

## Revised Access Agreement 2012/13

### 1. Fee limits and fee income above £6,000

The tuition fees for all new entrants to full-time undergraduate and foundation degrees at Ruskin College in 2012/13 will be £7,500. This is a reduction of £1,000 in the tuition fees set out in our current agreement. The proposed change will continue to support access to the College as the level of access expenditure set out in our current agreement will be maintained. The change to the tuition fees has been made in order to enable the College to respond to government policy by bidding for a share of the places available under the 'margin', as a reduction in our controlled student numbers could damage access.

The College offers degrees validated by the Open University. The estimated number of full-time entrants to these degrees is as follows:

BA (Hons) in English Studies: Creative Writing and Critical Practice	15
BA (Hons) in History with Social Science	11
BA (Hons) in Social Sciences: Sociology, Politics and Economics	17
Foundation Degree in Writing for Performance	15
BA (Hons) in Social Work	25
BA (Hons) in Youth and Community Work	15

New entrants to the degrees in Social Work and in Youth and Community Work are direct. New entrants to the degrees in English Studies; Creative Writing and Critical Practice, in History with Social Science and in Social Sciences: Sociology, Politics and Economics are via internal progression from Certificates of Higher Education, funded by the Skills Funding Agency, which means that they can complete their degrees in a further two years. New entrants to the Foundation Degree in Writing for Performance are also via internal progression from a Certificate of Higher Education, funded by the Skills Funding Agency, which means that they can complete their Foundation Degree in a further year.

The estimated total number of new entrants paying tuition fees of £7,500 is 98.

The College may apply annual increases in line with the amount set by the Government each year in order to maintain the value of the fees in real terms.

## **2. Expenditure on additional access and retention measures**

Ruskin College makes a distinctive contribution to widening participation and inclusion for adult students. The mission of the College is that of providing educational opportunities to excluded and disadvantaged learners to transform the individuals concerned and the communities, groups and societies from which they come. The College itself has the specific intention of encouraging and supporting students who are under-represented in HE.

The College has taken equalities issues into account in revising the current access agreement. The College will continue previous access agreement expenditure on outreach activities and incur expenditure on additional outreach and student retention measures. The additional measures on outreach and retention are aimed at disadvantaged adults from lower socio-economic classes. The additional outreach measures will build on the College's success in attracting students from lower socio-economic classes through publicity materials and activities which present positive images of disadvantaged adults and offer opportunities for raising aspiration.

As well as seeking disadvantaged adults, the College will target disabled people, people from certain black and minority ethnic (BME) groups, care leavers and people wishing to study part-time. The College has a good record in meeting targets for disabled people and people from BME groups since its first access agreement was approved. In 2009/10 the target of 25% disabled students was met. The 2009/10 target of 20% BME students was exceeded, with the actual being 25%. Buttle UK recently renewed the College's Quality Mark for Care Leavers for a further two years, on the basis of the progress made to date, and it expressed confidence that, with the commitment shown by the College, more care leavers will aspire to and be successful in higher education.

The College's assessment of its access and retention record is that it has a very high proportion of under-represented students, but retention needs to be improved from the current rate of 84%. The assessment of our access record is based on our performance with disadvantaged adults from lower socio-economic classes. The number of new entrants on full state support, from SLC data, has been as follows :

<b>Number of entrants on full state support</b>		
<b>07/08</b>	<b>08/09</b>	<b>09/10</b>
43	39	32

The College has assumed 98 new entrants a year. We aim to at least maintain the proportion of new entrants on full state support and to increase the numbers slightly by 2016/17.

The assessment of our retention record is based on the College's ILR data submitted to the Skills Funding Agency. We aim to improve the retention rate to 88% by 2016/17.

We propose to spend 25% of the fee we are charging above £6,000, i.e. £375 per fee. The total expenditure on additional access measures in 2012/13 will be £36,750. The level of total expenditure set out in our current access agreement has been maintained in order to protect access measures. There are no changes proposed to the additional access measures. The expenditure for subsequent years is set out in annex B. We recognise that long-term co-ordinated outreach has been a more effective use of access funds than the precise amount of financial support available to students on entering HE. Therefore we intend to shift the balance between financial support and non-financial measures by transferring expenditure gradually to outreach and student retention. This will enable the College to manage the growth of the outreach and retention measures and to evaluate the impact on entrants of the higher graduate contributions and the reductions in financial support.

### **3. Additional access measures**

#### **3.1 Outreach**

The College's outreach activities involve raising aspirations and attainment among potential applicants from under-represented groups and encouraging them to apply to higher education. A QAA review held in May 2011 commended the College for the support that is given, especially at the pre-entry stage which effectively encourages students from non-traditional backgrounds to commit themselves to higher education. Most of the expenditure on outreach in 2012/13 will be on activities which have already been shown to work well in raising aspiration and attainment. This includes expenditure on activities we were previously funding through other means

where these funding streams have ended, in particular activities previously funded under the Aimhigher programme. These include the cost of Higher Education Access Days, Information and Guidance Days, Student Ambassadors and bridging courses, as well as taster days previously funded by the regional Lifelong Learning Network.

The College will continue to extend its work with community and voluntary organisations, trade unions, BME groups and organisations of disabled people, to encourage adults from under-represented groups to apply to HE, especially those from lower socio-economic classes.

The cost of outreach activity in 2012/13 will be £68,000, including additional expenditure of £10,000.

The College's outreach work produces Certificate of Higher Education students, who can internally progress to degrees in the way described in section 1, as well as direct new entrants to the degrees in Social Work and in Youth and Community Work. Our outreach activity includes encouraging progression from Access courses run by local FE colleges to our Certificate of Higher Education programmes, as well as to our degrees in Social Work and in Youth and Community Work. Students completing a Certificate of Higher Education programme can also progress to a university, including Oxford Brookes University and the University of Oxford, if they meet admissions requirements. The retention measures relate to those students who have progressed internally from Certificate of Higher Education programmes to degrees as well as to direct entrants. New progression accords will be developed to support these progression opportunities from FE colleges to Ruskin and on to university where appropriate.

The College recognises that collaborative working between institutions is an important element of delivering long-term outreach and that co-ordinating outreach activity with other institutions offers many benefits, increasing coverage and avoiding duplication.

Ruskin has been a member of the Oxford Brookes University Associate College Partnership since 2006. The College will develop a progression accord with Oxford Brookes University in appropriate subjects, building on

existing links. We will also participate in a collaborative project to market the Associate College Partnership with a College focus to encourage people from under-represented groups to apply.

An existing progression accord with the University of Oxford's Department of Continuing Education, enabling students to progress from a Certificate in Higher Education at the University of Oxford to a degree at Ruskin, will be strengthened.

We will work with the University of Oxford's access team, which will be looking at the scope for the existing activity at Ruskin to be considered as a recognised and recommended route to facilitate progression to an Oxford undergraduate degree. Progress on this work will be included in our access agreement for 2013/14.

The College will develop progression accords with two local FE colleges, Oxford and Cherwell Valley College and Abingdon and Witney College, in relation to Access programmes.

### **3.2 Student retention and success**

The key focus of the College's additional access measures will be on student retention and success. The College will invest in retention measures to improve performance in this area towards the sector average. The main new initiatives in 2012/13 will be an extension to the personal tutoring system and a student mentoring programme. The QAA review held in May 2011 commended the College for a tutorial system that is specifically focussed on the early stages of programmes to support and nurture students from non-traditional backgrounds. This tutorial system will be extended beyond the early stages of programmes. These new measures to improve retention will be targeted towards disadvantaged adults from lower socio-economic classes, especially those on full state support. The student retention programme will build on the proven success record of the Student Ambassadors programme as an outreach measure. Much of the work we will do to improve retention will be embedded within our learning and teaching practices and therefore within staff costs for 2011/12. This will also be the case for the management and administration of the new student mentoring

programme. The cost of the additional retention measures in 2012/13 will be £26,750. The expenditure for subsequent years is set out in annex B.

### **3.3 Financial support for students**

The College will not receive an allocation for the National Scholarship Programme in 2012/13. We will not be required to match this funding for that year, but we would do so in 2013/14 and 2014/15, should an allocation be made as NSP funding increases, and this would be addressed in future access agreements.

The College will continue to award Adult Education Bursaries (AEBs) to full-time students on Certificate of Higher Education programmes, including those that lead to progression to level 5 of degree programmes. These AEBs are funded by the Skills Funding Agency and the expenditure is not countable under this agreement. They cover the cost of tuition fees and provide a maintenance grant for Certificate of Higher Education students. As a result, students progressing from the Certificate of Higher Education in 2012/13, would pay tuition fees of £7,500 at level 5 and £7,500, plus an annual increase, at level 6 in 2013/14. So the total tuition fees for a student gaining a degree through this route would be c£15,000.

The College has no evidence that the current access bursaries it pays to HE students on full state support have an impact on student retention. Continuing students, who started their courses in 2011/12 or before, will continue to be paid bursaries at the minimum level, subject to any inflationary increases. New entrants will not be paid the bursaries as these students will receive the increased state maintenance grants in 2012/13, when the funding of minimum financial support is effectively transferred entirely to the Government rather than being shared between the Government and the College.

## **4. Targets and milestones**

The College has a good track record in meeting the targets set in its original access agreement. We attract high proportions of students from under-represented groups and aim to maintain this across our higher education provision. We aim to continue to recruit mature students in line with our

mission. Our statistical targets in relation to our student body are as follows:

**Disabled students**

12/13	13/14	14/15	15/16	16/17
25%	25%	25%	25%	25%

**Black and ethnic minority students**

12/13	13/14	14/15	15/16	16/17
20%	20%	20%	20%	20%

The source of the data for targets for disabled students and black and ethnic minority students is the College's ILR data submitted to the Skills Funding Agency. A new statistical target will be set for new entrants from disadvantaged adults from lower socio-economic classes, measured by the number of new entrants on full state support, from SLC data :

**Number of entrants on full state support**

12/13	13/14	14/15	15/16	16/17
36	37	38	39	40

A new statistical target will be set for student retention across our HE provision as follows :

**Student retention**

12/13	13/14	14/15	15/16	16/17
84%	85%	86%	87%	88%

The source of the data for student retention targets is the College's ILR data submitted to the Skills Funding Agency.

The College will put more effort into sustained co-ordinated outreach engaging with potential students over a number of years and there will not be an immediate effect on the statistical targets for additional new entrants on full state support and for improved retention rates. The student numbers involved are relatively small. We have therefore provided milestones around our outreach and retention work to illustrate our progress towards increasing access and improving retention.



These milestones relating to outreach activity and student retention and progression are as follows :

#### **Outreach activity milestones**

- ◇ Extend outreach activity to a further 10 community and voluntary organisations a year.
- ◇ Develop progression accords with two local FE colleges, Oxford and Cherwell Valley College and Abingdon and Witney College in relation to Access programmes
- ◇ Strengthen the existing progression accord with the University of Oxford's Department of Continuing Education, enabling students to progress from their Certificate of Higher Education.

#### **Student progression milestones**

- ◇ Develop a progression accord with Oxford Brookes University in appropriate subjects, starting with Law.

#### **Student retention milestones**

- ◇ Extend the personal tutoring system in 2012/13.
- ◇ Establish a student mentoring programme from new entrance in 2012/13.
- ◇ Develop the IT infrastructure for student support through investment in e-learning resources in a new academic building and library opening in September 2012.

### **5. Monitoring and evaluation arrangements**

Widening participation is central to the College's mission and the measures set out in this agreement, including progress against targets and milestones, will be monitored through the committee structure. The Outreach and Recruitment Committee will monitor the effectiveness of the outreach activities, including the milestones for these activities. It reports to the Academic Quality and Standards Committee (AQSC), which is the senior academic committee. The AQSC will monitor the statistical targets, in relation to the student body and student retention, and the overall effectiveness of the access measures. The Finance Committee will monitor the tuition fee income and expenditure on additional access and retention measures. There is student representation on the Outreach and Recruitment

Committee and the AQSC. The General Secretary, who is responsible for planning and resources, is the senior manager responsible for co-ordinating delivery and monitoring of the agreement and he attends all three of these committees.

The College recognises that well-designed evaluation is critical to ensuring long-term value for money in relation to access measures. We will continue with the well-established evaluation methods for outreach activities which were previously funded under the Aimhigher programme. We will use the best practice from these evaluation methods in designing the evaluation of the new student mentoring programme.

## **6. Provision of information to prospective students**

The College will publish clear, accessible and timely information for applicants and students on tuition fees and financial support. This information will make it clear exactly what level of financial support we are offering students in each year of their studies. It will also include information on costs of studying in Oxford.

The College commits to informing all applicants of the change in tuition fees within five working days of this revised agreement being approved. We will make all reasonable efforts to make sure that applicants receive information about the revised tuition fees by contacting them individually. The College does not offer any courses with a 15 October deadline.

The QAA review held in May 2011 commended the College on the range of clear and comprehensive information, which is distributed in a timely way, starting at the pre-entry stage, which provides reassurance and guidance for students.

The information for prospective students will be published on the website and in the prospectus for 2012/13 in August 2011. The information for students starting in 2011/12 and for new entrants in 2012/13 will be published on the intranet and in the Learning and Support Handbook. We will test the clarity of the information for prospective students at Higher Education Access Days. We will provide such timely information to UCAS and

SLC as they reasonably require to populate their applicant-facing web services.

The College will provide information, advice and guidance to prospective students, new entrants and organisations about tuition fees and financial support. This will happen through Higher Education Access Days, Information Advice and Guidance Days and induction sessions. Information, advice and guidance provided will address any concerns prospective students might have around the costs of studying in Oxford. We will run progression sessions for new Certificate of Higher Education students in the Autumn term of 2011/12 to include information on tuition fees and financial support for those progressing to degrees in 2012/13. We will also provide additional IAG support, through the Oxford Brookes University Careers Service, in relation to progression beyond higher education to enable greater social mobility into professions where this is low, e.g. Law.



