

AGREEMENT ACCESS FOR: SOMERSET SCITT

Fee Limits

1. From September 2006, Somerset SCITT will charge £3000 per annum for its full time PGCE course. Fee levels will rise in subsequent years by the value of inflation.

Bursaries

2. We accept the principle that a significant proportion of the income generated through higher fees should be used to fund a targeted bursary scheme. However, we believe that students who will be paying the higher fees are likely to have much higher expectations in terms of facilities, resources and both academic and pastoral support. In response we need to make every effort to ensure that their expectations are met and exceeded. Therefore, in drafting this agreement, we are aware of the need to strike an appropriate balance between these two demands on additional income.
3. A significant proportion of Somerset SCITT trainees have household incomes close to the qualifying limit for a maintenance grant. Somerset SCITT does not wish to deter this group from entering higher education and this is especially so for the large number of mature students who choose to study with us.
4. All students liable to pay the fee of £3000 per annum and who are in receipt of a full maintenance grant will receive an annual bursary of £700. All other students liable for the new fee will receive a bursary of £500 per year. This baseline bursary will not be means-tested. Since fees are expected to rise with inflation, the bursaries will also be adjusted in line with inflation.
5. Both bursaries will be awarded as an integral part of the application and admissions process. Bursary payments will be staged to encourage retention. Trainees will only be eligible for a maximum of one bursary payment.
6. We will continue to target funds received under the Access to Learning Fund or its successor to allow us to make additional awards to those students whose ability to continue their studies is jeopardised by extreme hardship. The existence of this scheme will be made known to students throughout the admission process and beyond, although it will be stressed that such payments will be exceptional and rare.

Information for Students

7. Full information about fee levels and bursary entitlement will be published in our prospectus and in other publicity leaflets as well as via our website. When the Government does not set the maximum tuition fee in advance of prospectus publication dates, the fee for the previous year will be quoted with advice to expect a nationally agreed inflationary increase. Staff involved in finance and admissions will be appropriately trained to give information and support to applicants and trainees.

Outreach Work

8. Nationally, as well as on our course, certain groups are under-represented. These include men, people with disabilities and those from minority ethnic groups. We welcome very strongly applications from members of these groups and guarantee an interview if candidates have appropriate qualifications. If they join the course we ensure they are linked with appropriate supporting groups during the year. We will use around £500 of the additional fee income to augment our existing activities to encourage members of these under-represented groups to apply for our course, specifically by producing appropriate publicity material and undertaking targeted advertising of the course.

Baselines, Milestones and Targets

9. We are firmly committed to the principle of selecting trainees on academic merit and teaching potential. We believe that specific targets relating to the number of students admitted by background characteristics such as school type or social class are inconsistent with this principle. However, during the first 18 months of this agreement we will collect detailed socioeconomic and financial data on our trainees to establish a baseline profile of our trainees over two years. We will aim to increase the total number of applications received from candidates coming from the lower socio economic groups. Our targets will be developed from the baseline data with appropriate adjustments and flexibility to cater for the inherent volatility of the profiles due to the relatively small number of trainees on the course. We will also seek to enhance recruitment from men, people with disabilities and those from minority ethnic groups

Institutional Monitoring Arrangements

10. The existing annual monitoring reporting systems will be extended to include the activities identified in the Access Agreement. In addition the Management Board will receive and review regular reports which will evaluate the administration of the bursary scheme and the outreach activities undertaken, and their impact on our progress towards meeting our milestones for increasing recruitment from the under represented groups.
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