

**CUMBRIA INSTITUTE OF THE ARTS
ACCESS AGREEMENT**

On 1st August 2007 St Martin's College amalgamated with Cumbria Institute of the Arts to form the University of Cumbria. For academic year 2007-08 the access agreement for Cumbria Institute of the Arts will remain in place. From academic year 2008-09 and onwards the University of Cumbria has a single approved access agreement.

Link to [access agreement for St Martin's College](#)

Link to [access agreement for the University of Cumbria](#) (2008 onwards)

CUMBRIA INSTITUTE OF THE ARTS

ACCESS AGREEMENT

1. INTRODUCTION

This access agreement has been prepared using the guidance issued under OFFA's publication "Producing Access Agreements" (November 2004/01) in accordance with the requirements of the Higher Education Act 2004.

It is the intention of Cumbria Institute of the Arts (CIA) to charge variable fees of up to £3,000 to all eligible full-time home and EU students from the beginning of the 2006 academic year (ie September/October 2006). This agreement covers the **five year** period from 2006 to 2011.

2. INSTITUTIONAL CONTEXT

2.1 WIDENING PARTICIPATION OUTREACH

TABLE 1

Key Current Performance Indicators

Young Full-Time Undergraduates	CIA %		UK Average %	
	2001-02	2002-03	2001-02	2002-03
From State Schools	99	98	87	88
Socio-Class IIIM, IV, V	35	34	26	29
Low participation neighbourhoods	20	22	14	13

Mature Undergraduates	CIA %		UK Average %	
	2001-02	2002-03	2001-02	2002-03
Percent who are mature	31	27	22	23
No previous HE and low participation Neighbourhoods	16	18	14	15

Table 1 reflects our excellent record in statistical terms. In 2002-03 98% of CIA's students progressed to the Institute from State Schools, against a UK Average of 88%. In the same year 34% of CIA's students were from Socio-Class IIIM, IV and V, against a UK average of 29%. The Institute also performs above the UK average in terms of recruiting mature students; in 2002-03 27% of students were mature against a UK average of 23%.

The Institute's strategy in Widening Participation has always focused not only on the recruitment of students from 'non-traditional' backgrounds, but on ensuring that such students are retained at the Institute and successfully complete their programmes of study.

Recruitment strategies include a wide range of outreach activities in local schools and community settings. The inclusion of a broad spectrum of communities and age-groups in the Institute's outreach activities has been seen as key to promoting the accessibility of Art and Design study. Visual Studies, Performance and Media activities have secured the interest and

commitment of a wide number of groups and individuals, who have subsequently pursued studies at the Institute.

National initiatives such as HEFCE funded Widening Participation projects and AimHigher have been supportive of the Institute's activities in this area. The Institute has acted as the lead Institution for both the Widening Participation and AimHigher initiatives since their inception, and is extremely active in supporting AimHigher at regional and national level. The Institute currently offers two Summer Schools each year. One of these is a one-week HEFCE funded specialist school which offers a residential experience of HE to students from disadvantaged backgrounds from around the country. The other is a four-week non-residential school which offers around 60 places to 16 year olds from North and West Cumbria who wish to gain an experience of Art, Performance, Popular Music and Media at further education level. Around one-third of those attending the four-week summer school from the local area ultimately enrol on a further education programme at the Institute.

The relationship of present indicators to future performance targets is discussed in Section 2.10 and Table 3.

2.2 STUDENT SUPPORT - PASTORAL

The Institute presently offers a wide range of student services and support. The Student Advisers work with students, teaching staff and learning support staff to effect on-course learning support where necessary. The Student Advisers also provide a repository of information for students on a range of health, social and personal issues. The Institute employs a full-time Learning Support Tutor who has a team of part-time staff. Students are assessed for basic skills on enrolment and are offered follow-up support as required. This support can range from basic study skills to Educational Psychology assessments. This service is supported by a Personal Progression and Development Administrator who acts as a facilitator between students and services.

The Institute also employs a Careers Adviser and advice is provided to students as part of their course but also on a one-to-one basis as required. Students with disabilities are encouraged to disclose needs at application stage. However, disclosure at any time is also encouraged and a range of staff are available to provide support, including Admissions, Student Advisers (who also have the role of Institute Disability Officers) and teaching staff.

2.3 STUDENT SUPPORT - FINANCIAL

The Institute has no endowments, nor sponsored scholarships from charitable or other bodies. The Institute does not normally offer scholarships or fee-waivers to undergraduate students although it has considered fee remission to individual students in exceptional cases of hardship. The Institute offers one-to-one counselling on financial issues and operates the Access to Learning Fund.

2.4 STATEMENT OF CORPORATE AMBITION IN RELATION TO VARIABLE FEES AND BURSARIES

Section 2.1 above (and particularly the performance indicators covered in Table 1) has demonstrated the Institute's success over a sustained period in attracting students from disadvantaged backgrounds. Above all else our mission is to be inclusive and to value potential. We therefore approach our overall objective from perhaps a different perspective to the average institution. Paragraph 14 of 2004/01 states *"In conducting our duties we aim to ensure that the introduction of variable fees does not have a detrimental effect on widening participation"*. This encapsulates our ambition. We have already set good standards in terms

of widening participation. The biggest risk to us in the future is that participation from disadvantaged groups may **fall** and this for two reasons:

- (i) Apprehension from the most vulnerable potential student groups in terms of the fee level and resultant debt, leading to a general drop in applications throughout the sector.
- (ii) Increased competition from other institutions who may start from a lower level of inclusion and may then offer more substantial rewards in terms of bursaries or fee-waivers.

These issues will be addressed in the detailed submission set out below.

2.5 FEE LIMITS

The Institute will charge tuition fees up to £3,000 to all eligible full-time undergraduate students from September 2006.

2.6 AMOUNT OF ADDITIONAL INCOME TO BE SPENT ON ACCESS MEASURES

Table 2 below sets out the additional income generated and the proportion to be used for bursaries, outreach and administration.

TABLE 2

**Forecast of Additional Fee Income and
Percentage Committed to Bursaries and Outreach**

	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010
	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000
Total fee income	1620	2160	2700	2700	2700
Less present standard fee income	-1200	-1200	-1200	-1200	-1200
Additional Fee Income	420	960	1500	1500	1500
Bursaries	-216	-432	-648	-648	-648
Outreach	-50	-50	-50	-50	-50
Admin	-50	-50	-50	-50	-50
Residual Additional Income	104	428	752	752	752
Percentage of additional fee income spent on Bursaries and Outreach	75	55	50	50	50

Note: No account has been taken of inflationary increases.

It should be stressed that the amount identified (£50k) as being spent on additional outreach measures is our estimate of additional expenditure on "qualifying" outreach. This we have interpreted narrowly as only outreach work which will have a direct impact on potential students from disadvantaged backgrounds. It is however our intention to use a substantial part of our additional income to enhance student services generally, this will be in the areas of:

- (i) Student social facilities
- (ii) Additional language support
- (iii) Student welfare and medical facilities
- (iv) Special measures to support disabled students

However, as these facilities will be used to enhance services for all students, the anticipated expenditure has not been classed as outreach work.

2.7 BURSARIES AND OTHER FINANCIAL SUPPORT FOR STUDENTS

We intend to offer income contingent bursaries and will adopt the "model" bursary assessment scheme devised by SCOP/UUK.

The rationale of the scheme will be to offer "standard" bursaries to students in four categories using the baseline definition of "poorest student" as in paragraph 40 of the guide, ie those students in receipt of the full Higher Education Maintenance Grant of £2,700, and where residual family income is less than £22k per annum. These students will receive a minimum bursary of £1,200 but will also be eligible to apply for a limited number of higher awards up to £3,000 per annum (which would then include the minimum £300 award).

The second category will be those students where residual family income is £22,000 to £24,999 per annum. Those students will receive a bursary of £1,000 per annum but may be eligible to apply for a limited number of higher awards up to £3,000 (which would then include the £1,000 bursary award).

The third category will be those students where residual family income is £25,000 to £34,999 per annum. Those students will receive a bursary of £400 per annum but may be eligible to apply for a limited number of higher awards up to £3,000 (which would then include the £1,000 bursary award).

The fourth category will be those students where residual family income exceeds £35,000 per annum. Those students will receive a bursary of £200 per annum but may be eligible to apply for a limited number of higher awards up to £3,000 (which would then include the £1,000 bursary award).

A limited number of additional scholarships (up to £3,000) will then be offered. These will normally be available to students from the poorest backgrounds. The detailed criteria has yet to be determined but will be a combination of exceptional ability and/or achievement in the face of severe adversity.

Table 2 shows that the Institute will devote an average of 56% of additional income to bursaries over the 5 year period. At present it is our intention to pay bursaries in cash rather than as fee waivers.

2.8 INFORMATION TO STUDENTS

2.8.1 Fees

Full advice on how to obtain information on the fees to be charged for courses will be published on the Institute website and in supplementary information to the Institute prospectus. All prospective students will be informed of the aggregate cost of their tuition fees before they commit to a course. Detailed information, including options for payment and the respective roles of the Institute and the Students Loan Company, will be sent individually to prospective students as part of their "offer" letter (see section 2.8.2 below)

2.8.2 Bursaries

General information regarding the Institute's bursary scheme will be available:

- on the Institute's website
- in supplementary information to the prospectus
- as a hard copy
- from the Student Services office as a telephone or one-to-one advice service.

(Specific advice will also be available to appropriate students from the Institute's Disability Officer.)

Each student will be sent detailed information with their offer letter. (It is Institute policy that an offer must be made within three weeks of interview or application, subject to UCAS requirements). The information will include a bursary application form, notes on completion and a helpline number for advice/problems.

Our students will qualify to receive an income contingent bursary as assessed by the SCOP/UUK model scheme. In addition, those students from the lowest income groups may qualify to apply for a limited number of additional bursaries (up to £3,000) which will be awarded on the criteria of exceptional ability and/or achievement in the face of exceptional adversity.

2.9 OUTREACH WORK

Section 2.1 above provided a summary of the Institute's achievements to date in terms of widening participating and outreach. This work will continue as a matter of course. The additional income from fees will be used to target specific areas (see below) which we feel still remain a disincentive to some students from the lowest socio-economic groups. The specific areas will be:

- (i) Continuation of outreach work focussing particularly on deprived communities in west and south Cumbria where participation in further and higher education is significantly below the national average. This will be a new initiative and it is hoped to conduct it in partnership with other University Education Cumbria partners.
- (ii) The provision of a wider range of activities for local schools, including campus visits, workshops and Summer Schools. This will build on work currently undertaken.
- (iii) Inductions to raise technical competence in ICT, Digital Imaging and Media. This will be a new activity.
- (iv) Learning Support targeted at dyslexic students and those with writing difficulties. This will be an extension of the facility currently offered.

In the case of (iii) above we are finding that students from the poorest backgrounds (particularly mature students) may not have had access to some areas of modern technology and see this as a limiting factor, even if their chosen subject area may not at first sight appear to have a high technical content, (eg fine art students are increasingly making use of all three technologies outlined in (iii) above).

In the case of (iv) above, the production of written reports/essays for dyslexic students is less of a problem than, say, ten years ago due to the universal acceptance of electronic processing. However specialist institutions still have a problem with students whose dyslexia severely restricts the ability to read whether conventional books or electronically produced material.

2.10 MILESTONES/TARGETS

Section 2.1 demonstrated the Institute's past success in attracting students from under-represented and low income groups. Section 2.4 set out our concerns in terms of risk assessment of the volatility of the sector. (This is recognised in paragraph 65 of OFFA guidance.)

Given that all of our widening participating indicators are already above the national average then the questions we posed were:

What are the minimum measures we need to take to **retain** the percentage rates of current performance indicators?

How much of our additional fee income would we need to utilise in the form of bursary or outreach work to be able to make a realistic forecast that participation rates should rise by a significant percentage - say 5%?

We experienced difficulty in providing answers to both these questions due to two linked "unknown" factors:

- (i) the elasticity of consumer (ie student) demand in relation to the bursary offered, and
- (ii) the identity of competitors and the effect of their "pricing" (ie fee/bursary mix) policies.

We have therefore decided to set targets based on a 5% increase in participation rates within an estimated range of increase of 0-10%. We trust (in particular for the reasons set out above) that this will be viewed as realism in terms of our risk assessment rather than as any lack of ambition on our part.

In terms of monitoring, OFFA will appreciate that our **main** priority will be to use sensitivity analysis to monitor our application/recruitment ratios to ensure that our **total** numbers remain stable and therefore that financial security is guaranteed.

We will monitor the key widening participation targets (as we do now) on an ongoing basis and take corrective action where appropriate. However, the determination of cause and effect (particularly in 2006-07) will be difficult to ascertain until trends are discernable. For instance, if we do find a downturn in young undergraduate students from low participation neighbourhoods this could be the result of:

- (a) National trends (eg demographic)
- (b) Regional/local trends
- (c) Dissatisfaction with fees generally
- (d) Dissatisfaction with our level of fees
- (e) Misunderstanding of the fees/grant/bursary structure generally
- (f) Dissatisfaction with the level of bursary/support offered at our Institute
- (g) A combination of some or all of the above.

Clearly we need to be in a position to identify the cause of a downturn in applications to determine the most appropriate means of addressing it. There is almost an implied assumption in the OFFA guidance that there will be a direct correlation between increased bursaries and increased participation from poorer background. At this stage we would feel that we need reliable market intelligence (including time series of at least one to two years) to establish discernable trends in consumer preference and choice.

We note that paragraph 68 provides for review and re-assessment of targets and welcome that initiative as we believe flexibility may be crucial in the early years of the scheme. Table 3 below sets out our milestone targets.

TABLE 3
Milestone Performance Indicators and Targets

Young Full-Time Undergraduates	CIA Present Average % 2001-04	Target % 2006-11	Range %
From State Schools	99	99	97-100
Socio-Class IIIIM, IV, V	35	37	35-39
Low participation neighbourhoods	21	22	21-23

Mature Undergraduates	CIA Present Average % 2001-04	Target % 2006-11	Range %
Percent who are mature	29	29	29-32
No previous HE and low participation neighbourhoods	17	18	17-19

These targets will be considered at every meeting of the Senior Management Group and Finance, Personnel and General Purposes (FP&GP) Committee in conjunction with our application and enrolment data. Progress will be reported by the Chair of FP&GP to the full Board of Governors and will be integrated into the Institute's Annual Monitoring Statement and corporate planning process.