

Bradford College Access Agreement

Bradford College recruits over 60% of its undergraduate students from widening participation backgrounds. The successful recruitment and retention of these students is a central part of the College's higher education strategy. Charging a fee of £6700 in 2012 will enable the College to increase its investment in the retention and improved results for these students, details of the opportunities planned are outlined below.

The costing of the activities is outlined in the tables but as a high recruiter of students from widening participation pathways, it is anticipated that the increased spend will be at the level of 26.3% of the £700 higher fee charged.

The following paragraphs are founded on, and develop, objectives and commitments outlined in the College's HE Strategy for 2009/2010-2013/2014 which was submitted to Hefce in January 2010.

1. The College intends to increase its targeted outreach in the following areas

Locally within the City of Bradford and the outlying areas

The College is principally a local and regional recruiter with a small number of niche national recruiting programmes. Much of the local recruitment activities were previously carried out as a mixture of independent initiatives run by the College and initiatives run in conjunction with Aim Higher. The ACE days and Focus days run by both the College and Aim Higher will continue as College run days with a view to increasing the number of students progressing from the City and the immediate environs, some of the areas being schools and colleges with low post 16 and post 18 progression to further and higher education. The activities will focus on raising awareness of Higher Education opportunities in Year 9 to enable appropriate Key Stage 4 choice and in Year 11 to maximise progression and make informed subject choices. The College will increase its activities with post 16 students within the College emphasising the integrated student journey that progression within the College offers and the excellence in vocational provision available to those students currently studying with other post 16 providers. The College's commitment to a vocational/professional curriculum means it is ideally placed to offer students courses that lead to professional careers providing the greatest financial benefit to students and promoting social mobility. The increased level of activity is focused on ensuring that the success of the College in widening access is maintained despite increased fees nationally and the cessation of Aim Higher.

Regionally and Nationally

The College will maintain its outreach work in the region on the same basis as the local provision outlined above but with a commitment to widening access to Higher Education in general as well as to the College in particular. The College is committed to the West Yorkshire Life Long Learning Network (WYLLN) access and progression partnership as evidenced below.

In collaboration with the other HE providers in West Yorkshire, both HEIs and FECs, we will invest in the Higher Education Access and Progression Partnership (HEAPP), building on the partnership working and shared expertise established through the WYLLN and Aim Higher. The HEAPP will target both adult learners and young people. It will continue the development of high level skills in the region by maintaining the West Yorkshire progression agreement framework and providing an

effective communication channel between HE providers, the Leeds City Region and Leeds Local Enterprise Partnership; and it will define and oversee an appropriately co-ordinated programme of sub regional widening participation activity. The HEAPP will be established in 2011-2012 and its effectiveness carefully monitored during a two year development phase.

2. The College intends to maximise successful retention and increase the number of students gaining Upper Seconds and First class honours degrees

Contextual data

The College is aware that students come to study with different experiences of post 16 education and a large number of them are first generation HE students coming from schools which struggle to achieve national benchmarks. The College wishes to use the contextual data available to maximise student success in:

- Choosing the most appropriate course
- Choosing the most appropriate mode of study
- Structuring appropriate induction throughout their study with an emphasis on retention through the first year of study and progression to the second year

The intention is to track the progress of students on the basis of their previous institution and the record of success of previous students. The College will use this information to:

- target additional, appropriate information and guidance on a course specific basis,
- outline what additional support is available e.g. using the Colleges functional skills team to provide additional mathematics based support for science and engineering students,
- Aim to achieve a higher retention and progression rate for those student cohorts identified on a year on year basis
- Provide support for students for whom English is not their first language

Retention

In common with other institutions with a strong record of widening access, the College recognises that there are challenges in the successful retention of these students and also in maximising their opportunities to achieve the best possible outcome on their chosen programme which will increase their chances of good professional career opportunities. The overall undergraduate retention rate for the College is around 75% for each student cohort. This overall percentage masks the high retention and successful completion rates in the final years of study. Students who do not complete the course tend on the whole to leave in their first year. The College aims to raise the retention rates for first year students from 70% in 2010-11 to 85% in 2016-17; to raise the retention for students progressing from year 2 to the final year from 81% in 2010-11 to 89% in 2016-17; to improve internal progression from FE to HE within the College from 24% in 2010-11 to 31% in 2016-17 and to maintain the percentage of students entering the College from widening access backgrounds at or above the 2010-11 figure of 49%. The details of the year on year improvement are listed in annexe table 5a. The data sources are a combination of internal data and the data prepared for the ILR return. We will measure progress against the same data sources. The College is reviewing its induction arrangements with a view to providing a more bespoke offering for students which will

address the issues which are preventing a minority of them from staying on the course and progressing successfully. Examples of possible additional offerings are:

- Summer schools for students who have had a break from education prior to their arrival focusing on study techniques
- Stronger early intervention using trigger point alerts to prevent underperformance/absence from becoming endemic using the College's data management systems for monitoring attendance and achievement
- Using the additional support systems available to this mixed economy college to provide additional learning support in specific areas such as literacy and numeracy
- Reviewing the entry criteria for each programme of study to ensure that students arriving on the course have the appropriate prior learning to maximise their chances of success
- Build on the College's excellence in e learning provision to provide enhanced support

Table 5a reflects the detailed target increases in retention and progression for students in their first and second year of study. The data is taken from the Colleges EBS database and is reflected in the annual returns to Hefce. The target for year 1 students is 5% improvement since this is where the main withdrawals occur. Year 2 carries a target of 2% since year 2 progression is higher than year 1. The targets will be measured through the data collected by the College in assessing the success rates of student retention in its annual report to the Standards Committee of Corporation and will be calculated on a course by course basis.

3. The College will review the curriculum offered to ensure that students have a relevant and diverse menu of courses which are professionally orientated to maximise access and employability

The College is awaiting the outcome of its application for Taught Degree Awarding Powers (TDAP). If successful it will be able to carry out a major review of its curriculum emphasising the following key issues;

- Maintenance of the present "broad and deep" suite of courses available for students
- Offer expanded provision in key niche areas including a wider range of accredited provision designed to maximise "step on step off" modes of study where applicable
- Increase its progression opportunities for students at each level of study
- Consider the provision of accelerated study
- Expand niche areas of distance learning which have a national market building on success
- Build on existing successful links with other providers to maximise successful collaboration

4. The College will invest further resource into its enterprise and employability provision for students

The College has an excellent track record of both involving employers and preparing students for successful, professional entry into and promotion within the workplace. The Summative Report of IQER reviews for the year 2009-2010 listed the College as being a national centre of excellence in nine of the eleven categories available, including its relationship with employers. The College has designed and developed an Enterprise Academy. The aims of the Academy are to stimulate interest

in Enterprise, enhance the entrepreneurial skills of students, and increase the opportunities of start-up businesses and self-employment. The College aims to strengthen its provision further by:

- Providing an increased number of work placements both within the College and with external agencies and employers
- Strengthening employer involvement in curriculum development
- Increasing investment in the College's employment agency, Beacon Recruitment, to give each student an entitlement to support in preparing for each stage of their journey into the world of work, including one to one link ups with suitable employers where possible

5. The College is committed to providing additional financial support and support in kind for students, both through the National Scholarships Scheme and through the additional fees levy

- The College plans to spend a minimum of £100 per fee on access/retention. Since the College is a highly successful recruiter of widening access students, the emphasis will be on retention and successful completion strategies, so the split will be 20/80
- The College has received notification that it is eligible for 44 National Scholarships. We plan to use matched funding to offer a total of 88 scholarships of £3000. These scholarships will be used to improve progression from HND to top up degrees and from HNC to HND. Priority will be given to students who are studying in the following curriculum areas: Engineering, Construction and Computing in that order of importance. Priority will be given to students progressing from FE courses within Bradford College ahead of those coming to Higher Education from outside the College. It will use these to support access and retention by a combination of matched funding to the limit of £1000 financial bursary, coupled with discounts for institutional services as outlined below. The release of these incentives will be timed to maximise retention by releasing them at the end of key trigger points for withdrawal e.g. end of Semester One.
- Students who progress to Higher Education from Further Education at the College will receive a discount of £500 on their fee. The discount will be applied to the second year of their course to maximise retention and successful progression.
- The College is developing a menu of discounted institutional services which will benefit all first year students. These will include: lap top computers, catering and accommodation discounts, photocopying and thesis binding and seasonal offers up to the value of £30,800 in the first year.

6. Monitoring and Evaluation arrangements

The College has a culture of continuous improvement and a robust quality assurance process. The monitoring and evaluation arrangements will be embedded in the College business processes to ensure effective identification of success, action on any concerns and effective placement to take advantage of additional opportunities for growth and development.

Each target will have an owner and report on progress at agreed intervals to the appropriate College committee. The access agreement, its milestones and performance will be reviewed each semester by Academic Board and an Annual Report will be made to the College's Corporation.

The College has already embedded student representation on each of the committees involved in the monitoring and development processes through its close links with the Student Union of the College and is confident that the student voice will be appropriately represented at each stage of the process.

7. Provision of information to prospective students

The College will ensure that accurate and timely information is available to prospective students through:

- The College's own publications and websites
- The College's planned marketing and promoting campaigns
- Through structured partnership arrangements e.g. HEAPP
- Through UCAS, and GTTR

At each stage of the applicant journey and through wider College links with employers and alumni to raise awareness of the provision with all interested stakeholders.

