

## NEWCASTLE COLLEGE

### ACCESS AGREEMENT

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a) Level of fees or fee limits

All the higher education provision at Newcastle College is directly funded.

A fee of £2300 will be charged for all full-time higher education programmes from September 2006. This includes Higher National Diplomas, Foundation degrees and BA/BSC Honours degrees. The fee will apply equally to United Kingdom students and to students who are nationals of any other state of the European Union.

Students who begin a full-time course part way through an academic year will only have to pay a fee proportionate to the remainder of their tuition for that year. This could occur where a programme recruits twice in the same year, or where a student transfers from a part-time to a full-time programme.

#### **Bursaries and other financial support for students:**

The level of tuition fee set by the institution takes account of the policy considerations which it has adopted to guide its thinking in relation to fee income. These considerations are:

- that the cost of full time higher education to students should not act as a entry barrier to those capable of benefiting from such an education and otherwise willing to engage in it;
- that income from tuition revenue should be managed to provide direct financial support for students, and to enhance their learning, and to encourage their progression and achievement.

The bursary arrangements the institution will introduce from 2006/7 are intended to support the fulfilment of these policy objectives.

All students will be eligible to apply for a minimum bursary of £500 in year 1 of their study and in subsequent years dependent upon continuation of their study and successful completion of the previous year. In addition, students, whose residual household income entitles them to state financial support, approximately 63% of the intake, may receive an additional sum of up to £500 per year.

Bursary payments will be administered in the following way;

**1. Students receiving £1000 per year:**

- an initial payment of £500 following enrolment in the first year of study. It is anticipated that this payment will assist students in acquiring personal learning resources for their programme;
- subsequent payments of £250 and £250 at the beginning of the Spring and of the Summer Terms in the first year of study, to provide general financial support, and to act as an incentive to assist retention, achievement, and progression between levels of study.
- A further £500 will be paid to all students progressing into their second and third year of study providing that they have passed each module at that lower level.
- £250 will be paid at the start of the Spring term and £250 at the start of the Summer term to provide an incentive to assist retention and achievement.

**2. Students receiving £500 per year:**

- an initial payment of £250 following enrolment in the first year of study. It is anticipated that this payment will assist students in acquiring personal learning resources for their programme;
- subsequent payments of £125 and £125 at the beginning of the Spring and of the Summer Terms in the first year of study, to provide general financial support, and to act as an incentive to assist retention, achievement, and progression between levels of study.
- a further £250 will be paid to all students progressing into their second and third year of study providing that they have passed each module at that lower level.
- £125 will be paid at the start of the Spring term and £125 at the start of the Summer term to provide an incentive to assist retention and achievement.

In addition to bursary arrangements, students will also be eligible for the following financial support:

- payments under the Access to Learning Fund. Payments under this fund can provide short term repayable loans, and offer hardship funds in cases of serious financial difficulty. Guidance notes for higher education students seeking payments under this fund are available on the college website and in materials produced by the Student Services department.

**Outreach activities:**

It is anticipated that the current extensive range of outreach activities will continue although the College reserves the right to amend this depending upon any changes in widening participation funding. Current activities include:

- short courses held within the local community aimed at mature learners who come from widening participation categories
- events and promotional materials intended for mature learners and for non-traditional entrants to Higher Education such as Apprentices progressing onto level 4/5 provision.
- aspiration raising activities targeted at pupils aged 14 years and above including roadshows, visits from our Vocational Higher Education Facilitator and master classes.
- open days held at the College.
- participation in open days held at local, regional and national venues.
- mailshots including promotional materials aimed at encouraging our own level 3 students to progress onto our higher education provision.
- visits to local and regional schools and colleges.
- a 'keeping warm' campaign for all applicants through out the year of application.

These activities are aimed predominately at pupils and students studying within Tyne & Wear, and Northumberland in local schools, sixth forms, colleges of FE including the institution's own students and work based learners.

#### **Information on financial support available to students:**

Financial information will be made available to all prospective students considering whether to join courses coming under this agreement. Such information will be guided by the principles of accessibility, transparency and clarity.

Information will summarise the annual and aggregate fee for the chosen course, bursary arrangements, and other sources of financial support available to students. It will also identify the sources from which students can obtain advice both within and outside the institution regarding the general financial framework applying to students undertaking full time higher education studies, so that they can establish the likely level of debt they will incur by the end of their studies. The institution is able to provide a full range of financial advice to prospective and current students through its Student Services department through the production of fact sheets outlining fee charges and the bursaries available to students with worked examples, through individual interviews and in response to queries received in person, by telephone or by email. Student Services will also provide briefing sessions as part of Open Day events and will be available to give individual advice and guidance.

During induction all students will receive a presentation from the Student Services team which will, inter alia, cover issues associated with student finance.

It is the intention of the College that all information relating to costs and means of support for students will be available in the Prospectus and on the college website. Given the print deadlines for the 2006-7 prospectus, it has not been possible to include this information in this edition but a summary sheet will be sent out to all applicants advising them of our policy. The information will also be advertised prominently on the College website.

#### **Expenditure of access measures:**

The institution will direct its additional fee revenue to support access measures in the following ways:

- through bursary payments to students
- through the outreach activities outlined earlier
- through funding to provide additional support for academic tutors in relation to assessment of students and the provision of work based learning
- through capital spending to ensure that appropriate facilities are available.

#### **Institutional milestones and objects:**

The institution has established the following milestones and objectives in relation to its higher education provision falling under this access agreement:

- recruitment targets: to meet the planned target intake onto programmes of study.
- retention targets: to achieve a minimum annual retention rate of 85% in each year on higher education programmes.
- progression targets: to achieve an annual internal progression rate from full time FE vocational level 3 programmes of 20% of completers, and to achieve an annual minimum internal progression rate from foundation degree completers onto articulating honours degree programmes of at least 40% where appropriate programmes are available.
- widening participation: to maintain the planned target intake for the proportion of students coming from the widening participation categories i.e. eligible for financial support at or about the current figure of 65%. This is based on data identifying 29% of College students receiving full fee waiver and 36% receiving partial fee waiver in 2003-4.
- curriculum development: to respond to the identified needs of employers and students by developing new programmes and offering curriculum flexibility.

#### **Additional information:**

The institution will undertake annual monitoring of this access agreement to confirm compliance and progress towards the

achievement of the milestones it has established. Responsibility for the monitoring report will rest with the Director of Higher Education Curriculum. The report will be presented to the College Executive for approval, and following such approval be sent to the Academic Board and to the College Governors.

The annual monitoring report will be submitted to the Director of OFFA following its approval by the College Governors. The report will be presented to the Executive at such time as to ensure that OFFA will receive the report by its July deadline.

The report will incorporate the following sections:

- financial data summarising recruitment levels, payment of bursaries, and other financial support made available to students;
- outreach activities that have been undertaken during the year; and
- progression made in meeting institutional targets and milestones.

It is anticipated that amendments to this access agreement would not be sought from OFFA before the academic year 2008/9. The College retains the right to submit a revised agreement in 2006-7 following the introduction of variable fees.