

## **ACCESS AGREEMENT**

**January 2007**

### **1. INTRODUCTION**

The North Bedfordshire Training Partnership (which includes the North Bedfordshire SCITT Consortium) has a proven track record in the delivery of high quality, school-centered, Initial Teacher Training meeting the wide range of needs of our diverse local community and offering a variety of training routes into the teaching profession. The Partnership strives to ensure fair and equal access to our ITT courses for all those who wish to, and are able to, benefit from this level of study – meeting, year on year, our targets for recruiting from under represented groups.

The North Bedfordshire Training Partnership decided to introduce variable tuition fees from September 2006. Thus, our first ‘Access Agreement’ originally detailed the terms of the variable tuition fees charged by the Training Partnership to Post Graduate trainee teachers from September 2006 and indicated how the Partnership planned to support individuals to achieve their potential in teacher training.

### **2. FEE LIMITS**

#### **2.1. Courses covered by the agreement**

This agreement applies to the PGCE courses for which the Partnership receives funding directly from the Training and Development Agency. This agreement does not apply to our employment based teacher trainees or to our Overseas Trained Teachers programme.

#### **2.2. Students included within the agreement**

All students who are eligible to pay EU tuition fees are included in this agreement. If the Partnership recruits any students who are classified as overseas students, they will pay a separate tuition fee, which is to be determined on an individual basis.

#### **2.3. Agreement renewal**

However, the original agreement - which was intended to last for 5 years - was reviewed before it was implemented and changes were suggested. The reasons for these changes arose because of structural changes to our validating university which we were not in a position to anticipate when our access agreement was originally submitted.

When the access agreement was first written, the Partnership’s PGCE provision was validated by De Montfort University – who imposed a policy that all their partner providers

should charge the full £3000 fee. However, before the original access agreement could be implemented De Montfort University (Bedford) merged with Luton University to become The University of Bedfordshire – thus our validating university changed. The University of Bedfordshire had a very different policy to their predecessors - and at that point we were encouraged to pursue our original intention of setting our tuition fees at below the maximum level allowed.

#### **2.4. Tuition fees**

Therefore, for September 2007 onwards North Bedfordshire Training Partnership decided to charge tuition fees of only **£2500** to trainees on full time PGCE programmes. As school based providers we have fewer of the infrastructure costs of HEI providers and it seemed appropriate to pass these savings onto our trainees at the point of access to our courses rather than through the 'standard' bursary.

### **3. BURSARY SCHEME**

The North Bedfordshire Training Partnership has always been fully committed to widening participation and continues to be engaged in a number of activities in this area. It was partly in order to ensure that as wide a range as possible of suitably qualified trainees continued to have access to our PGCE courses, that the Partnership made the decision to reduce its fees.

Because we have set our fees £500 below the £3000 maximum fee we no longer offer our trainees the 'standard' bursary of £300. However, we still aim to ensure that the impact of top up fees is minimized and that all students in need of financial support have access to that support.

Thus, an additional, discretionary, means tested bursary of up to £500 for any student in need of financial assistance (using the thresholds we used with the 'Access to Learning' Fund and using the full SLC service) will continue to be available.

This Bursary scheme is additional to the package of financial support available to trainee teachers from the TDA.

### **4. PROVISION OF INFORMATION TO STUDENTS**

Clear information about the tuition fees that apply to our PGCE courses - and full details of our bursary schemes and other support – has been readily accessible from February 2007: -

- in our prospectus
- on our website
- in our advertising and publicity
- at our information evenings and 'drop in' sessions
- at interview.

Finally, prior to accepting a place on a course with the Partnership, all prospective PGCE trainees are advised - in writing - of the aggregate amount of fees that will be charged for the completion of their chosen course.

## **5. OUTREACH WORK**

The partnership will formalize and further develop with funding its existing practices working with the local network of Training Schools and Specialist Colleges – contacting key community groups - to make available a wide range of opportunities for potential trainees to gain valuable experience within schools prior to making an application.

The North Bedfordshire Training Partnership will also continue to develop and fund its current practice of: -

- holding local information and recruitment evenings within local schools
- targeted newspaper advertising  
(aimed at different ethnic and under-represented groups)
- regular 'drop in' sessions in targeted local schools to encourage and support applications from the full spectrum of groups within our local community.

## **6. INSTITUTIONAL MONITORING ARRANGEMENTS**

The North Bedfordshire Training Partnership undertakes to monitor compliance with the commitments made under this agreement. The following indicators will be monitored annually;

- The number of students taking up the bursaries and patterns of awards
- The retention and achievement rates for PGCE students
- The age, gender and socio-economic characteristics of the students

The Training Partnership was committed to setting explicit baselines and targets in each of the above categories by May 2008. This has been done and these targets are listed in our SED and are reviewed in our Consortium Board Meetings. Compliance will continue to be ensured by ongoing monitoring using our existing quality assurance procedures and reports will be presented to the Board and the University.

An annual monitoring report will be submitted in accordance with the requirements of the Office of fair Access.

Mark Thompson  
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(Joint Programme Managers)