

University of Bristol - Access Agreement 2010/11 to 2013/14

Background

The University developed its first Access Agreement in 2005 for students entering the University between 2006/07 and 2010/11. Following our experience of the first year of higher fees and bursaries in 2006/07 and also the revised maintenance grant package announced by the government in July 2007, a revised Access Agreement was put in place for 2008 onwards. We have also revised our financial support projections moving forward from 2009/10 to 2013/14, in the light of subsequent changes to state support packages. There will be students on both bursary schemes studying at Bristol during this period and so the following details the costs of the old (2006/07 and 2007/08) and the existing (2008/09 onwards) schemes. This access agreement also updates our outreach activity and milestones to reflect our revised Widening Participation Strategy, covering the period 2009-2016.

Context

The University of Bristol's Access Agreement is founded on a two-fold commitment to:

- Sustained enhancement of our key product – the educational experience of our students
- Widening participation in Higher Education in general and at Bristol in particular

The University of Bristol has an ambitious Education Strategy, which aims to provide a world-class student educational experience based on excellent teaching, good accommodation and state-of-the-art facilities and student services. It is the University's intention that the high levels of investment needed to maintain and enhance this quality of experience will largely come from additional fee income from students.

At the same time, the University of Bristol is committed to having a student body that is diverse in terms of background and experience, with all the cultural and educational benefits that this brings. This commitment has been reflected in a longstanding and active programme of widening participation. The University's first strategy for widening participation was published in 1999 and our fourth strategy (attached) covers the period 2009-16. This strategy will drive a wide range of initiatives, including plans for continued participation in collaborative projects through Aimhigher in the South West as well as actions intended to diversify Bristol's student population more specifically. The plans highlighted in our Access Agreement primarily represent those elements of this strategy that relate to student finance and to outreach activity. The strategy also includes our plans in relation to student support, career progression, widening participation to postgraduate programmes and research in the field of widening participation.

Tuition Fees

With effect from 2006, the University of Bristol has charged an annual tuition fee of £3,000 (increasing annually in line with inflation) for all UK and EU students on undergraduate programmes¹ and for its PGCE programme.

It is anticipated that undergraduate tuition fees will generate additional income of approx £19.9 million in 2009/10, rising to £22.9 million by 2013/14. As indicated in the attached appendix an increasing percentage will be re-invested in bursary provision and other measures designed to underpin our strategy for widening participation and student recruitment. **Please see Appendix One.**

¹ NB. In line with Government policy, people who study Veterinary Science as a second undergraduate degree will have to pay the full cost fees (£17,720 a year in 2010/11).

In addition, PGCE tuition fees are expected to bring in additional tuition fee income of approximately £456k in 2009/10, rising to £502k in 2013/14. 30% will be reinvested in bursary support for students from low income groups.

	2009/10	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14
Additional fee income	£455,900	£465,300	£477,050	£488,801	£501,725
Bursary scheme	£139,050	£142,590	£146,130	£149,670	£153,210
% of additional fee income	30%	30%	30%	30%	30%

Student Finance Strategy for 2010 and beyond

As part of our strategy for widening participation, we have made a clear commitment to ensuring that, as fees increase, students with genuine financial need are in receipt of good advice and appropriate financial assistance. Our aim is to ensure that no student has legitimate reason to be deterred from applying to Bristol because of their inability to meet the costs of living and studying here.

Bursaries

To underpin this aim, the University's Financial Support Package from 2010 will comprise:

- Bursaries valued at £1,230 per year for all UK students in receipt of a government maintenance grant and with a residual household income up to £25,000 per annum
- Bursaries valued at £790 per year for all UK students in receipt of a government maintenance grant and with a residual household income between £25,001 and £40,000 per annum
- Bursaries valued at £320 per year for all UK students in receipt of a government maintenance grant and with a residual household income between £40,001 and up to £50,020 per annum
- Additional hardship funds, totalling £220k (rising to £250k in 2013/14)
- Top-up bursaries, valued at £1,100 per year for bursary holders from the local area

Students who entered the University in 2008/09 and 2009/10 are also eligible for the above package.

Students who entered the University in 2006/07 and 2007/08 will continue to be eligible for the previous financial support package of:

- Bursaries valued at £1,230 per year for all UK students in receipt of a full government maintenance grant
- Bursaries valued at £790 per year for all UK students in receipt of a partial government maintenance grant
- Merit based scholarships, valued at £2,755 per year (for students also in receipt of a bursary) or £560 per year (for non-bursary holders) awarded in open competition

All the above amounts are valid for 2010/11 and will increase annually in line with inflation.

Our analysis of the costs of living and studying in Bristol, undertaken at the time that our original Access Agreement was produced, suggests that these measures should comfortably ensure that students eligible for state support (whether full or partial) have sufficient funding at their disposal to cover normal maintenance costs while at the University.

Hardship Funds

We are confident that, for the majority of students, these bursary packages will provide an appropriate level of support, particularly as from 2008/09 our bursary scheme package increases the numbers of students eligible for some form of University support. We are, however, also continuing to invest in hardship funds to provide an additional source of support to those **UK undergraduate and PGCE students who, through no fault of their own, find themselves in financial difficulty during their studies**. From 2010/11, an additional £220k will be set aside for this purpose, rising to £250k of additional funds by 2013/14. Priority for these funds will be given to students with the greatest financial need taking into account the other financial support which they receive as well as their ability to undertake part-time work (we recognise, for example that students with dependents and those on particularly intensive courses may not be able to work part-time during their studies). We anticipate that approximately 70% of the total amount will be allocated to students from low income families.

Scholarships

As part of our original Student Finance Strategy and Access Agreement, approximately 100 additional scholarships were introduced for students with outstanding ability and potential. These scholarships were open to any student, although the level of award was higher (£2,755 per annum at 2010/11 rates) for students from low income backgrounds, i.e. those in receipt of state support and university bursaries, than for non-bursary holders (£560 per annum at 2010/11 rates). Although scholarships awarded in 2006/07 and 2007/08 will continue to be paid, subject to satisfactory performance, we decided to discontinue these scholarships from 2008/09 and instead to focus more of our funds on student bursaries for those from low income backgrounds and on increased outreach provision.

Top-up bursaries for Local Students

Undergraduate bursary holders from the local area will receive an additional top-up bursary of £1,100 per annum (2010/11 rate). Although these bursaries will not be restricted to mature students, we hope that they will encourage mature students to attend.

PGCE students will not be eligible for local top-up bursaries.

Existing Scholarships and Bursaries

These new measures build on the following established bursary and scholarship provision:

- 12 Vice-Chancellor's Scholarships, each valued at £3,000 a year, for students with exceptional artistic, creative or sporting talent.
- A number of Access to Bristol Bursaries, valued at £3,290 (in 2010/11, linked to tuition fees), per year, for local students who participate in the "Access to Bristol Scheme" with local schools and successfully gain a place at the University.
- A range of departmental bursaries and scholarships, varying in value and allocation criteria. In some cases, criteria are specifically linked to widening participation.

Financial Advice and Support

In recognition of the importance of providing students and prospective students with the best possible advice on financing their time at Bristol, the University has also increased investment in financial advice to students, with the appointment of two additional Student Funding Advisers and a more senior Student Funding Officer, at an annual cost of approximately £132k in 2008/09 rising to £165k in 2013/14 (initially appointed in 2006/07). With these additional advisers, we have been able to meet our aim as stated in our original Access Agreement of ensuring students are able to meet with a student funding adviser on a drop-in basis without appointments being necessary.

The advice provided by the Student Funding Office has been supplemented by an enhanced student funding website, including development of a 'funding-calculator' to give students and prospective students easy access to a personalised illustration of the likely costs of tuition, living and studying at the University of Bristol for the full duration of their course. This service has a high profile on the University's website and is advertised by email to all students. Information about costs and financial support is also made available to prospective students through prospectuses/admission correspondence and to current students via annual registration materials.

Our analysis of maintenance costs assumes that students can reasonably expect to cover a proportion of their living costs from part-time earnings and we have therefore also put in place a Job Shop service to improve the advice and information available to students on part-time work opportunities and sensible approaches to part-time employment.

The cost of this service is approximately £20k per annum.

Outreach activities to be funded through additional fee income

The University has an established programme of outreach activity and is also a committed participant in the Aimhigher West area of the South West region. Prior to the introduction of our first Access Agreement, we were already investing a total of £589,000 in outreach activities (including our Aimhigher initiatives; summer schools; master classes and subject enrichment programmes and activities targeted at mature students, black and ethnic minority groups and school pupils ranging from primary through to secondary age). Additional fee income received from 2006/07 allowed us to increase our investment in outreach by a total of £400,000. This additional investment was increased by a further £210,000 from 2008/09 and will rise to £640,000 in 2009/10 and £670,000 in 2010/11.

From 2009, a total of £640k per annum from new tuition fee income will be allocated to additional outreach work. This amount will rise annually in line with inflation.

As additional activities have now been embedded within an overall framework provided by our strategy for widening participation, it is becoming increasingly difficult to identify separately the specific actions relating to our investment from additional fee income. However, an overview of all outreach activities currently planned is provided below, together with an indication of where these are being supported, either wholly or partially, by additional fee income (expenditure met from other funding sources is not shown). The exact distribution of our total investment across the various activities will be kept under review and may evolve to reflect ongoing evaluation of the Widening Participation Strategy.

Activity			Funding contribution from additional fee income
Student Recruitment – additional outreach to schools and colleges outside the Aimhigher area	Year 12		4,000
Additional Open Day, timed to meet needs of non-traditional students	Year 12	5000 students	57,000
Mature Students	Access students of all ages	15 Further Education Colleges	3,000
Summer Schools	Year 11 Year 12	53 students 140 students	43,000

Student Navigation Network	1 st year students	90 mentors 180 mentees	15,000
Access to Bristol Scheme	Year 12	250 students	24,000
Schools Outreach including: Aimhigher visits, Aimhigher mentoring; Aimhigher tutoring; CPD for teachers/advisers; primary school liaison; academic enrichment; support for looked after children; work with young mothers.		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 4000 young people • 1490 parents • 40 student mentors • 40 student tutors • 200 teachers/advisers 	17,000
WP Marketing & Communications			2,000
Personal adviser scheme (conversion project)	Mature and local applicants	900 students	93,000
Outreach and transitional support for students with disabilities			5,000
WP research cluster			33,000
Widening Participation office salaries			229,000 ¹
Admissions office salaries ¹			115,000
Total			640,000¹

¹ Plus £25k from 'administrative costs category, bringing total additional outreach expenditure to £665,000

This table concentrates on the University's plans in relation to centrally-coordinated outreach work. However, it should be noted that faculty and departmentally-funded activity is not included and that our widening participation strategy also contains plans for the development of a broader range of activities, including researching more flexible progression routes into the University; continued improvement of fair admissions procedures; developing further skills support; and other support mechanisms for existing and new students. In addition, it articulates our plans to draw together and further develop academic research expertise in relation to widening participation, ensuring that the results feed into future widening participation practice.

As a separate, but related activity, in 2004 the University agreed to be a co-sponsor of a new Academy school in South Bristol to replace the existing Withywood Community School. The school opened in 2008. The University has played an active role from the start, providing senior level specialist input to the Education Committee and Project Board (the fore-runner to the Board of Governors), as well as concrete support in the shape of office space, work placements, outreach engagement and funding for a community-based research project.

We are also currently working with 12 other research-intensive universities to assess the feasibility of developing a national compact/access scheme.

Milestones and objectives, including institutional baseline data

Progress in delivering the new widening participation strategy will be carefully monitored by the University's Education Committee. Analysis indicates that the University has made reasonable progress in attracting applications from students from widening participation backgrounds. However, to date, we have had limited success in converting these applications into students. For this reason, the University's Widening Participation strategy includes plans to supplement existing aspiration-and attainment-raising activity with measures designed to improve conversion. Progress is monitored against a series of milestones which focus on applications and, where performance can be influenced by the selection process, intake.

In addition, the Education Committee (through the Widening Participation and Admissions Strategy Group) will require each of the University's faculties and relevant support services divisions to submit and report against an annual action plan, containing detailed aims, objectives and actions which support the delivery of the Widening Participation strategy. Specific actions will be evaluated using a range of qualitative and quantitative measures.

As part of the process of revising our Widening Participation strategy for the period 2009-16, we have undertaken a major review of the milestones, against which progress in widening participation is monitored. As a result of the review, which drew on work undertaken by the Widening Participation Research Cluster, it was agreed that, whilst application milestones would be set for all the categories below, intake milestones would only be set for mature students and low performing schools, these being the two categories which could be taken into account in the selection process.

In addition changes have been made to the method of calculating the milestones. The majority are now calculated by benchmarking the University's position against its Russell Group comparators. The exception is the milestone for low performing schools which are now defined as those which, in the previous year, ranked in the bottom 40 per cent of all schools and colleges in relation to the average score per 'A' Level entry, the average score per 'A' Level entrant or the percentage of students applying to Higher Education. We believe that the success of this strategy will be most effectively monitored against milestones which focus on applications and acceptances (see table below) rather than on the HEFCE benchmarks for student intake.

WP Category	Actual Applications 2008/09	Application Milestone 2016	Actual Intake 2008/09 ¹	Intake Milestone 2016
Mature Students	7.7%	11.4%	5.3%	9%
Students from low performing schools / colleges ³	16.5%	46%	11.7%	40%
Students from Low Participation Areas ²	7.8%	17.7%	5.5%	
Socio-economic groups 4-8	19.8%	25.2%	14.9%	
Minority ethnic students	15.3%	19.1%	10.9%	
Disabled students	4.7%	4.6%	6.8%	
State school students	69.5%	78.1%	60.1%	
Local students	3.7%	6%	4.2%	

Notes

¹ Figures relate to those students for whom we have known data.

² 2008/09 monitoring was based on Super Profile data while the 2016 milestones have been calculated using POLAR quintiles 1 and 2.

³ Criteria by which schools defined as low-performing changed following the recent review. 2008/09 figures are based on old definition and 2016 milestone on the revised definition.

It should be stressed that our milestones will provide an indicator, against which we can measure the success of our strategy for widening participation. Progress against the milestones will be used to inform the process of agreeing annual action plans in

support of the University's widening participation strategy and to inform future strategy development but the milestones will not be treated as targets for achievement.

The Widening Participation Strategy Implementation Group will conduct a detailed annual review of progress against these milestones, reporting any key conclusions, achievements or concerns to the Widening Participation and Admissions Strategy Group. While the basis of calculation will remain constant, the milestones themselves will also be re-calculated on an annual basis to ensure that external factors do not distort any assessment of the University's progress.