

University of Newcastle upon Tyne

Access Agreement



This Access Agreement between the University of Newcastle upon Tyne and the Office For Fair Access (OFFA) covers the period from 1 September 2006 until 31 August 2007, and relates to undergraduate and PGCE students entering the University in the academic year 2006-07 only.

1. Introduction

- 1.1 The University of Newcastle upon Tyne is committed to widening participation and fair access. We wish to encourage able, highly-motivated and enthusiastic students of all ages, and from all backgrounds and contexts, to apply to our degree programmes.
- 1.2 Our admissions policies and practices are based on principles of integrity and fairness, and involve the assessment of each applicant's ability, achievements and potential.
- 1.3 We wish to admit the brightest and best students, regardless of background. We recognise that some of those students may have concerns about the financial costs of Higher Education. Our bursary scheme, available for 2006 entry, will provide additional financial support for many of our students.
- 1.4 We also know that many talented and able people do not feel confident about applying to university. This may be because they have no family experience of higher education, or because they lack confidence about their ability to achieve the necessary entry requirements for a university like Newcastle. We are committed to investing in additional outreach work with schools and colleges in order to encourage more people to achieve their potential and enjoy the life-long benefits of higher education.
- 1.5 For those who choose to study at Newcastle University, we are confident that we offer challenging, exciting and relevant degree programmes, taught by experts whose research enriches the learning environment for all of our students. The overall 'Newcastle experience' is underpinned by our strong commitment to the provision of outstanding opportunities for our students to add value to their academic studies by gaining additional skills and experience which will prepare them for rewarding careers. Our strengths in enterprise education and vocationally-relevant programmes are reflected in our exceptional record of graduate employability.
- 1.6 These commitments and principles set the context for our Access Agreement, details of which are shown in the sections which follow.

2. Fee Limits

- 2.1 The University of Newcastle upon Tyne intends to charge an annual (home rate) tuition fee of £3,000 for all of its eligible full-time undergraduate degree programmes and for the Postgraduate Certificate in Education (PGCE) programme from September 2006.
- 2.2 Undergraduate programmes (or parts of programmes) funded under contract by the Department of Health will not be subject to the variable fee of £3,000 (At the University of Newcastle upon Tyne, this currently includes the following programmes: Speech and Language Sciences and the fifth and sixth years of 5- and 6 year programmes in Medicine and Dentistry).
- 2.3 Students on four-year programmes who are undertaking a one-year placement, or a year abroad, as a compulsory part of their degree programme, will be liable to pay the relevant proportion of the annual tuition fee (25% of the full fee, i.e. £750 in 2006-07).
- 2.4 Students who applied through UCAS during 2004-05, and defer their entry to 2006, will not be required to pay the full tuition fee of £3,000 for the duration of their programme of study, provided their decision to defer entry was taken, and formally notified to UCAS, before the deadline of 1 August 2005. The tuition fee in 2006 for such students will be the standard fee (expected to be £1,200). Deferred entry students who begin their degree under these arrangements in 2006 will be treated as though they were entering in 2005. They may be eligible for government financial support towards fees or living costs, on a means-tested basis, according to the legislation which applies to 2005 entrants.
- 2.5 Subject to regulations published by the government each year, the annual home rate of tuition fee charged by the University is expected to increase to reflect inflation. The fee payable in any given year will be published in advance in the relevant Undergraduate Prospectus and other publicity channels, including the University website.
- 2.6 In the event of any such increase, the University's bursaries and other financial support offered to eligible students will normally also be increased in line with inflation to reflect the additional cost of tuition fees.

2.7 Students who are offered a place at the University will be informed of the total fees payable for the duration of their programme of study.

3. Widening participation context and target groups

3.1 This Access Agreement is part of the University's overall Widening Participation Strategy, which is currently under revision. The Widening Participation Strategy is an important element of the University's Corporate Plan and strategic objectives.

3.2 The University's performance in widening participation, as measured by its intake each year of students from key groups under-represented in higher education, is published publicly in the annual HESA Performance Indicators.

3.3 The activities and investment described in this Agreement represent just a small part of the University's overall work to widen and increase progression to higher education. The University has undertaken an intensive programme of widening participation activity, working with schools and colleges in the North East over the past 11 years (see Section 7, below, and Annex 1). This work will be sustained and developed during the period of this Agreement, subject to the continued availability of funding.

3.4 For the purposes of this Access Agreement, the University's *additional* work and financial investment to maintain and safeguard fair access is aimed particularly at the following groups:

- Students from lower socio-economic groups
- Students from low participation neighbourhoods
- Students from black and minority ethnic groups
- Students with a disability
- Students who are from lower income backgrounds
- Students with a range of relevant other personal or educational disadvantage factors, including those who enter the University through the PARTNERS Programme.

3.5 The **additional measures** described in Sections 4, 5, 6 and 8 specifically aim to:

- Increase the number and proportion of applicants with appropriate qualifications, ability and potential, from: lower socio-economic groups; low participation neighbourhoods; black and minority ethnic groups; and those with other relevant personal or educational disadvantage factors
- At least maintain the application and progression rates to the University of students with a disability
- Encourage more students from lower-income backgrounds to feel confident that they will receive adequate levels of financial support if they choose to study at Newcastle
- Contribute to an overall increase in regional rates of progression to higher education
- Increase progression to Newcastle University of students from lower income backgrounds.

3.6 Milestones relating to these aims are shown in Section 9 below.

4. Bursaries

4.1 The University is committed to providing financial assistance to students from lower-income backgrounds. Students entering the University in 2006, who are ordinarily resident in the UK and to whom the home rate of tuition fee applies (subsequently referred to as 'home UK students') will be eligible for bursary support according to the criteria below

4.2 The terms of the bursary scheme are as follows:

- **All home UK undergraduate students commencing study in 2006, who are assessed as being eligible for full government financial support, will automatically receive a Newcastle University Bursary of £1,300 for each relevant year¹ of undergraduate study.**
- **All home UK undergraduate students commencing study in 2006, who are assessed as being eligible for partial government financial support, and whose household income (as assessed and notified to the University by the Student Loans Company) is £33,500 or less will automatically receive a Newcastle University Bursary of £1,000 for each relevant year of undergraduate study.**

¹ Details of the Newcastle University Bursary Scheme will be published in the **Guide to Student Finance at the University of Newcastle upon Tyne** (obtainable from the University from April 2005). Full details of bursary regulations, including those which apply to students undertaking repeat years or part-time study, will be published on the University website once finalised.

- **In addition, for 2006 entry only, home UK undergraduate students whose household income is between £33,500 and £37,425 (the revised DfES threshold for partial government support) will receive a Newcastle University Bursary of £1,000.**
- **Home UK students following a Postgraduate Certificate Of Education (PGCE) programme, and who are eligible for the full means-tested element of the Government Higher Education Maintenance Grant, will receive a Newcastle University PGCE Bursary of £300.**
- Eligible students who are undertaking a compulsory placement / study abroad as part of their degree programme, and by whom a reduced rate tuition fee would normally be payable to the University, will receive a bursary reflecting the reduced rate of fee, on a *pro rata* basis.
- The bursary will be paid as a cash award.
- The amount of the annual bursary will reflect the level of tuition fee: if tuition fees increase with inflation, then the bursary amount will normally be increased accordingly.

4.3 For students from England² commencing undergraduate degree programmes in 2006, the table below shows examples of the amount of non-repayable support for which students may be eligible each year. In addition, students will be able to take out repayable student loans for living costs and fee deferral.

Annual household income	Government financial support per year	Newcastle University Bursary per year	Total amount of non-repayable financial support per year
Less than £17,500	Full maintenance grant of £2,700	£1,300	£4,000
Between approximately £17,501 and £37,425	Partial maintenance grant of up to £2,699 (on a means-tested basis)	£1,000	Minimum: £1,001 Maximum: £3,699

4.4 PGCE students commencing study in 2006 may be eligible for non-repayable financial support as follows:

Government financial support per year	Newcastle University PGCE Bursary
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Government bursary of £6,000 ▪ OR Government bursary of £9,000 plus a 'golden hello' of £5000 for maths and science postgraduate trainees ▪ OR Government bursary of £9,000 plus a 'golden hello' of £2500 for other priority secondary subjects. ▪ Means tested maintenance grants of between £1200 and £2,700 	All PGCE students eligible for the FULL means - tested grant of £2,700 will receive a Newcastle University Bursary of £300

4.5 Students' eligibility for state financial support will be assessed by their LEA and/or the Student Loans Company (SLC).

4.6 It is expected that Newcastle University Bursaries will be paid to students through the Student Loans Company

4.7 The bursary will normally be paid in two equal annual instalments. Details of procedures for payment of the bursary will be provided to all students holding an offer of a place.

4.8 From the information which we have about our students entering the University in 2004, (and taking into account deferred entrants from 2005) we estimate that approximately 1317 (36.5%) of our total 2006 UK undergraduate entrants who enter under the new fee arrangements will be eligible for a Newcastle University Bursary.

4.9 Of these, we estimate that about 593 (16.4% of the total) will be eligible for the Newcastle University Bursary of £1,300 payable to students who receive full state financial support, and 725 (20.1% of the total) will be eligible for a bursary of £1000.

4.10 We estimate that approximately 68 (20%) of our students commencing PGCE programmes in 2006 will be eligible for the Newcastle University PGCE Bursary of £300

4.11 The new bursary scheme subsumes and replaces the current (Alumni-funded) bursary scheme which offers an Access Scholarship of £500 in year 1 to students from the North East who are eligible for full or partial state support. The current scheme has been in operation for 2004 and 2005 entrants. The Alumni funding (approx £250,000 per annum) will contribute to resources for the new scheme from 2006, subject to continued availability of donations for this purpose.

² Details of government student support arrangements for students from other parts of the UK are available from the relevant government websites for Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland.
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4.12 The Newcastle University Bursary scheme will be reviewed and revised annually.

5 **Recognising outstanding achievement**

5.1 In addition to the Newcastle University Bursary scheme described above, the University is introducing, from 2006, the **Newcastle Excellence Scholarship Scheme** to support its aim to admit undergraduate students of excellent ability and potential and to recognise outstanding achievement on entry. This recognition will be available to students from all backgrounds.

5.2 The following awards, available to entrants from all backgrounds and from all parts of the UK and EU, will be made in 2006:

Subject areas:	Newcastle Excellence Scholarships	Details
Science, Agriculture and Engineering	48 Scholarships of £1,000 per year	Awarded on the basis of outstanding performance on entry
	At least 50 Scholarships of £500 per year	Various performance-related criteria, depending on the subject
	Up to 38 awards of £1,000 per year from Stage 2 onwards	For students who did not receive an award on entry, but demonstrate outstanding performance in Year 1 at the University
Humanities, Arts and Social Sciences	29 First Year Scholarships of £1,000	For outstanding performance on entry, taking into account all information on the UCAS form
Medical Sciences (including Medicine, Dentistry and Biomedical and Biomolecular Sciences)	Approx. 29 First Year Scholarships of £1,000	For outstanding performance on entry, taking into account all information on the UCAS form

5.3 It is expected that students from the target groups in this Access Agreement will benefit from these Excellence Scholarships on a proportionate basis.

5.4 In addition, each Faculty is offering specific Scholarships for students entering the University from schools and colleges involved in the PARTNERS Programme:

Faculty	Awards linked to PARTNERS schools and colleges :	Details
Science, Agriculture and Engineering	10 First Year Scholarships of £500 for students entering the Faculty through the PARTNERS Programme supported entry route.	Awarded on the basis of outstanding performance in the PARTNERS Programme Assessed Summer School together with achievements of specified examination grades.
Humanities, Arts and Social Sciences	19 First Year Scholarships of £1,000 for students from PARTNERS schools and colleges.	For outstanding performance on entry, taking into account all information on the UCAS form, including average A level or equivalent performance of the applicant's school / college
Medical Sciences (including Medicine, Dentistry and Biomedical and Biomolecular Sciences)	Approx. 6 First Year Scholarships of £500 for students entering the Faculty through the PARTNERS Programme supported entry route.	Awarded on the basis of outstanding performance in the PARTNERS Programme Assessed Summer School together with achievements of specified examination grades.

5.5 For students entering the University in 2006, it is anticipated that approximately 229 awards, to the value of £492,000 will be made through the Newcastle Excellence Scholarships Scheme. Of these, it is estimated that 105 awards (£227,000 approx) will directly benefit students from the target cohorts identified in this Access Agreement.

5.6 Information about scholarships for 2006 entrants is available on the University website.

6 **Provision of information to students**

6.1 A key to the success of our initiatives to promote and safeguard fair access will be the provision of clear, timely and accurate information about student finance to potential students and their parents, teachers and advisers. We plan to do this as follows:

- 6.2 Our Undergraduate Prospectus for 2006 entry contains information about student finance and an outline of our proposed bursary scheme, with a note to indicate that this is subject to approval of this Agreement.
- 6.3 Our comprehensive **Guide to Student Finance at the University of Newcastle upon Tyne (2006 entry)** includes information about fees, government financial support, the Newcastle University Bursary Scheme, the Newcastle Excellence Scholarships Scheme, Access to Learning Funds, student loans and other ways of funding study. It also provides advice on budgeting and financial management. A copy of the Guide will be sent with the Undergraduate Prospectus to all enquirers and to all UK schools and colleges. Copies will be available at all HE recruitment fairs, parents' evenings, school visits, University Visit Days, post-application open days and other relevant events. The Guide will be revised annually to reflect any changes in our Bursary scheme.
- 6.4 Our University website will include up-to-date financial information, including, in due course, a 'cost calculator' which will enable students to assess the costs of studying at Newcastle University.
- 6.5 The website will also include resources for those who advise students, including a Powerpoint presentation with notes, which can be downloaded for use by teachers and careers advisers. There will also be a PDF version of the Guide, handouts and budget planner activities for potential students.
- 6.6 Our student recruitment and widening participation teams will visit schools and colleges to give presentations to teachers and pupils about student finance matters. They will be assisted by trained student ambassadors (part of our new outreach plans) who will visit schools and colleges to explain student finance issues and our bursary scheme, and give first-hand, credible information about the experience of being a student at Newcastle University. This scheme will be piloted in 2005-06.
- 6.7 The University will also contribute to Student Finance seminars provided by the regional and sub-regional Aimhigher Partnerships, which will also reinforce the messages through relevant websites. In addition, the University will reinforce the messages about student financial support alongside the government's publicity scheme.
- 6.8 Applicants to the University in 2006 will receive information about student finance and the bursary and scholarship schemes when they receive an offer of a place.
- 6.9 Existing eligible students (from 2006) will be reminded about the bursary scheme and financial support available during each year of study at the University.

7. Current outreach activities

- 7.1 The University has a coherent and wide-ranging programme of existing widening participation work, which will be continued and expanded during the period of this Access Agreement (see Annex 1 for details). The outreach elements of our Widening Participation Strategy are based on the following key themes:
- Working with young people (from primary school age) to raise their aspirations and awareness of higher education, using our current students as positive role models through our Students into Schools Project, 'Student Guide to Student Life' and residential Summer Schools.
 - Encouraging positive aspirations and attitudes in families and communities through work with parents, younger children and disaffected groups
 - Activities and initiatives to help to raise the attainment of young people, including Master Classes, taster events and specialist Summer Schools
 - Building strong relationships with schools and colleges, and working closely with teachers, advisers and others who influence student choice and aspirations
 - Providing opportunities for all potential applicants to find out about the University, together with information which will help them to make an informed choice about their options, through a wide-ranging programme of liaison activities, school / college visits, comprehensive printed and web-based information and opportunities to visit the campus
 - Identifying, through our PARTNERS Programme, able, talented young people of high potential, who may be at risk of not progressing to higher education because of socio-economic, personal or educational disadvantage factors, and supporting them in the transition from school or college to the University
 - Collaborating with the other universities and colleges in the region, through regional projects and initiatives such as the government's Aimhigher programme and Lifelong Learning Networks, to encourage progression to higher education
 - Developing our curriculum to reflect the needs of an increasingly diverse student population.

8. New outreach work

8.1 The University will use a proportion of its additional fee income to support the following additional outreach activities from 2006-07:

Student Ambassador Placement Scheme

8.2 Six undergraduate students will be employed each year, on a one-year paid placement scheme, to work as student ambassadors in collaboration with our student recruitment and widening participation teams. A major part of their role will be to carry out visits to schools and colleges throughout the UK to give talks and presentations to pupils about: the benefits of investing in their future through participation in Higher Education; student finance issues, including the bursary scheme; student life (to dispel myths and misconceptions); and the 'Newcastle experience' about which, as current undergraduate students, they will be able to give credible and contemporary information.

8.3 The student ambassadors will be fully trained, and will undertake many other relevant roles, including work with local schools and colleges, involvement in the PARTNERS Programme, Summer Schools and Master Classes, and the development of projects, resources and materials to support our widening participation work. They will also gain valuable employability skills, and earn money to offset their own student costs.

8.4 The Ambassador Scheme will be piloted in 2005-06 (see section 6, above). The student ambassadors will be carefully selected to ensure that they will be credible ambassadors in the context of our widening participation target groups.

8.5 From October 2005, the Student Recruitment Office is also working with our School of Education and Communication Studies to ensure that each year's cohort of PGCE students is fully trained and equipped to promote the benefits of Higher Education, and the key messages about Student Financial Support, during their periods of teaching practice.

Strengthening our Widening Participation Team by providing additional resources to Faculties and Schools

8.6 Faculties and Schools play a vital role in widening participation and outreach activities, delivering the essential academic content of many events and participating in our PARTNERS Programme and Students into Schools schemes. Involvement in such work is often on the basis of goodwill and is subject to time constraints and other pressures.

8.7 We will provide additional funding to our Faculties and Schools so that the enthusiastic champions of our widening participation and outreach work can be supported in their contribution to activities such as: Master Classes; Summer Schools and other residential events; development of exciting materials to enthuse young people about learning; visits to schools and colleges; pre-application open days, taster events and conferences for students; subject-specific development activities for teachers; and work to encourage, retain and 'nurture' applicants from target groups to maximise their opportunities for progression.

Extension of the PARTNERS Programme into schools and colleges with a large black and minority ethnic population

8.7 The University is currently developing links with schools and colleges in Yorkshire and Humberside. As part of this process, we will, from 2006, extend the PARTNERS Programme to schools and colleges (up to 10 initially) in key areas (eg Bradford, Rotherham) which have a high black and minority ethnic population, in order to encourage more qualified young people from these groups to apply to the University. It is estimated that approximately 2,400 students per annum will have the opportunity to participate in PARTNERS events, and that up to 100 per annum will potentially benefit from the supported entry route.

Extension of current work to raise awareness of deaf and disabled students

8.8 The University hosted a successful joint awareness-raising event for deaf and disabled students (working with Northumbria University) in March 2004. We will offer two further events each year from 2006, aimed at potential deaf and disabled students from the North East and other areas including Cumbria, Yorkshire, Humberside and the North West.

9. Milestones

9.1 The University will use three sets of data as its baseline for milestones, monitoring and evaluation in the context of this Agreement:

- UCAS application datasets purchased annually by the University
- HESA Performance Indicators concerning student intake (supplemented, where more detailed analysis is required, by the University's own HESA data)
- Data provided by the Student Loans Company regarding eligibility of students for financial support.

9.2 The parameters for considering these data sets will be maintained in successive years to enable meaningful comparisons to be made.

9.3 In some instances, the milestones and anticipated numbers shown below extend beyond the period of this one-year Access Agreement. They assume that applications will increase by approximately 3% per annum from the 2003 entry baseline.

Young students from lower socio-economic groups (NS-SEC groups 4 - 7)

- Number of applications to increase by 5% per annum, from 4484 in 2003, to 6309 in 2010
- Proportion of applications to increase from 21.59% in 2003 to 24.23% in 2010
- HESA performance indicator for intake of young students to increase from 21% in 2003 to 26% in 2010

Young students from low participation neighbourhoods

- Number of applications to increase by 5% per annum, from 2543 in 2003, to 3578 in 2010
- Proportion of applications to increase from 11.49% in 2003 to 13.15% in 2010
- HESA performance indicator for intake of young students to increase from 10% in 2003 to 14% in 2010

Students with a disability

- Number of applications (of all students indicating a disability, including those with dyslexia) to increase by approximately 3% per annum, in line with overall increase in applications, from 951 in 2003, to 1170 in 2010
- Proportion of such applications to remain stable at approximately 4%
- HESA performance indicator for intake of students in receipt of the Disabled Students' Allowance to remain stable at the 2003 entry figure of approximately 3.3%

Students from black and minority ethnic groups

- Number of applications to increase by 3.5% per annum, from 1414 in 2003, to 1799 in 2010
- Proportion of applications to increase from 6.4% in 2003 to 6.63% in 2010
- Percentage intake to increase from approximately 4.7% in 2003 to approximately 6.00% in 2010

Outreach and activity milestones

- 6 student ambassadors to be employed each year from 2006 (with a pilot in 2005-06)
- Student ambassadors to visit up to 450 schools and colleges per annum, to deliver talks to approximately 250 students in each school / college (approximately 112,500 students in total)
- 5 schools and colleges from Yorkshire/Humberside to join PARTNERS Programme in 2006 (for 2007 entry), increasing by at least 2 per year until 2010
- At least 30 students from black or minority ethnic groups from these additional participating schools and colleges to apply to the University through the PARTNERS Programme in 2007, increasing to 60 by 2010.
- At least 120 deaf and disabled students per annum to attend awareness-raising events at the University from 2006.

10. Monitoring, evaluation and review

- 10.1 The University's performance against the above applications milestones will be monitored annually in late January (on receipt of the relevant UCAS datasets).
- 10.2 Monitoring of performance against HESA benchmarks will be undertaken on publication of the annual Performance Indicators (September).
- 10.3 The University will report to HEFCE on all of its widening participation activity through the Annual Monitoring Statement in July each year. This will include a separate section reporting on progress against the milestones in the Access Agreement. A copy of the relevant section will be sent to OFFA, with accompanying analyses, comments and notes as appropriate.
- 10.4 Within the University, the effectiveness of the activities and bursary schemes included in the Access Agreement will be reviewed and evaluated annually in October / November by University Teaching and Learning Committee. Recommendations for any revisions to the Access Agreement will be discussed initially with OFFA before being considered and agreed by Council and submitted to OFFA for approval.

Annexes:

1. Summary of current widening participation outreach activity at the University of Newcastle upon Tyne
2. Baseline application and performance data on which the milestones are based
3. Russell Group Statement on widening participation