

BRUNEL UNIVERSITY ACCESS AGREEMENT - applying to new entrants commencing courses in 2012/13

Summary

In line with new legislation Brunel University wishes to charge fees in excess of £6,000 and is therefore submitting an Access Agreement which sets out how it intends to utilise a percentage of the extra fee income generated to continue and expand the activities that have proved successful in widening access and delivering positive outcomes for students from under-represented backgrounds at the University.

Given that the University has a very diverse population our OFFA Agreement will focus on students from Low participation Neighbourhoods, Low socio-economic groups, mature students, students with a registered disability and care leavers and will not specifically focus on any particular ethnic minority.

Brunel University has a strong reputation for widening access both within the sector and with its partners in both mainstream education and further education. It also undertakes considerable activity to improve transition, retention and employability for its Widening Participation cohort and we believe that our efforts to widen access are amongst the strongest of any Pre-1992 research-intensive university.

The University has a diverse student population and currently meets or exceeds the majority of benchmarks for “under-represented” groups in HE. We will seek to maintain our record of fair access and diverse admissions whilst extending our outreach activities to encompass mature students, a cohort currently under-represented at Brunel.

We also intend to increase our work in the areas of transition and retention to ensure our under-represented groups achieve outcomes comparable to our student population as a whole. We intend to match the Governments National Scholarship Scheme in a way which benefits our students both fairly and flexibly, recognising the diversity of need represented within our student population.

The University’s current Widening Participation Strategy is available at <http://www.brunel.ac.uk/about/strategy/strat/wps>.

Since its inception in 1966 Brunel University has also had a very strong focus on employability and employer engagement and this OFFA Agreement also contains details of schemes to ensure that under-represented groups can benefit from internships and placement years which we believe can improve outcomes for those students..

The University intends to set a fee of £9000 for all Home & EU undergraduate students commencing full-time undergraduate studies in Autumn 2012 and to subsequently review tuition fees annually in line with inflation. For students on four-year sandwich courses the fee for the sandwich year is £1000. This agreement also gives a commitment to reduce the final year tuition fee for the four year masters programmes to the national basic fee. Full information on the university's fee and scholarship levels will be published on the University's website at <http://www.brunel.ac.uk>.

The University has a small number of undergraduate courses in the Arts, Health and Social Care and Sport which recruit part-time. The fee for admission to a part-time undergraduate course will be based pro rata on the enhanced fee. The University will continue to pro-rate the standard fee for those students taking only part of their programme of studies in order to redress academic failure or to make up time lost through illness.

Scholarships will not be available to those undergraduates whose fees are funded by other agencies (e.g. TDA) or where the full tuition fee is not charged. Students from the EU, Northern Ireland and Scotland are also ineligible for Scholarships.

The University's Access Agreement has four main strands:

- Current Performance
- Outreach
- Transition, retention and employment outcomes for students
- Targets

Current Performance

The University's undergraduate cohort for 2009/10 can be broken down into the following structure in absolute numerical terms:

Socio group 1-3	Socio group 4 - 7	Socio group unknown	Low participation	Regular participation	Participation unknown	Disability	Mature	Total
3908	2421	2752	473	7883	725	633	1215	9081

With regards to performance against HESA benchmarks Brunel performs well in relation to students from Low socio-economic groups and students with disabilities and is close to reaching the location adjusted benchmark for low participation neighbourhoods. A new

outreach programme is featured within this agreement to look to increase our penetration of the mature students cohort.

HESA Table T1a	YOUNG - Full time First Degree Entrants							
	From Social Classes 4-7				From low participation neighbourhoods			
Year Published	Brunel %	Benchmark	Location adjusted Benchmark	UK Average	Brunel %	Benchmark	Location adjusted Benchmark	UK Average
2009/10	36.4	32.1	32.1	30	6	11	6.4	10.3
2008/09	37.8	35.5	35.7	32.3	5	10.9	6.1	10.1
2007/08	38.6	32.6	31.1	29.5	5.8	10.4	5.7	9.7

	MATURE - Full Time First Degree Entrants			
	From low participation neighbourhoods			
Year Published	Brunel %	Benchmark	Location adjusted Benchmark	UK Average
2009/10	5.1	14.9	7.4	11.9
2008/09	4.5	14.9	6.5	11.6
2007/08	3.5	15	6.7	11.6

	ALL STUDENTS - Full Time Undergraduate		
	In receipt of Disabled Students' Allowance		
Year Published	Brunel %	Benchmark	UK Average
2009/10	5.4	4.7	4.9
2008/09	5.0	4.8	4.7
2007/08	4.1	4.6	4.5

National Scholarship Programme

The University will offer the allocated number of NSPs to eligible prospective students who choose Brunel as their 1st choice of institution (i.e. have unconditional firm status with Brunel University) and meet appropriate criteria, including income. The funding for those NSP prospective students who fail to achieve their predicted grades and are rejected by the University will be reallocated to students coming in through Clearing who meet the established criteria.

Brunel has been allocated 127 FTE NSP students at an estimated spend of £0.4m in 2012 rising to 254 places by 2014. However the University intends to offer a further 188 places within the scheme in 2012 at a cost of around £500k rising to 389 places in 2014 at a cost of over £1.1 m. Students will be provided with two-thirds of this £3000 package as fee waiver and £1k in University services vouchers.

Brunel Access Scholarships

The University also intends to provide Access Scholarships to 380 new entrants every year from under-represented groups and mature students. In a steady state we would expect 1062 students within the student population to be receiving these scholarships by 2014. The Scholarships will be innovative in that they will rise in value as a student progresses successfully from year to year. Funding will be in the form of University Service Vouchers and will be allocated as follows:

Level 1 - £1000

Level 2 - £1500

Level 3 - £2000

Regional Partnership Scholarships

We intend to continue our Regional Partnership Scholarships which will be worth £6,000 annually, subject to satisfactory progression, paid as £5k in fee waiver and £1k in University Service Vouchers. They will be provided to 20 undergraduate students in 2012, on the basis of academic excellence and require high levels of academic achievement, and to a further 10 students each year thereafter.

Eligible students for both Scholarships must have attended a maintained school or college (not an independent or private school) in one of the six London boroughs with whom the University operates Widening Participation partnerships – Brent, Ealing, Hammersmith and Fulham, Harrow, Hillingdon and Hounslow

Students must also meet one or more of the following under-represented criteria:

- have a disability, including dyslexia
- are a care-leaver
- come from a low-income or low socio-economic background (i.e. are entitled to a full Government Maintenance Grant or Special Support grant).

Scholarships and awards additional to the OFFA Agreement

The University has established a range of existing scholarships. Four Scholarship schemes are currently available to new full-time undergraduates at Brunel. Applicants cannot receive more than one Scholarship.

Alumni Scholarships

Brunel Alumni Scholarships (funded by alumni donations) are non-repayable* cash awards of £6,000, paid each year on the same basis as Regional Partnership Scholarships to the five applicants who achieve the highest number of UCAS tariff points.

Brunel Urban Scholarships

Brunel Urban Scholarships are non-repayable cash awards of up to £3,000 per year for students who have attended the Urban Scholars programme at Brunel University for a minimum of two years, who achieve academic excellence and who meet the criteria for obtaining UK fee and maintenance support

Brunel Mathematics Scholarships

The Department of Mathematical Sciences offers up to 10 scholarships annually for UK students admitted to one of the undergraduate Mathematics degree programmes (Mathematics, Financial Mathematics, Mathematics and Computing, Mathematics with Computer Science, Mathematical and Management Studies or Mathematics and Statistics with Management). To qualify for a scholarship, students must achieve at least grades AAB at A-level, with grade A in Mathematics or Further Mathematics. Successful applicants will receive £1000 in each year of study (except in a placement year), subject to the recipient maintaining at least an upper second class honours standard of academic performance.

For Scholarships available from Brunel University see: <http://www.brunel.ac.uk/ugfunding>

Outreach Activities

Brunel University has a strong reputation for widening access both within the sector and with its partners in both mainstream education and further education. The University has had a dedicated team since 2001 focussing on outreach, transition and retention and has achieved considerable success both directly with local Schools and Colleges in West London and through its award winning partnership programme with the London Borough of Hillingdon. Brunel also is recognised by the Frank Buttle Trust for its efforts to encourage the entry of care- leavers into the University.

It is no surprise that Brunel meets and in many cases exceeds its benchmarks with regard to attracting students from Low socio-economic backgrounds and State Schools. Each year 4,000 children attend aspirational events delivered by Brunel. It is our aim to maintain this level of performance in attracting students from Low socio economic groups through continuation of our Outreach activities, although we will need to work hard to do so as other Universities may target our current student cohort.

Detailed targetry for our Outreach activity can be found within our University Widening Participation Strategic Assessment. It is not, as yet, possible to confirm targetry for our new outreach programme for mature students as this will be developed with our corporate and educational partners during the period of this agreement.

The University has been very successful in its Outreach activities and is widely recognised for its aspiration raising work in the region but we recognise that in order to attract more mature students we will be required to undertake an entirely new and separate form of outreach targeted at the 21+ population in both the workplace and in local colleges. This will necessitate the creation of a range of communications and publicity material setting out our

offer for mature students, including dedicated areas of our website, and the building of a range of new partnerships in the wider south east region. We also anticipate examining ways of attracting women who are looking to return to work to increase their skills through Higher Education.

Similarly Brunel University recognises that there are many pathways into Higher Education and as part of our outreach work we will examine the feasibility of supporting a University Technical College within Hillingdon during the period of this Agreement.

We confirm that Brunel University is adding a collaborative pan-London dimension to our own access and outreach plans. This will further help students (and their teachers) to have contact with a wider range of higher education opportunities.

Through our established regional membership association London Higher, we are in discussion with the developers of AccessHE. This is a new social enterprise formed by and for London's HE sector. It will seek to take forward some selected aspects of the collaborative and targeted programmes of the current Aimhigher Partnerships in London, following a lead by WECAN (the Partnership in West, Central and North London), whilst at the same time and in a cost effective, co-ordinated way exploring possible new ways of reaching out to schools across the capital and including especially young people under-represented in HE.

This new pan-London collaborative approach will help support and inform our own Access Agreement by, for example, the acquisition, analysis and reporting of data, such as contextual data, school and college profiles, patterns of access by different groups across London and deprivation profiles. Taken together, these are important aids to targeting, and to delivery at the local level. Monitoring, evaluation and also co-ordination on the pan-London basis will help us to place our own efforts into the necessary broader context of widening participation and help to show if recent valuable momentum is being maintained. Through our joint efforts, we are expecting to confirm the constitution, budget and work programme of this new collaborative group during the first half of the 2011-12 academic year. On behalf of the participating group of London HE institutions, London Higher will liaise closely with OFFA to explain how its activities address directly the requirements of OFFA's March 2011 guidance, and the spirit of the letter of Sir Alan Langlands to heads of institutions dated 11 March 2011. If, having taken part in the initial set up discussions and process, this institution should decide after all not to take part in the new London Higher/AccessHE collaboration you will of course be advised.

We envisage that once established the group will report annually to all participating HEIs to show what benefits the collaboration has brought, and how it has helped individual HEIs

such as ourselves to engage more effectively with identified schools and colleges for outreach purposes.

We also recognise the contribution that AimHigher has made to aspiration in Hillingdon, an area with historically low participation rates, and will look to continue this activity within our OFFA agreement. Indeed given the evidence of the importance of raising aspiration in primary schools, in order to drive increasing participation in education post 16, we will look to build on recent work undertaken in this area which will require a further increase in our outreach activities. We will additionally expand our current gifted and talented “Urban Scholars” programme, and its associated research programme, to focus on Hillingdon and other West London Schools.

Transition, retention and improved employment outcomes for students

Brunel has piloted a programme called “Head Start” which aims to give students with little or no experience of Higher Education a clear insight into the level of work expected at University and the study skills required. We will use our additional fee income to significantly ramp up the numbers of students taking advantage of this pre-sessional scheme either through online materials or increased on site skills workshops. It is our experience that transition is key in ensuring widening access students have a successful start at university and this contributes significantly to retention.

Data analysis has also shown that certain groups, including mature students, are less likely to achieve the retention levels common to other cohorts. We will look to fund and develop pilot schemes within academic schools to examine how best to deliver an improvement in retention amongst specified groups with the aim of rolling out best practice approaches over time. Such activity will be embedded in our Teaching and Learning activity. This agreement details our targets for retention of Mature students for the future.

Our data suggest that our courses which contain integral foundation years (year 0) are popular with students from Low participation neighbourhoods although many do not succeed in progressing to Year 1. To ensure that they can focus on their education and have less need to work to fund their studies in Year 0 we will provide £1000 in University Services Vouchers to those from under-represented groups who commit to Brunel University during the UCAS Main Scheme and meet their entry criteria. This will encourage both access and retention.

Analysis also suggests that outcomes and retention are improved where students take an industrial or other work related placement. As an institution Brunel University strongly believes in a student experience built upon the foundations of employer engagement and research-led teaching and has continued to provide placement options across its portfolio.

However our research shows that students from Low participation neighbourhoods and mature students are less likely to take up this option. In order to improve take up of placements by under-represented groups we will provide a fee-waiver to students from such groups during the placement year. Where placements are unpaid, we will provide £1k to each student where applicable to ensure take up of this opportunity. We also intend to provide up to 500 bursaries to ensure students from under-represented groups are able to take up internships and therefore assist with entry into low mobility professions.

To encourage high performing students from under-represented groups to apply for, or transfer to, our four year integral under-graduate Masters degrees in Mathematics and Engineering we will offer successful candidates a fee waiver of £3k for the fourth year of study. This reduces the cost to the national basic fee and encourages such students to pursue excellence in STEM subjects.

Targets

The University's aim is to sustain its performance as measured by the percentages from the various groups identified in relevant HESA Performance Indicators whilst delivering improvements over time in measures related to low participation neighbourhoods and mature students.

The table below sets out our targetry and milestones relating to performance against benchmarks from 2012 /13 onwards.

Criteria	Current Brunel performance %	Target 2012/13 %	Target 2013/14 %	Target 2014/15 %	Target 2015/16 %	Target 2016/17 %
Social Class 4 - 7	36.4	36.4	36.4	36.4	36.4	36.4
Low participation neighbourhoods	6	6.4	6.7	7.0	7.3	7.6
Mature	14.9	15.4	15.9	16.7	17.5	18.5
Disability	5.4	5.4	5.5	5.6	5.7	5.8
Retention	15.7	14.5	13.8	13.1	12.4	11.7

As datasets are continually developed and improved, both nationally and within Brunel, milestones will be further refined. It is planned to undertake a major review of performance against targets in 2013.

Institutional Monitoring Arrangements

The Strategic Planning and Resources Committee of the University (a joint committee of Senate and Council) has responsibility for monitoring progress towards the strategic goals of the University and considers performance against targets through the Annual Monitoring Statement report, which is submitted to Council and to HEFCE annually.

Publication of details of fees and financial support available

It is our intention to announce our broad intentions, subject to OFFA agreement, on our official website in late April. Summary information detailing the Scholarships and benefits package and eligibility criteria will be made available in print form, and via the web, prior to the University's June Open days for 2012 entry. Detailed information regarding the timing, processes and procedures necessary to receive or apply for a scholarship will be available prior to our September Open days for 2012 entry and will be made available to prospective students and HE advisors within Schools and Colleges in both print and electronic form.

