

WRITTLE COLLEGE

ACCESS AGREEMENT 2013/14

FEE LIMITS

From September 2013 Writtle College will charge new full-time home-region undergraduate students **£8500** per annum for all eligible courses. Part-time students will be charged a pro-rata fee according to the amount of study undertaken.

The £8500 fee will not apply to students who commenced their programmes in previous years. Full-time Students who commenced their studies in 2012 will pay **£8000** per year in 2012/13 (as per that year's Access Agreement) and **£8250** in 2013/14. Part-time students who commenced their studies in 2012 will be charged a pro-rata fee according to the amount of study undertaken.

Prior to 2012 Writtle College charged students less than this amount and the College will maintain this scheme and its system of bursaries for those earlier (old system) students for the normal duration of their programmes. Hence, full time students who commenced their studies in September 2012 are currently charged as follows: BSc/BA - £3465 per annum; FdSc/Fda - £3465 per annum. Part-time students who commenced their studies in 2011 will be charged a pro-rata fee according to the amount of study undertaken. We anticipate raising this in line with the permitted maximum for continuing students (not yet announced).

We plan to raise the tuition fee for full-time new entrants in 2014/15 to **£9000** per year. For continuing students who started in earlier years we anticipate raising their fee in line with inflation and our costs.

EXPENDITURE ON ADDITIONAL ACCESS MEASURES

In 2013/14 we estimate spending on additional access and retention measures to comprise:

- £193,637 on bursaries and scholarships
- £55,000 on marketing activities aimed at supporting applications from under-represented groups (pre-entry expenditure).
- £120,000 on a range of outreach work.
- £150,000 on a slate of measures and activities embedded in our Learning and Teaching to support student success and retention.

ADDITIONAL ACCESS MEASURES

Financial Support for Students: Bursaries

We believe that bursaries are a useful retention measure and have a role to play in ensuring that students do not discontinue their studies as a result of immediate financial hardship. The National Union of Students have consistently articulated the view that bursaries – paid directly to students according to their financial circumstances – are far preferable to fee waivers. Accordingly, we will offer the following bursaries:

1. New undergraduate students on household incomes under £25,000 and in receipt of the full state maintenance grant will receive a bursary of £500.
2. New undergraduate students on household incomes between £25,000 and £30,000 will receive a bursary of £200.
3. New undergraduate students on household incomes between £30,000 and £40,000 will receive a bursary of £150.
4. Undergraduate students who commenced their programmes prior to September 2012 and who will be paying fees as listed on p1. will be eligible for bursaries as follows;
 - Undergraduate students on household incomes under £25,000 and in receipt of the full state maintenance grant will receive a bursary of £547¹. (This is the minimum stipulated £347 plus an additional £200.)
 - Undergraduate students on household incomes between £25,000 and £30,000 will receive a bursary of £200.
 - Undergraduate students on household incomes between £30,000 and £40,000 will receive a bursary of £150.

Financial Support for Students: National Scholarship Programme

- In 2013/14 Writtle College will offer free on-site term-time accommodation and ten meals per week for up to 28² full-time students under the National Scholarship Scheme for their first year of study. For paying students the cost of this accommodation and food package is at least £4000 per annum. Therefore the Writtle College contribution to the NSP will be worth at least £112,000 per annum.
- This will be offered on a 'first come, first served' basis according to when applicants accept an offer of a place. The sole criterion for eligibility to apply for an NSP award will be that the student is in receipt of a full grant. Hence, no one with a declared income over £25,000 will be eligible.
- The NSP is also available to part-time students (according to the same eligibility requirements, and awarded according to the same 'first come, first served' process). However, for part-time students the scholarship comprises a partial fee waiver – pro-rata, according to the amount of credit studied.
- The NSP will also be available to part-time students commencing their studies in 2012/13. *This was not detailed in our previous Access Agreement.* (eligibility, awards, and process as listed above for part-time 2013/14 starters)

¹ Actual figure will be slightly higher as stipulated minimum rises for students on the current scheme.

² 30 places will be awarded if there are no part-time applicants

Outreach

1. As a Higher Education Institution with a significant population of Further Education students, a key aspect of Widening Participation strategy at Writtle College continues to be the fostering of progression from our Further to our Higher Education provision. Although we are also engaged in a range of relevant links and activities with schools and colleges our 'dual' status places us in a special position to promote internal FE to HE progression. Our internal progression aim is that 20% of our eligible level 3 FE completers should progress to Higher Education at Writtle College. We will work with College FE Lecturing staff to encourage level 3 FE learners to consider Higher Education, assist them in the decision-making and application process, and prepare them for the expectations of the University sector. These sessions will benefit all our FE-to-HE progression students, whether they continue their studies at Writtle or elsewhere.
2. In addition to those FE completers from Writtle, the College also seeks to raise aspirations and facilitate access for students from other FE colleges and schools, especially from areas of low participation. We will continue to engage in a range of activities with local schools and colleges that encourage and prepare students to consider, apply for, and succeed on land-based Higher Education courses.
3. We will continue to offer a portfolio of Foundation Degrees and HE level 4 qualifications to attract students from vocational study routes and those who cannot commit to three years of full-time study. We will also continue to offer flexible study options that facilitate work-based learning.
4. We will also deliver a range of outreach activities that share our skills, resources and enthusiasm with a much broader constituency. Our Centre for the Arts and Design in the Environment (CADE) and staff from across the College deliver learning experiences for school pupils (both primary and secondary), training and networking events for teachers, and skills development sessions for a wide range of learners including job-seekers. This involves both events hosted at the College that make use of our 550 acre estate, our science and arts facilities, as well as projects where Writtle academic staff visit schools and other venues. We aim to deliver 30 events annually, involving up to 5000 participants in total. For example, at our annual 'Essex Schools Food and Farming Day', held each May, 3000 students spend a day at the College.

Student Retention and Success

The College will use student fee income to invest in a range of measures that will have a positive impact in terms of student retention and success.

- There will be an increased emphasis on student support from module leaders and course leaders. This will involve tutorials, catch-up sessions, on-line support, and immediate feedback following presentations.
- We will offer a comprehensive range of Learner Services that enable Higher Education students to succeed on their chosen programmes. This includes: discretionary financial assistance through the 'Access to Learning Fund' to alleviate unexpected hardship; welfare and counselling services; support for students with specific learning difficulties or disabilities.

- The Head of Higher Education and Heads of Schools will hold one-on-one meetings with students identified by their Course Scheme managers or Module leaders as being 'at risk' (i.e. they have failed an early assignment or have missed classes without good cause).
- In Writtle School of Design – we will deliver additional 'open studios' for students needing extra help, plus an early formative 'screening' assignment in a 1st year module to identify students with writing issues, plus an increased emphasis on staff office hours as an opportunity to be helped.
- In the School of Sport, Equine & Animal Science – we will deliver an additional maths classes alongside a key 1st year module. These will be 1 hour sessions, available at different time slots.
- To continue our 'Open Door' policy of ad hoc tutorials and student support from Lecturing staff.

For the proportion of students in our learning community drawn from under-represented groups (anticipated at 38% of students being identified in NS SEC 4-7 in 2013/14) we project that the cost of these initiatives will be £150,000 in 2013/14, rising to £190,000 in 2016/17.

In addition to these measures we are also raising our tariff points for entry in 2013: from 240 to 260 points for Bachelors programmes, and from 160 to 180 points for Foundation degrees. Following earlier increases for 2011 and 2012, this measure is intended better to map our threshold for entry onto the attainments necessary to succeed on a Higher Education programme. Individual applications will continue to be considered on their own merits. In conjunction with the measures above, this is intended to effect a continued improvement in student completion and retention.

Our Assessment of Our Access and Retention Record

- In Autumn 2011 4.7% of our eligible level 3 Further Education completers progressed to Higher Education courses at Writtle College in 2009/10. *This is much lower than in 2009/10 when 12.7% of eligible FE completers progressed to HE. We believe that increases in tariff points for 2011 entry have deterred some of our internal applicants. For 2012 entry we are trialling internal FE-to-HE progression bursaries (which were not in place when our 2012/13 access agreement was devised) to improve this figure.*
- Black and ethnic minority students comprised 10% of the Higher Education student body in 2010/11. *This figure remains similar year-on-year.*
- In 2010/11 15% of our Higher Education students had a disability. *This figure is the same as the previous year.*
- In 2010/11 53.6 % of our students were aged 21+. *This is a 10% reduction on the previous year. The impact of ELQ funding arrangements has meant a reduction in mature, degree-qualified, applicants to Writtle (especially in Horticulture) which has altered our age demographic.*
- Since 2008 the College has engaged in more than 30 Outreach events annually, benefiting 4,000-5,000 participants annually.
- In 2010/11 12% of our full-time home-region undergraduates were 'non-completers'. *This is the same as the previous year. We predict steady improvement in this figure in the future as a result of several retention initiatives, an increased proportion of Honours degree students, and significantly increased tariff points for entry.*

Targets and Milestones

Our Targets and Milestones for 2012/13 to 2016/17:

1. 15% of our eligible level 3 completers from Further Education should progress to our Higher Education courses in 2012/3, rising to 20% in 2016/7.
2. In terms of the proportion of our student body drawn from areas of relative deprivation, we intend to grow the percentage identified in NS-SEC 4-7 tables 38% to 39% (HESA table 1a). (2012-17)
3. The proportion of the HE student body drawn from black and ethnic minority groups should be no less than 10%. (2012-17)
 - to maintain the proportion of HE students who are disabled at 15% or greater. (2012-17)
 - to maintain the proportion of HE students aged 21+ at 57% or greater. (2012-17)
 - to sustain our education outreach activity (in terms of volume and variety) at the high level attained in previous years, notwithstanding the cessation of Aimhigher funding – to deliver at least 30 events benefiting 5,000 participants annually. (2012-17)
 - 'non-completion' for full-time home-region undergraduates should be less than 10% for academic year 2012/13, dropping to 7% by academic year 2016/17.

Institutional Monitoring Arrangements

The Head of Higher Education will report on matters relating to the Access Agreement at the College's Senior Management Team. Registry will continue to monitor the student population against HESA benchmarks and in terms of relevant equality and diversity categories. Finance will continue to monitor the uptake of College bursaries. Outreach activities will be reported upon by relevant departments, including the academic areas and Marketing.

The *Access Agreement Monitoring Return* and *Widening Participation Strategic Assessment*, compiled by the Head of Higher Education with input from all the departments above, is the key document in which our bursary, outreach and WP objectives are reviewed.

Information for Students

We are committed to providing information to students in a clear and timely fashion. Information regarding fee levels and bursaries will be available as a supplement to our Prospectus, in leaflets for applicants, and on our website. The Student Handbook, given to all students, provides full information regarding our fees and bursaries. The College runs poster campaigns through the year and sends targeted e-mails to encourage eligible students to apply. Staff in Marketing, Finance and Registry also provide relevant information and advice to prospective students through Open Days, UCAS Fairs and Schools Liaison activities.

Consultation with Students

Students were extensively consulted through 2011 as the College prepared for the dramatic change in Higher Education funding that begins in Autumn 2012. Focus groups and working lunches were held that discussed fee-levels, bursary arrangements, and outreach & retention activities. The 2013 fee-level and access package was most recently debated at College Board of Governors in March

2012, with representation from both the outgoing 2011/12 Students' Union and the incoming 2012/13 Students' Union. The agreed fee of **£8500** for 2013/14 was endorsed by the SU representatives. Writtle College Student Union will continue to contribute to analysis of our performance through our regular Student Union Liaison Group (SULG) where senior staff meet with elected representatives of the student community.

Equality Issues

This agreement, like its 2012 predecessor, takes equality issues into account as per the Equality Act 2010. Targets for disabled and BME students, as well as for students from areas of relative deprivation are included and will be comprehensively monitored. The agreement aligns with our *Single Equality Scheme 2011-2015* in "recognising that everyone is different, respecting and encouraging these differences and valuing the benefits diversity brings." We believe that Equality and Diversity are central to achieving the goals set out in our Strategic Plan, whilst enhancing our cultural profile and labour demographic.

