

University of Westminster

ACCESS AGREEMENT

updated: 7 September 2005

A TUITION FEE LEVELS

Tuition fee levels for full time home and EU undergraduate students and courses for the 2006-07 academic year are set out below. These were approved by the University's Court of Governors in October 2004.

Degree courses

Fees will be set at **£3,000** per annum for all courses, with the only exceptions being those noted below. Support and incentives for students based on their means and/or their ability will be provided through the provision of bursaries and scholarships.

Foundation level courses (level 3, year 0)

These courses are for 1 year and provide an opportunity for students without the full entry qualifications to a degree course to achieve the necessary standard. The fees for these courses will also be set at **£3,000**. The University will be introducing targeted scholarships for the most able graduates of foundation level courses, which are available once they progress to year 1 of a full University of Westminster degree course.

Sandwich year and year abroad

Students on year-long sandwich placements and those taking a year abroad as part of their programme of study will be charged a **nil** fee for that year. The costs involved in establishing and supporting sandwich placements will be met from the fee income for degree courses.

Foundation degree and sub-degree provision

These courses are delivered by the University's Associate Colleges who are responsible for setting and collecting the fees. The courses are validated by the University and, by 2006, will all be subject to new non-franchise agreements.

Institutional partnership programmes

EU students attending the University on a full time basis as part of an undergraduate degree programme at a partner institution will be charged a fee of **£2,000** for the 2006-07 academic year.

Fees for the full duration of a course

The University will set the fee at £3,000 in the first year (2006-07 academic year) for all courses attracting fees and will ordinarily charge the maximum allowable rate, that is £3,000 plus inflation, for each subsequent year. It is possible that in future years the fee may be lowered for particular subjects or courses. Alternatively, subject or course-specific bursaries may be introduced.

B BURSARIES AND FINANCIAL SUPPORT

Minimum bursaries

The University will meet the minimum requirement for the provision of financial assistance to students. Students with residual family income of £17,500 or less (2006 threshold; to be inflated for future years) will receive a bursary of £300. This includes all students in receipt of the full state support equivalent to a grant of £2,700, as well as those who may not be eligible for state support, eg non-UK EU students. The administration and payment of this bursary will be in accordance with the UUK/SCOP model bursary scheme. The means-testing and payment of the bursary will be conducted on behalf of the University by the Student Loans Company (SLC).

The expectation is that approximately 1,150 students per annum at the University will fall into this category, which at £300 each is a cost to the University of £345,000 in year 1 (2006-07), rising to £900,000 (3,000 students) by year 3 (2008-09).

Payment arrangements for these bursaries are still to be confirmed (deleted: but payment is expected to be annually at the start of the year) and, from year 2, dependent upon successful progression. The arrangements for students who repeat years or withdraw also remain to be confirmed, however the treatment of the bursary will be consistent with the treatment of state-funded support.

Additional bursaries

The University will offer, in addition to the minimum bursary, a bursary also at the rate of £300 per head, for all students with residual family income between £17,500 and £37,425 (2006 thresholds; to be inflated for future years) and who are in receipt of state-funded support on a sliding scale. This will help to compensate for the exceptionally high living costs of London.

The University's intention is that the means-testing to determine eligibility and the payment of these bursaries will be carried out by the SLC. It is not certain at this stage, however, that this facility will be provided for bursaries beyond the minimum required and an estimate of the additional costs required to undertake the assessment, administration and payment of these bursaries has therefore been included.

The University's estimate is that approximately 600 students would be eligible for this bursary in year 1 at a cost of £180,000, rising to £480,000 (1,600 students) by year 3. The bursaries will be offered in the form of cash, as it is believed that this is the most valuable and flexible form of support for students.

Scholarships

The University will be extending significantly its scholarship scheme as this is an important means of improving retention and academic performance. The University's existing scheme currently offers scholarships of a total value of around £1m, to students from a wide variety of backgrounds. The majority of the existing scholarships are awarded to international students.

The operation of the extended scholarship scheme will be monitored to ensure that it has no detrimental effect on the breadth of participation. It is the University's firm belief that the dual aims of increasing the proportion of students with higher entry qualifications and greater academic potential, and widening access are not mutually exclusive.

The detail of the extension to the University's scholarship scheme is being determined. A number of principles have however been agreed:

- scholarships will be designed to attract students with demonstrable potential to achieve academic excellence.
- some scholarships will be targeted to reward progression, particularly from foundation to degree level.
- a specific offering for part-time students will be included.
- scholarships will consist of a mix of fee waivers, cash and accommodation credits.
- the 2006 scholarship scheme will be flexible to ensure that for subsequent years it continues to meet its aims.

The University is planning to invest around £1m in the extension of its scholarship scheme. Only that proportion of this investment that is likely to be distributed to under-represented groups is included for the purposes of this agreement. This cannot be calculated accurately but is estimated at approximately £587,000 (by year 3) of the total. This estimate is arrived at as follows.

	Year 1	Year 3
Scholarships targeted at progressing foundation level students	£66,000	£174,000
Scholarships estimated to be distributed to students from under-represented groups	£157,000	£413,000
Total eligible for Access Agreement	£223,000	£587,000

C OUTREACH ACTIVITIES

C1 Outreach and progression to HE

The University undertakes considerable work with partner organisations to seek to improve the numbers and quality of HE entrants. A significant expansion in the range or scale of these activities is not envisaged, although there are some specific plans for future developments.

The University supports the Aim Higher initiative. It is involved in the West London and Health Profession Partnerships and the Aimhigher Central London Partnership. In addition, an innovative project has been developed with the West and Central London Partnerships, which establishes greater FE/HE collaboration with Aimhigher partners.

The University has been engaged in an extensive programme of outreach with schools and colleges for over 16 years and seeks to raise the aspiration of learners who do not have a tradition of attending HE. The University is a member of the Access Elite and seeks to encourage diversity in student entrants whilst supporting talent. Foundation degrees have been developed with our Associate Colleges to develop vocational learning. Admissions and marketing staff are trained to respond to a broad range of enquiries and are engaged in outreach work for specific subject areas.

Successful access to HE is achieved through school/FE/HE collaboration and the University recognises that the key is cross-sector staff development to support seamless progression. There is much for HE to learn from FE regarding for example study support schemes, student support, literacy and numeracy modules embedded in the curriculum and key/core modules as an accepted pathway in learning. Despite the availability of support and guidance, a significant proportion (37%) of students in schools and FE do not progress past level 2.

The University's partnership work involves developing a dialogue with key stakeholders, including employers, to ensure that the learners acquire relevant skills for educational attainment and employability. There has been and will continue to be an extensive range of work undertaken (see Annex A) with around 3,000 outreach activities and events organised annually.

The links with Associate Colleges will be developed further by increasing the scale of academic support offered to each college. Staff of the University will be identified to work with the senior academic and administrative staff in the college in the areas of curriculum development including Foundation Degrees, quality assurance and HE progression. This work will be funded from the additional tuition fee income arising from variable fees.

The University is the lead institution for the HEFCE-funded Aimhigher National Activity Project for students with specific learning difficulties. The University intends to invest further to extend this work in order to increase the provision of support to students and aspirant students with dyslexia.

C2 Retention and progression within HE

The University's widening participation strategy recognises that its historical mission as an institution which placed emphasis on the widening of access had resulted in uneven performance on retention and progression. The strategy therefore places emphasis on improving retention where this is necessary, offering curricula which lead readily to employment and helping students improve their skills and confidence to assist the transition from study to work.

The aims of improving access and encouraging applications are directly associated with delivering high quality academic and pastoral support and thus improving retention and progression, within higher education and beyond into employment. Some measures are linked more directly to HE access than others, and it is these for which estimates of additional expenditure have been included.

The aim of improving retention is being addressed in a number of ways, most of which at present are concentrated on level 4. They range from better pre-entry guidance to more focussed support through the induction period, concentration on skills development alongside the specialist curriculum in the early months and remedial support, such as intensive summer programmes in certain subjects, for those who are not successful at their first assessment attempt. In addition, practical financial advice is provided for all students through information handouts, the internet and one-to-one interviews.

A specific programme of activities is being delivered to provide support in the early months of the course. This includes:

- 'Keys Skills for surviving as a Student' programme for self-referrers
- teaching support materials out of class time via the VLE
- peer mentoring and targeted extra-curricula tutorial support
- routine testing for numeracy and literacy with additional teaching where necessary.

A number of areas have been identified for further development of this work to be funded from the additional fee income. These are:

- extending the successful programmes to improve academic literacy and numeracy
- increasing the numbers of staff available for first year students in particular; to provide a mentoring service to help identify and address problems as early as possible
- extending the scope of personal tutoring including training for tutors and, where practical, attendance monitoring
- providing swifter feedback and return of coursework
- reviewing the requirement for formal examination at the end of semester 1
- improving induction.

C3 Employability

The University is committed to developing employable graduates by ensuring that:

- career development skills are embedded in all courses
- opportunities for part-time work, placements and work-related learning are widely available to students
- staff continue to widen and strengthen links with employers in all sectors, involving them in curriculum design and encouraging their participation in other aspects of the University's career education, information and guidance provision
- staff are provided with up-to-date data on labour market trends and employers' requirements which will inform the service delivered to students.

A number of projects targeted specifically at students from under-represented groups have been undertaken. Two examples are summarised below.

Employability Project

The aims of this project are to (1) increase and strengthen links with employers within the SME market, targeting those sectors such as IT, where University of Westminster courses have low employment rates, and (2) improve notification of employment opportunities to the student population, for example by investing in a text messaging system and enhancing search and match tools in the vacancy system.

The project achieved a 54% increase in the number of employers registered with the University's careers service, with consequent increases of 22% in immediate graduate vacancies, 90% in placements and 10% in part-time positions.

Business Experience & International Unit

This Unit has been established to provide placement advice and support for business undergraduates that have an optional or compulsory placement as part of their degree programme. The Unit employs 4 full time staff and helps around 300 students each year. It runs workshops and lectures to help students develop the skills and competences to attract placement employers as well as providing one-to-one meetings. The Unit maintains a database of over 600 placement recruiters and opportunities are advertised on the intranet. The Unit also provides short-term internship opportunities for approximately 70 international students each year wishing to gain experience of working in the UK.

Other employment-related initiatives provided with under-represented groups in mind, include:

- targeted career management workshops to mature and ethnic minority students
- participation in the National Mentoring Consortium scheme, which had the highest participation rate in the country with 20 pairings
- extension of the diversity website to include sections on women, religious discrimination and issues relating to social class
- research activities including a longitudinal evaluation of computer science graduates and research into the destinations of disabled graduates. A survey of the experiences of black and Asian graduates entering the labour market was also conducted.

D PROVIDING INFORMATION TO STUDENTS

The University will provide all prospective students with clear and unambiguous written information on student finance, scholarships, bursaries and additional financial support. This will include clear guidance on fees and loans, and financial commitments and entitlements.

The University will set the fee level at £3,000 in the first year for all courses and will ordinarily charge the maximum allowable rate ie £3,000 plus inflation for subsequent years. This information will be provided to prospective students. In addition, the University will provide individual advice and guidance to prospective students on the financial implications of full-time or part-time study. Particular emphasis will be given to supporting students from vulnerable groups such as lone parents, carers, students with disabilities, students with mental health problems and care-leavers and this support will extend to advice on state benefits and their interaction with student finance.

Additional administrative staff will be assigned to achieve improvements in the speed and efficiency with which enquirers and applicants are handled (communications, open days, etc) in order to help attract and secure talented students from under-represented groups.

A leaflet will be produced and the University's website will be reviewed to ensure that information is easily accessible for prospective students and others. Where good practice can be shared between institutions in explaining the changes in fees and student support arrangements then this will be supported. Appropriate links and signposting will also be included to other sources of information, such as the Aimhigher and UCAS websites.

The University is in the process of establishing a centralised enquiry service which will field and respond promptly to enquiries received from all sources – telephone, internet, letter.

E EXPENDITURE ON ACCESS MEASURES

The University's modelling of additional fee income from variable fees and associated expenditure is based on a number of assumptions. One of the more significant assumptions is that the UUK/SCOP model bursary scheme will be available for the University to use in respect of the bursaries proposed that go beyond the minimum required (see section B).

The additional fee income, before payments for bursaries, scholarships or other expenditure, is estimated at £5.1m in year 1 (2006-07 academic year), rising to £13.3m after 3 years.

The required minimum bursary will account for around 7% of this total, or £900,000 in year 3. The proposed University of Westminster bursaries, in addition to the minimum, will cost a

further £480,000 (4%). The extension to the University's scholarship scheme is estimated to cost around £1m pa, although as noted in section B, only £587k of this is deemed eligible for inclusion in this Agreement, accounting for a further 4% of the additional fee income. Additional administrative costs are estimated at £205,000. The provision of bursaries and scholarships as proposed, together with associated administration costs, will therefore in total account for around 16% of the year 3 gross additional tuition fee income.

The total additional estimated to be spent on an annual basis in respect of activities to improve and widen access is £750,000. This incorporates, as described in section C, a wide range of activities encompassing outreach and partnerships, supporting retention and progression, and enhancing employability. This accounts for a further 6% of the year 3 additional fee income. In total therefore, measures described within this Access Agreement will total around £2.9m by year 3, representing 22% of the gross additional fee income. An analysis of the expenditure amongst the proposed additional activities is provided at Annex B

F MILESTONES, OBJECTIVES AND BASELINE DATA

The University has a student population of circa 23,000 of which some 12,000 are home/EU students studying at undergraduate first degree level, 81% of whom are full-time.

The HEFCE performance indicator data shows that 95% of the young full-time first degree student population of the University come from state schools or colleges and 40% are from social classes IIM, IV and V which are determined as lower socio-economic groups. These figures are significantly above the locally adjusted institutional benchmarks of 91% and 32% respectively.

Ethnicity analysis of University of Westminster full-time first degree students shows that 35% are white, 36% Asian/Asian British, 12% Black/Black British and 12% Mixed/Other ethnic groups (the balance is not known). Comparison with the UK full-time first degree student population indicates that the University has half the proportion of white students, four times the proportion of Asian/Asian British students and Black/Black British students and twice the proportion of mixed/other ethnic groups. Further comparison with the London census data (2001) shows that all non-white ethnic groups are represented in higher proportions in the University full-time first degree population than in the population of London as a whole.

HEFCE non-continuation data show that 13% of University of Westminster full-time first degree entrants are not in higher education the following year. This figure is slightly higher than the university benchmark (12%) and higher than the average for UK institutions (9%).

The University has determined that there are 6 key measures that should be used in determining the rate of achievement in respect of the access, retention, progression and employment plans summarised herein. These are:

- participation of under-represented groups - percentage from state schools
- participation of under-represented groups - percentage from social classes IIM IV, V.
- numbers of students progressing from Associate Colleges to the University of Westminster
- level of dependence on clearing for recruiting full time undergraduates
- retention – achieving a 1% annual improvement in the proportion progressing from year 1 to 2
- employment – achieving a 1% annual improvement in the level of employment of graduates (as measured in the First Destination of Leavers survey).

The University's recent performance in relation to these measures and the targets for achievement up to 2008-09 are summarised in the table below.

Measure	Achievement				Target						
	2000-01	2001-02	2002-03	2003-04	2004-05	2005-06	2006-07	2007-08	2008-09	2009-10	2010-11
Participation of under-represented groups in HE (Young FT first degree entrants) from state school/college (HEFCE benchmark)	94% (91%)	95% (91%)	95% (90%)	*	95%	95%	95%	95%	95%	95%	95%
Participation of under-represented groups in HE (Young FT first degree entrants) from social class IIIM, IV, V (HEFCE benchmark)	36% (32%)	40% (32%)	44% (36%)	*	44%	44%	44%	44%	44%	44%	44%
No. of students progressing from Associate Colleges to the University of Westminster				227	235	245	270	300	330	345	345
Dependence on clearing for recruiting full-time undergraduates	34%	31%	36%	34%	34%	33%	32%	30%	29%	28%	27%
Retention – 1% annual improvement in the proportion progressing from year 1 to 2 without having to retake (full-time first degree students)	70%	72%	67%	70%	71%	72%	73%	74%	75%	76%	77%
Employment – 1% annual improvement in the level of employment of graduates (HEFCE benchmark)	86% (89%)	89% (89%)	*	*	+1%	+1%	+1%	+1%	+1%	+1%	+1%

* Not published yet

G MONITORING COMPLIANCE AND PROGRESS

The University will monitor compliance with the terms of the Access Agreement and progress towards the milestones and objectives contained herein. The responsibility for this will lie with the Widening Participation Strategy Committee, a senior group of staff chaired by the Deputy Vice Chancellor. This group meets termly and will report on compliance and progress bi-annually to the Vice Chancellor's Executive Group and to the Court of Governors. The timing of these reports will be such as to fit with the University's annual planning cycle to ensure that any amendments to milestones or targets can be approved accordingly. The University will furthermore comply with all reasonable reporting and monitoring requirements determined by the Director of OFFA.

Any proposed amendments to the Access Agreement will, once approved within the University, be submitted to the Director of OFFA for approval.

Digest of outreach activities

Collaborative work with key London borough 14-19 forums to ensure that strategic aims are common across the sector
Work with the LSC to encourage a pan London forum which incorporates 14-19 providers, forum coordinators, HEI's and employers to support this approach
Aimhigher partnerships
Bringing FE and HE staff together to share teaching strategies and methodology through staff development/INSET days
Shared teaching on attainment and enrichment programmes; one Associate College is already involved with the winter programme 'Academic Communication Skills'
Develop the Learning Exchange through the Community Volunteering Unit to provide volunteering/shadowing opportunities across sector
Including key partners in University staff development workshops such as 'student centred learning'
Developing study skills support (eg in maths) and personal development modules
Working with FE partners to increase academic dialogue for the development of a study skills package that will support progression from FE to HE
Work in partnership with FE to provide accreditation of enrichment programmes such as the winter school, which add value to a student's portfolio for entry to HE
Identifying common skills for learning and employment to be embedded (eg via progression routes to HE)
Ambassadors scheme – talks on student life and finance
Recruitment events such as open days, HE fairs, School/College events, staff visits to Schools and Colleges
Master classes and subject workshops
Partners include Central London and West London Aimhigher Partnerships, Health Professions Partnership, LSC StARS, Arts Thematic Partnership and Central London Learning Partnership
Within these partnerships the following sectors are represented: Schools, Colleges, HE Institutions, Training Agencies, Connexions, LSC, Employers, Adult Learning providers.

Annex B

Analysis of expenditure

	2006-07	2007-08	2008-09	2009-10	2010-11
Additional tuition fee income (gross)	5,051,000	9,243,000	13,332,000	13,332,000	13,332,000
Bursaries - minimum	345,000	628,000	904,000	904,000	904,000
Bursaries - additional	184,000	335,000	482,000	482,000	482,000
Total bursaries	529,000	963,000	1,386,000	1,386,000	1,386,000
% of fee income	10%	10%	10%	10%	10%
Scholarships (eligible portion)	223,000	405,000	587,000	587,000	587,000
% of fee income	4%	4%	4%	4%	4%
Additional administrative costs	205,000	205,000	205,000	205,000	205,000
% of fee income	4%	2%	2%	2%	2%
Access activities					
Academic staff to work with Associate Colleges	61,000	110,000	160,000	160,000	160,000
Extending academic literacy/numeracy programme	41,000	75,000	125,000	125,000	125,000
Additional staff for 1st yr student support	144,000	262,000	380,000	380,000	380,000
Extending scope of personal tutoring	0	0	0	0	0
Swifter feedback/return of coursework	0	0	0	0	0
Review semester 1 examinations (no additional cost)	0	0	0	0	0
Improving induction (no additional cost)	0	0	0	0	0
Additional support for students with disabilities	75,000	75,000	80,000	85,000	90,000
Extending employability projects (no additional cost)	0	0	0	0	0
Total access activities	321,000	522,000	745,000	750,000	755,000
% of fee income	6%	6%	6%	6%	6%
Total expenditure subject to Access Agreement	1,278,000	2,095,000	2,923,000	2,928,000	2,933,000
% of fee income	25%	23%	22%	22%	22%