

BIRMINGHAM CITY UNIVERSITY

ACCESS AGREEMENT 2012-13

1. Fee Levels

We are proposing that fees will be set at one of four fee points, as indicated below. These represent the maximum fee that will be charged for these subjects at each fee point.

£6,000

All HND, HNC and Foundation degrees.

£7,500

Full time first degrees in Business and Management; Sociology; Early Childhood Education Studies; Computing, Information and Communication Technology; Architectural Technology; Property, Construction and Planning; English: Health and Social Care,(other than those courses delivered under the NHS contract).

£8,200

Full time first degrees in Art and Design; Architecture; Law; Engineering; Digital Media Technology; Engineering Design and Manufacturing Systems; Psychology; Criminology; Media and Communication; Community Theatre.

£9,000

Jewellery; Music; Acting; Stage Management.

£1,500

Sandwich Year Out

The fee set for entrants will apply to them for the duration of their studies. Fees will be subject to an annual inflationary increase, in line with the amount set by the Government.

The fee set for technology based programmes is based on the assumption that Funding Council financial support for this strategic subject will continue. If this funding is removed then the fee will be set at £9,000 as this is a high delivery cost subject.

2. Expenditure

Birmingham City University performs exceptionally well both in absolute terms and by comparison to the adjusted sector benchmark in indicators of widening participation. Examination of the HESA performance indicators for 2009-10 reveals:

- for young full-time undergraduate entrants
 - 97.2% from state schools or colleges (above benchmark)
 - 42.3% from NS-SEC classes 4, 5, 6 & 7 (significantly above benchmark)
 - 15.4% from low participation neighbourhoods (above benchmark)

- for mature full-time undergraduate entrants
 - 13.9% with no previous HE qualification and from low participation neighbourhoods (above benchmark)

Indicators of retention reveal the following:

- non-continuation following year of entry
 - a recent trend of a reduction in non-continuation, now at 10% compared to 9.8% for the sector – adjusted benchmark and against a UK mean of 7.9%
 - within the above, the University performs better than benchmark in the proportion of young full-time first degree entrants from low participation neighbourhoods who do not continue in HE: at 7.7%, compared to 10% for the sector adjusted benchmark and 8.7% for the UK average
 - although non-continuation of mature full-time entrants is higher than benchmark for those pursuing first degrees (at 14.3% compared with a benchmark of 13.1% for those without a previous HE qualification and at 14% compared with the 11.8% benchmark for those with a prior HE qualification), there is evidence of improving performance in recent years
 - performance of all categories of entrant to other undergraduate programmes is better than benchmark and better than the UK average
- projected learning outcome
 - the proportion of full-time first degree entrants projected for neither award nor transfer at 17.5% is higher than the adjusted sector benchmark at 15.2% and the UK average of 12.3%.

Our evaluation of performance in relation to access and retention is that we have a demonstrable record of achievement in relation to widening access and have shown recent solid progress in relation to first-year retention, with only mature first-degree entrants performing below benchmark. However, analysis of the indicators demonstrates that the University needs to acquire a greater understanding of the causes of poor progression and completion after the first year and that the focus of our access agreement expenditure should be upon the provision of tailored investment to support retention and success in achieving an award.

We therefore intend to commit approximately 15% of additional fee income, £265 per FTE, for expenditure on additional access and retention measures. This will include our National Scholarship Programme match funding, new regional collaborative activity that replaces the Aim Higher Scheme, University outreach activity and new activities to increase and support student retention, progression and achievement. We intend to continue expenditure on maintaining sector adjusted benchmark for the participation of students in receipt of disabled students' allowance and we will meet all bursary commitments for continuing students.

2.1 Access

2.1.1. Financial Support

National Scholarship Programme

Our provisional allocation from HEFCE is for £561,000. This will provide 187 scholarships to the value of £3000 per scholarship. These will be offered as a

fee waiver to eligible students from a family income background of £25,000 per year or less.

The University will match this allocation with a further £561,000 which will also be offered as a fee waiver to eligible students from a family income background of £25,000 per year or less.

The University consistently attracts more students per year from a family income background of £25,000 or less than will be able to receive a scholarship; in 2009 11.3% of our entrants were eligible for a statutory bursary. We had planned to use our match funding in a way that enabled us to offer fee waivers of less than £3,000 to a greater number of students but the current HEFCE guidance has prevented us from doing this. Therefore, additional criteria of a lower family income background and demonstration of excellence in academic achievement, performance or potential will be used to select scholarship beneficiaries.

The University expects to support 2012/13 scholarship recipients in their subsequent years of study with us through scholarships or cash bursaries towards their living costs. These will be targeted at students at risk of non-completion due to financial reasons.

2.1.2. Outreach

Birmingham City University has always been committed to delivering and participating in outreach activities. The University's Widening Participation Strategic Assessment contains further information on these and the other widening participation activities undertaken.

The University consistently performs above widening participation benchmarks, particularly against the state school and social class indicators. The proportion of students from Black and other Minority Ethnic backgrounds is high and has been increasing. The proportion of mature students is high, although this has fallen somewhat over recent years. The proportion of female students is high and actions targeted at attracting male entrants in certain discipline areas have been implemented.

We will undertake activities to maintain our performance at or above the sector adjusted benchmark in relation to entrants from state education, social class and low participation neighbourhoods. The types of activities will include subject enrichment workshops, master classes, campus visits, one-to-one surgeries giving advice on UCAS applications, attendance at parents' evenings and careers fairs, talks on student finance and what to expect at university, and conferences for college students and their advisors.

The outreach team will provide organisational support, previously funded by HEFCE, for activities initiated by the successor body to Aimhigher and continue to work closely with key feeder schools and colleges in communities with low participation rates to raise aspirations and encourage applications to higher education. Our evidence demonstrates that learners in such environments, when offered a range of targeted activities, are much more likely to consider higher education as a realistic option.

The overall rise in applicants to the University between 2008/09 and 2009/10 was 25%. Analysis shows higher than average increases in applications from

those feeder institutions where most outreach activity has already taken place. These institutions are all located in areas with low rates of participation in higher education.

- Walsall College applicants increased from 122 in 2008 to 184 in 2009 (50% increase)
- Dudley College applications increased from 206 to 275 (35%)
- Halesowen College applications increased from 292 to 382 (31%)
- Kingshurst City Technology College showed an increase of 27 applicants (69%)
- Heathfield School applications increased from 21 to 38 applicants (71%)
- George Dixon School applications increased from 11 to 18 applicants (82%).

Monitoring and evaluation of outreach activities will be undertaken through a range of methods, including:

- Tracking learners who take part in intensive activities such as mentoring and master classes to monitor applications and progression to the University.
- Carrying out a sample of pre and post- event evaluations to monitor attitudinal shift and effectiveness.

The indicator relating to the recruitment of students in receipt of Disabled Students' Allowance has in the past shown the University performing below benchmark. While the percentage of students in receipt of Disabled Students' Allowance has risen consistently year on year in the student populations analysed, this trend has been matched by a corresponding increase in the benchmark. The University proposed to improve the participation of students with disabilities to match or exceed benchmark and the most recent figures suggest that the University has now exceeded benchmark for full time and part time undergraduates. We will continue to devote resource to enable us to maintain this position.

2.1.3. Collaborative working between institutions

Birmingham City University has formed a collaborative partnership with the University of Birmingham, Aston University and University College Birmingham to take forward the legacy of the Birmingham and Solihull Aimhigher partnership. Established in 2004, that partnership of five HEIs, two local authorities and 118 local schools, academies and FE/6th Form Colleges in Birmingham and Solihull, proved very successful in developing an extensive provision of mentoring, master class, summer school and Information Advice and Guidance activities for schools.

This new partnership will seek to take forward this work in collaboration with schools, focusing upon pre-16 education, with a new organisational model which draws upon the experience and successful initiatives of the Aimhigher partnership.

Birmingham City University will jointly fund the coordination of this partnership's work with a contribution of £25,000 in 2011-12 and £35,000 in 2012-13, and is intimately involved in its governance and management. As

previously indicated, organisational support for partnership activities, both staffing and non-pay expenditure, will now be funded from within the University's outreach team. Partnership activities will complement Birmingham City University's own extensive programme of widening access and fair access measures.

The Birmingham and Solihull Higher Education Progression Partnership is developing a comprehensive impact and evaluation plan which will monitor student engagement with partnership activities, track the progression of those learners with whom the partnership works most closely, evaluate the overall effectiveness of the partnership activity and disseminate good practice. Evaluation will include both quantitative and qualitative measures and will provide evidence to partner HEIs and schools engaged in the programme.

2.2. Retention

We have already identified an objective to further improve the retention, progression and achievement of our students and have set up a working group to make recommendations to Senate later this year. The initial targets set out in this agreement focus primarily on reducing the number of students projected for neither an award nor transfer but the terms of reference of the working group also include the requirement to identify the most appropriate performance indicators and to recommend related benchmarks and targets; this is therefore an area which will be developed and refined over the next few years. The working group will set out to identify and understand the characteristics of those students who are least likely to be retained, progress and achieve their award so as to identify target groups for priority action. It will also identify the likely barriers to successful completion and identify ways in which these target groups, in particular, can be supported to successfully complete.

The working group will produce an action plan with targets and monitoring will be undertaken by the Academic Standards and Quality Enhancement Committee, a sub-committee of Senate, as part of the annual monitoring process.

A key focus will be identifying points along the student journey where intervention will have the most impact, using examples of current good practice from successful faculty and/or central service based initiatives.

We will encourage and increase student engagement in their learning and teaching, building on the University's award winning Student Academic Partnership Scheme and RoLEx process: The Redesign of the Learning Experience, (RoLEx), which was commended in the University's recent QAA institutional audit, has provided an opportunity for a systemic review of learning, teaching and assessment across the University's academic provision. First evidence of its impact relating to progression from Level 4 to Level 5 in undergraduate programmes is that there are signs of significant improvement. The Student Academic Partnership Scheme has furthered the RoLEx work through the direct engagement of students working alongside staff to enhance the learning experience.

The University joined the HEFCE funded Back on Course project in 2010-11. Participation in this project will, in particular, give us better information about

why students have left their course and will help some of these students back into higher education.

3. Monitoring and evaluation

All data relating to student participation, retention and progression is routinely reported to the University's Senate. Progress against the milestones set out in this agreement will be monitored by Senate, which already monitors progress against, and reviews the action plan of, the Widening Participation Strategic Assessment, which is also reported to HEFCE as part of the institution's annual monitoring.

4. Communication/information to prospective students

Clear, accessible and timely information on fees, loans, bursaries and scholarships will be provided to applicants and students in the following ways:

Outreach Activities

Outreach staff, student mentors, student ambassadors and 'BCU Choices' staff will provide information on fees, loans, grants, scholarships and bursaries as part of their outreach activity.

University web site

The web site will give comprehensive information about course fees, aggregate fees, the scholarship scheme, bursaries, loans and grants and the Access to Learning Fund and other financial support available to students. Clarification of any additional course costs will be provided and an indication of accommodation costs will also be available.

Essential Guide

The Essential guide contains links to the BCU website and Student Services website so information on fees and financial support will be signposted.

Open Days and Visit Days

Staff from the University's Education Liaison Team and Student Services give Open Day talks and provide information on fees and financial support to prospective students, applicants and their families.

These specialist staff provide current information for faculty based visit days and events.

Student Services Web Site

The Student Services web site gives information about all financial support available to students and includes a budget-balancing student calculator.

Student Services Fees and Funding leaflet

The leaflet will give an overview of current fees, with reference to detailed fee information on the University web site. It also contains information about all aspects of financial support available to students.

Student Services Money Matters leaflet

This leaflet outlines the financial support services offered, has a frequently asked questions section, gives information on how to contact the Student Finance Advisors and how to apply for financial assistance.

The University is committed to providing such timely information to UCAS and SLC as they reasonably require to populate their applicant facing web services.

