

St Helens College Access Agreement (2007 entry)

Introduction

The College has an excellent track record in contributing the widening participation agenda within St Helens and beyond. At present the College works with organisations such as Aimhigher (e.g. holistic approaches to progression routes project) to pursue its widening participation agenda as well as offering a wide range of access courses that enable young people and adults to climb onto and up the learning ladder. We are also in the process of developing progression routes from vocational level 3 programmes onto higher education courses.

a) Levels of fees or fee limits

All Honours and Foundation Degrees will be charged at £2500* per annum.

* This is subject to an annual inflationary increase in the region of 3% per annum

b) Amounts of additional fee income to be spent on access measures

All things being equal, it is anticipated that of the £317,000 raised in additional fee income £210,500 will be allocated to bursaries.

c) Bursaries and other financial support for students

Bursaries apply to directly funded Foundation and Honours Degrees:

- £1000 to prospective students who qualify for the full or partial grant i.e. that have a residual household income of less than £37,425*.
- An additional £300 to all students who progress to a full time Higher Education programme from within St Helens College.
- The bursary will be paid in one instalment each year by BACs.

The bursaries are in addition to any other support that the College presently provides to students.

*This is the latest figure for the upper limit for those who would qualify for the full or partial Maintenance/Special Support Grant starting in September 2006 and is subject to change for those students starting in September 2007.

d) Provision of information to students

The College will engage in a variety of means to communicate the new bursary offer to prospective students. These include:

- Higher Education Prospectus (this will be distributed in September 2006 to all careers advisors locally as well as to those people, as identified by UCAS, who have expressed an interest in a course area delivered by the College).
- College course prospectus, 'Prospect', (distributed to the majority of house holds in the Borough in January, March and August).
- School/College liaison (in part this will focus on the six sixth forms in the Borough). This activity will take place between October 2006 and June 2007 and will aim to inform young people that meet the bursary criteria, of what the College can offer them.
- College Web site (this includes a link to the UCAS web site during the clearing period). This is constantly being updated.
- Careers updating event. These target local careers advisors and informs them of any changes in the College's provision (including fees). This event takes place in May 2006 & May 2007.
- Student Finance & Welfare Officer. This is an existing post. The postholder will be briefed on the bursary once it has been agreed with Offa, they will then be able to advise prospective students of the financial packages available to them.
- Attendance at UCAS Fairs and College Open Days. These take place between February-June 2006 and February –June 2007. In the main these events attract sixth form students residing in the North West (including those from St Helens).
- Internal marketing to existing level 3 students (including those people on Access Courses or engaged in Work Based Learning). Teaching staff would brief their students in October 2006.

e) Outreach Work

The College will look to use its relationships with community centres, voluntary organisations and schools in the educationally deprived wards of the Borough to distribute information about the bursary and the College's HE provision. It is anticipated that this activity will take place between October 2006 and June 2007.

f) Milestones

The College will look to achieve the following broad milestones:

- To increase internal progression from level 3 courses onto HE courses taught by the College by 20% from 127 to 153 by July 2007
- To increase retention by 3% on higher education courses by July 2007.
- To explore the possibility of funding a Higher Education mentoring system. This to be achieved by October 2006
- To provide a financial advice session to each higher education student. This to be achieved by May 2006

As part of the College's business planning process, operational milestones will be agreed and set with each of the sub colleges. These will essentially highlight each sub college's contribution towards the above milestones. The sub colleges' milestones will be set by July 2006.

g) Institutional Monitoring Arrangements

Once the bursary has been agreed the milestones outlined above (as well as those highlighted in sections D & E) will be monitored by the Higher Education Committee for the College. This cross college committee has the responsibility of monitoring and reporting (to staff, senior managers and governors).

Any potential negative impacts on the delivery of the Access Agreement will be identified at the HE committee and an appropriate course of action drafted and agreed with the senior management team of the College.