

THE ROYAL VETERINARY COLLEGE

Access Agreement

2010/2011

1. Introduction

- 1.1 This Access Agreement has been prepared in response to the Higher Education Act 2004, and takes full account of the guidance (2004/01) published by the Office of Fair Access (OFFA). It has been revised in response to the requirement placed upon HEIs to submit Widening Participation Strategic Assessments, and should be read in conjunction with the latter, which is attached to this Agreement.

2. Additional Outreach Activity Funded from Variable Tuition Fees

- 2.1 The College recognises that it has a special responsibility as a national provider of veterinary education. We will therefore use part of the additional money generated by variable tuition fees to develop e-learning materials for Gifted and Talented pupils within the Widening Participation cohort. We will also selectively expand our national outreach activities, exemplified by our links with Highfields School in Wolverhampton. On a national basis we will also continue to advertise the College's offer via careers fairs and publications which target specific audiences, e.g., Hotcourses, Ethnic Britain.

3. Bursaries and Financial Advice

- 3.1 We recognise that the financial burdens of Higher Education can serve as a disincentive for prospective students from less affluent backgrounds. This is particularly the case for students coming to London, and those incurring the additional expense of pursuing a course in the veterinary and related professions. The College has therefore opted to go beyond the minimum requirements for a bursary scheme, in offering an enhanced bursary scheme targeted specifically at students from less affluent backgrounds. We will offer the following bursaries to UK students entering the College in 2010/11:

BVetMed Years 1-5, Combined BVetMed/BSc

A bursary offering of £1650 to those receiving a full Higher Education Maintenance Grant, with a pro-rata portion of the bursary for those with a family income of between £25,000 and £39,333.

BVetMed Year 0 ('The Gateway Programme')

A bursary of £5700 to those receiving a full Higher Education Maintenance Grant, which is expected to be the whole cohort. This bursary level is set to be an equivalent cost to the student of continuing to study at home for a further year to improve A level grades. After year 0 students will be offered bursary arrangements set out above for years 1 to 5 of the BVetMed.

BSc Bioveterinary Sciences

A bursary offering of £1750 to those receiving a full Higher Education Maintenance Grant, with a pro-rata portion of the bursary for those with a family income of between £25,000 and £39,333.

Foundation Degree and BSc in Veterinary Nursing

A bursary offering of £2000 to those receiving a full Higher Education Maintenance Grant, with a pro-rata portion of the bursary for those with a family income of between £25,000 and £39,333.

- 3.2 Where we state that students who receive less than a full Grant will be awarded a pro rata portion of the bursary, we mean that a student who receives e.g. 75% of the full Grant would receive 75% of the maximum bursary for that course, subject to a minimum of £50 (i.e. where the bursary would, pro rata, be worth less than £50, it would be rounded up), provided their family income falls within the limits set out in 3.1 above.
- 3.3 Students repeating a year of study will be entitled to a bursary at the rate pertaining to other students taking that year of study, except that students repeating the Gateway Year will be entitled to a bursary at the level for BVetMed Year 1.
- 3.4 The College offers Merit Scholarships to the value of £3000 for every year of the course. For the BVetMed and BSc Bioveterinary Sciences courses Scholarships will be awarded on the basis of the BMAT score. Merit scholarships will be awarded to Foundation Degree/BSc Vet Nursing students demonstrating very high achievement at the end of their first year assessments. There are three scholarships available each year to BVetMed entrants, and one per year each for BSc Bioveterinary Sciences entrants and Foundation Degree/BSc Vet Nursing first year students.
- 3.5 We expect that all students on the Gateway Programme, and 30% of students on other programmes, will be eligible for the maximum bursary. In addition, approximately a further 25% of students will be eligible for a partial bursary. We guarantee that, in subsequent years, bursary rates will, if necessary, be increased to ensure that any inflationary rises in the fee limit do not create a gap between the fee we charge and the total package of support available.

- 3.6 The College participates in the model bursary scheme devised by UUK and SCOP.
- 3.7 Student hardship funds in the form of the College's existing allocation from the Access for Learning Fund (ALF) will also be available to the tune of about £40,000 for all Home/EU undergraduates each year. This funding is provided direct to the College by HEFCE, and is therefore not formally part of this Access Agreement.
- 3.8 We will provide prospective students with information about the level of fees and bursaries in our prospectuses. Clear information about the costs of studying, including the aggregate cost of tuition, will be provided to prospective students when they are offered a place at the College. Continuing students will be informed of the financial support and advice available to them via the VLE.
- 3.9 The College will provide financial advice for students, which is particularly important on a high cost course such as the BVetMed. At present, our Financial Guidance Officer attends for one day a week at each campus. In 2007 the College employed a full-time Student Services and Support Manager to coordinate provision for student support.

4. Milestones

Our current Access Agreement sets targets for increasing enrolment of students from under-represented groups for the period to 2010. However, given the longer planning horizon of this Strategic Assessment, we are carrying these targets further, to 2012.

State School students

Between 2002/03 and 2007/08, the percentage of home undergraduate students who had attended state schools increased from 50% to 61%.

Target by 2012: by targeting our outreach activity at state schools, by offering a range of courses accessible to a broad range of applicants, and by facilitating entry by students with vocational qualifications, we intend to continue movement towards the representation of state school leavers among our students being closer to their representation in the overall population. A figure of 65% by 2012 would be challenging, but achievable.

Lower socio-economic groups

Between 2002/03 and 2007/08, the percentage of home undergraduate students whose parental occupations ranked 4 – 9 on the SOC2000 classification increased from 18% to 30%.

Target by 2012: through the range of initiatives noted above, we would hope to continue our progress in recruiting students from lower socio-economic groups. We would be disappointed if the number of students from lower socioeconomic groups did not reach 34% by 2012.

Ethnic minority pupils

Between 2002/03 and 2007/08, the total number of home undergraduate students from ethnic minority groups increased from 5% to 7%.

Target by 2012: despite this gradual increase, the number of ethnic minority students still fails to reflect their numbers in the wider community. Although cultural considerations militate against members of some ethnic groups choosing the veterinary professions, this is less relevant to the second and third generations. Particularly as we intend to provide specific activities for BME students, tailor the marketing of our courses to be more inclusive and develop closer ties with other aspirational projects targeting BME groups such as Generating Genius, it would be reasonable to project the number of ethnic minority students reaching 10% by 2012.

Vocational Students

Furthermore, to build upon the commitments we have made through both Widening Participation and through the VETNET LLN, we shall seek to increase the number of students entering our courses with vocational qualifications. The Gateway Programme, the BSc in Bioveterinary Science and the Foundation Degree in Veterinary Nursing already accept vocationally qualified entrants. We shall seek to reach a target of 6 such students, with appropriate modules, for entry on to the main BVetMed degree scheme, by 2012.

5. Tuition Fees

- 5.1 The College intends to charge a tuition fee of £3,290 per annum for full-time home undergraduate students on all RVC-based courses commencing their courses in September 2010. We anticipate that we will continue to charge fees equivalent to the fee cap set by the Government, as this rises in line with inflation.

6. Costs

- 6.1 The College's expenditure on bursaries, additional outreach and enhanced financial advice is expected to be of the order of 30% of additional fee income in 2010/11.

- 6.2 As indicated above, we are committed to making further investments to safeguard access, particularly through additional outreach activity (see section 2) and the provision of financial information (see para. 3.9).

7. Monitoring Performance

- 7.1 The College's Academic Board, and through it the College Council, receives the annual monitoring report detailing progress towards meeting its aims in respect of widening participation.