

# **UNIVERSITY OF WOLVERHAMPTON**

## **ACCESS AGREEMENT**

**2006/07 – 2008/09**

**(Revised November 06)**

## **1. Fee Limits**

From 2007/08 the University will charge a tuition fee of £3,070 per year for home/EU students on its full-time and sandwich undergraduate degree and PGCE programmes (with the exception of Foundation Degrees).

The fee of £3,070 is expected to rise with inflation.

Currently the University envisages that the fee level to be charged for full-time HND and Foundation Degree programmes in 2007/08 will remain at the 2006/07 standard fee level, plus inflation i.e. £1225.

## **2. Bursaries and other Financial Support**

### **Arrangements for payment of minimum standard bursaries**

The University anticipates that over 50% of its student entrants in 2007/08 will qualify for the maximum Higher Education Grant of £2,765. These students, if they are taking an undergraduate degree programme with a fee of £3070, will receive a Start Right Bursary award from the University of £500 which will include the £305 national minimum standard bursary payment. The University is utilizing the SLC's Higher Education Bursaries and Scholarship Scheme (HEBSS) for the assessment and payment of its Start Right Bursaries, which include the payment of the national minimum standard bursary.

PGCE students in receipt of the maximum Higher Education Grant will receive a bursary of £305 p.a.

The University is fully committed to increasing the amount of minimum standard bursary paid on its behalf by the SLC by the same inflation factor applicable to the undergraduate course fee.

### **Additional 'University of Wolverhampton' Student Financial Support Schemes**

From 2007/08 the University will provide a package of additional financial support aimed at those with relatively low family incomes who will receive only partial state support, and prospective students from low participation backgrounds.

#### **Start-Right Bursary Scheme (for full-time undergraduate students)**

Where the fee charged for a course is £3,070 this scheme offers additional financial support to those whose "family" income assessments for HE Grant purposes fall between £18,000 and £31,000 p.a.

The scheme, which recognises the need to provide extra support to entrants with relatively low family income but who receive lower value maintenance grants, offers 3 levels of award linked to family income bands as below:

<u>Family Income Assessment</u>	<u>Start Right Bursary</u>
£18,000 or less	£500 (inc £305 min standard bursary)
£18,001 - £25,000	£750
£25,001 - £31,000	£1000

The University estimates that by 2008/09 5,970 students could be in receipt of a Start Right Bursary.

The University expects to increase the levels of bursary in line with inflation and to adjust the link with income bands in response to announcements from the Government regarding income threshold levels for state support.

### **Regional Cash Back Bursary Scheme**

Where the fee level for a full-time undergraduate degree course is £3,070 this regional (West Midlands) scheme provides a £1000 cash award in year 1 of their course for young people approaching higher education via a range of awareness raising / aspiration building activities delivered across the region supported and accredited by agencies such as Aimhigher.

To be eligible for the scheme prospective students must be confirmed as having participated in a number of activities organised in any of the six local authority sub regions in the West Midlands i.e. Black Country; Birmingham and Solihull; Coventry and Warwickshire; Shropshire, Telford and Wrekin; Hereford and Worcestershire; Staffordshire and Stoke on Trent.

Qualifying activities will include taster events promoting understanding of subjects, the development of independent learning skills, and 'lifestyle' activities that convey a sense of what it is like to be a student in higher education. Normally learners will have participated in activities equivalent to 15 hours learning.

These activities target learners who are underrepresented in higher education and are likely to be drawn from the lower income groups in the community. This Bursary therefore provides an additional financial incentive / dimension to the University's existing widening participation agenda.

The University expects around 1000 students to benefit from Regional Cash Back Bursary Scheme for 2007/08.

### **Inter-relationship between the Schemes**

The Start Right and Regional Cash Back bursary schemes are seen as being entirely separate i.e. A regional pupil who had engaged with qualifying pre entry activities targeting underrepresented groups whose family income is below £31,000 would receive both a year 1 cash award of £1000 plus the appropriate Start Right Award for their family income band i.e. at least £500 and up to a maximum of £1000.

The two schemes in combination thus focus financial support on the most vulnerable groups in terms of financial need and group under-representation.

## **3. Outreach Activity**

The University has a long-term commitment to access and widening participation and has consistently surpassed its benchmarks in national HEFCE performance indicators for the recruitment of full-time undergraduate entrants from poor socio/economic groups and ethnic minorities (see Section 6 – Milestones and Objectives).

In its institutional audit report on the University, published by the Quality Assurance Agency in March 2004, particular attention was given to the ways in which the University had responded to, and continues to respond to, the challenges of Widening Participation (Thematic Enquiry pp 29-31). The QAA report states that:

“The solutions generated and areas identified for future enhancements may contain lessons for the higher education sector as a whole. Of particular note is... the pro-active way the University has worked with its regional education partners and regional agencies to raise aspirations and facilitate entry into higher education....” (Institutional Audit Report p.31 para 240)

The University will maintain and further extend its aspiration building activities during the period covered by its Access Agreement, building upon the programme of events and initiatives detailed in its HEFCE Annual Monitoring Statement.

The attached table, included under Milestones and Objectives, is illustrative of the range and nature of Outreach activity undertaken (existing and new), and provides information on the groups targeted and the reach of specific initiatives.

The briefing of advisers and influencers on changing national and University specific financial support arrangements is seen as a vital element of Outreach work. There is, therefore, a cross-referencing of activities categorised under Outreach work and those detailed under Section 4, the 'provision of information to students'.

#### **4. Provision of Information to Students (and their advisers)**

A comprehensive and ongoing communications strategy is in place which targets advisers as well as prospective and current students. It sets out to utilise a broad range of communication vehicles to provide pro-active, customised advice, information and guidance in a variety of settings.

In addition to ensuring a supply of printed and 'real-time' electronic sources of information, the Wolverhampton strategy puts great emphasis on the need to provide year-on-year personalised briefings via conferences, seminars, advice clinics and bespoke presentations geared to specific local audiences.

Website: A key vehicle for disseminating the latest information as quickly as possible. The University's website features a prominent home page icon 'Bursaries 4 You' which takes enquirers immediately to the detail of the University's bursary schemes, plus information on the national loan and grant schemes, links to other useful sites etc. An additional 'Money Matters' link under a generic 'Information About' heading on the home page provides a 'one click' access to a range of additional financial information including fees, payment arrangements, discount, state benefits, additional scholarships available etc. The site also includes a substantial section on budgeting – providing a handy reckoner to calculate living expenses.

Prospectus: Expected to remain as a key vehicle for imparting course information to prospective students it also continues as a major reference resource for intermediary advisers (Careers Advisors, Connexions Staff, teachers etc). The prospectus contains a substantial Advice and Guidance section including dedicated 'Money Pages'. Given the lengthy production time frame for the prospectus, and the need to refer prospective students to the latest information on fees and bursaries etc. the prospectus money section is used primarily to direct readers to the source of real time information ie. [www.wlv.ac.uk/moneymatters](http://www.wlv.ac.uk/moneymatters) as the dedicated area of the University's website plus contact numbers allowing personalised access to the University's team of expert advisers.

Specialised Student Finance Publications: A series of 'Money Matters' leaflets is produced at strategic points throughout the year disseminated in enquirer packs sent out by the University's 'call centre' style Central Despatch Unit; via the Schools & Colleges Liaison service (during visits, presentations and activities within regional feeder institutions); the University's High Street-based Higher Education Shop (which handles some 20,000 visitors per year); and the University's series of corporate Open Days in June, August, September and November.

Briefings for Advisers: The University offers a series of half-day conferences for groups such as regional Connexions personal advisers, teaching staff in schools with responsibility for careers guidance and student services staff in local colleges of further education. Questions and answer sessions are run by the University's expert education guidance officers and all delegates receive conference packs containing briefing notes, references to our website information resource, and copies of our specialist financial

publications. Head teachers, heads of year, etc. are offered the opportunity to book bespoke presentations to help inform school governors, parents and other teaching staff.

Briefings for the General Public: Pre-advertised day, evening and weekend advice clinics are organised via the University's HE Shop facility. These will augment the financial presentations already offered in the context of Open Days, the School/College adviser visit schedule, and the well established and heavily used HE Shop individual appointment and 'drop-in' system.

University Staff Briefings: It is vitally important that all University staff give out accurate information about the national and local situation. The University organises briefings for both academic and non-academic support staff and utilise the University's electronic newsletter and website finance pages to keep staff information up-to-date. Finance briefings feature in the induction programmes for all newly appointed academic staff.

## **5. Monitoring Arrangements**

The University has established administrative arrangements for the assessment, validation and processing of applications for its Regional Cash Back Bursary. Regular application and take up monitoring data is provided by the University's Regional Bursary Support Officer. The Support Officer liaises closely with regional feeder institutions and Aimhigher in order to monitor the impact of the scheme on application and participation rates.

The take up of the Start-Right bursary will be clear from SLC HEBSS records, but focus groups of new entrants will be used to assess the significance of the finance support package on entry to higher education decision making.

Procedures are in place to monitor the effectiveness of specific Outreach activities (i.e. via participant evaluation questionnaires and focus groups) and feedback is incorporated into regular Schools/Colleges Liaison activity reports presented to the University's Executive.

The effectiveness of key elements of the University's strategy for providing financial information to students and their advisers will also be monitored via user evaluation return postcards (as currently used to obtain general feedback on the prospectus), monitoring of usage of specific web pages, event evaluation questionnaires, and so on. Procedures are in place to ensure, where possible, the currency of financial information published.

Overall monitoring of the University's performance in attracting applications from and recruiting under-represented groups will continue to be via a combination of published HESA data (measuring performance against benchmarks) and UCAS/institutional data on applicant profiles analysed by ethnicity, socio/economic and occupational groups, postcode and previous institution. This data will provide the major measure of progress towards the Milestone/Objective of maintaining a performance significantly above benchmark for social inclusion, despite the possible deterrent effect of top-up fees.

Annual reports on the schemes covered by the Access Agreement, including a review of progress made towards the targets set out above, will be made to Academic Board and Board of Governors. The reports will be drawn up by an Access Agreement Review Group, which will include Students' Union representation.

The challenge for the University of Wolverhampton is to maintain its existing excellent widening participation profiles and its recruitment of students from disadvantaged groups, under new market conditions.

## UNIVERSITY OF WOLVERHAMPTON ACCESS AGREEMENT – MILESTONES & OBJECTIVES

Definition	Source	Base Year 2004/05	2005/06	2006/07	2007/08	2008/09	Objectives
<u>Entrant Profile</u> (Successful Applicants)  % of young first year full-time under-graduates (Base Year figure reflects projection of known HESA data)  1. % from NS-SEC socio/ economic groups 4, 5, 6, 7  2. % from low participation neighbourhoods	HEFCE PIs	51.5 (Benchmark : 37.3) (Location Adjusted : 41.1)  25.6 (Benchmark : 16.9) (Location Adjusted : 19.7)	50	50	50	50	To maintain performance above benchmark  To maintain participation rates via Outreach
<u>Applicant Profile</u>  % of total applicants with known classifications  1. % from NS-SEC socio/ economic groups 4, 5, 6, 7  2. % from Ethnic Minority Groups	UCAS	36  34	36  34	36  34	36  34	36  34	Hold steady  Maintain profile  To maintain annual targets for numbers of pupils, institutions engaged and events delivered
<u>Delivery of Outreach Activities</u>	Institutional Record and Performance Reviews	see attached tables	annual cycle (as detailed)	*annual cycle	*annual cycle	*annual cycle	

\* Assuming Aimhigher initiative continues beyond 2006

## UNIVERSITY OF WOLVERHAMPTON ACCESS AGREEMENT – OUTREACH WORK

Type of Activity (Annual Cycle)	Target Group	Reach of Activity (per year)	New or Extension
Learner Information Strategy – i) visits to regional schools/colleges to conduct ‘finance clinics’ with learners ii) ‘finance ‘clinics’ in HE shop week-ends/evenings	Learners in Years 11 – 13 and equivalent in colleges Mature students Parents and public	1,250 learners 90 Schools 12 FE colleges 250-400 parents	New activity to inform learners about new HE finance arrangements
Advisers’ Information Strategy – presentations to staff team meetings informing ‘key influencers’ about HE finance. Supported Conferences and Workshops	Connexions Personal Advisers, Schools and colleges guidance staff, teachers, LEA officers	200 ‘key influencers’	New activity to inform learners about new HE finance arrangements
University Campus Visits – learners gain a taste of University life, meet students and experience different areas of learning. Many activities developed through Aimhigher partnership arrangements	Learners in Years 9 – 13 Mature students	1800 learners	Extension of existing activities
Access to Further and Higher Education: Information, awareness and HE taster sessions supported by guidance and HE finance ‘clinics’	Pre-Access and Access students on FE programmes	300 learners 10 Further Education Colleges	New activity
Mentoring Programme – University students support targeted learners in schools/colleges to provide encouragement, improve confidence, raise aspiration	Learners in Years 10 -13	40 mentors working with 160 – 180 learners	Development of existing activity
Schools and Colleges’ Presentations – increase awareness about HE options and applications process	Learners in Years 10 – 13 Mature students	80 – 100 schools/colleges visited 1600 learners	Existing activity
Careers and Parents’ Evenings – presentations and advice surgeries to learners and parents about HE routes	Learners in Years 10 – 13 Mature students	40 – 60 schools/colleges visited 900 learners 350 – 400 parents	Existing activity

Type of Activity (Annual Cycle)	Target Group	Reach of Activity (per year)	New or Extension
Compact Arrangements – Choose A Real Deal (CARD): Partnership activity with Aimhigher Aspiration-raising activities with targeted learners combined with a guarantee of a place in HE subject to fulfilment of goals	Learners at 14 (Year 9) who are able to benefit from an HE pathway. Particular focus on 'HE interventions' for those without HE family background	Piloted in 18 Wolverhampton LEA schools from January 2005 3000 learners on CARD – 25-30% accessing HE activities Anticipated extension to Black Country schools and possibly other West Midlands sub-regions	Extension of existing activity
Aimhigher and HEFCE supported Summer Schools – residential activities that build confidence, raise awareness and provide an HE experience.	Year 11 learners with no family background in HE	380 - 456 places offered regionally nationally to targeted learners in schools	Extension of existing activity
Children's University – project work and awareness raising about HE	Year 6 learners in primary schools in former Education Action Zone	200 Places offered to primary schools in Telford and Wrekin LEA	Existing activity
University of Wolverhampton 'Learn-In' – Awareness raising and experience of HE	Year 9 learners in secondary schools, particularly those with no family HE experience	120 learners 16 – 20 schools in Telford and Wrekin and Black Country	Existing activity
Easter GCSE Revision Courses – intensive tuition in different subjects combined with exam practice	Year 11 pupils identified as borderline 'C/D' grade	40 learners 6 schools	Existing activity