

## **ST HELENS COLLEGE**

### **ACCESS AGREEMENT (2011 ENTRY)**

#### **Introduction**

The College has a proud heritage of helping people from a wide variety of backgrounds reach their learning goals with 65% of those students graduating on B.A. programmes gaining a 2.1 or 1<sup>st</sup> class honours degree in 2010. This has been achieved through:

- Providing excellent support for students (as shown in the 2010 National Student Survey).
- Ensuring that students have a high levels of contact and teaching time with staff.
- High staff/student ratio.

In addition, higher education students starting in 2011 will be able to enjoy the benefits of a state of the art new build at the College's Town Centre site that includes investment in the areas of; science; performing arts; music production and photography.

#### **a) Levels of fees or fee limits**

All Honours and Foundation Degrees will be charged at £3037<sup>1</sup> per annum.

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

The additional fee income will contribute towards the College's overall strategy of engaging people from a broad range of backgrounds to realise their full potential.

#### **c) Bursaries and other financial support for students**

The College has a range of support which it offers its Higher Education students. The Access to Learning Fund can provide financial assistance for students whose financial circumstances are exceptional and particularly those students who need financial help to meet extra costs that cannot be met from other sources of support. The Fund can also help to alleviate unexpected financial hardship.

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<sup>1</sup> This is subject to an annual inflationary increase in line with the Government announced amount.

#### **d) Provision of information to students**

The College will engage in a variety of methods to communicate its offer to prospective students. These include:

- Higher Education Prospectus (this will be distributed in November 2010 to all careers advisers locally).
- College course prospectus, 'Prospect', (distributed to the majority of households in the Borough in January and August each year).
- The College Website which includes a link to the UCAS web site during the clearing period and is constantly being updated.
- Careers updating event. This targets local careers advisers and informs them of any changes in the College's provision (including fees). This event takes place in November 2010.
- Student Finance and Welfare Officer. This is an existing post. The post-holder will advise prospective students of the financial packages available to them.
- Attendance at UCAS Fairs and College Open Days. These take place between November 2010 and June 2011. 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 learners on Access Courses or engaged in Work Based Learning). Teaching staff will brief their students from November 2010.

#### **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 College's HE provision. It is anticipated that this activity will take place between October 2010 and June 2011.

#### **f) Milestones**

- The College is in the process of applying for the Frank Buttle Trust Quality Mark in order to further support the progression of care-leavers into higher education. The aim is for the College to have this quality mark by March 2011. The College was awarded this Quality mark in January 2011. This award and its recognition of the College's commitment to promoting and providing progression to HE for those in care and care leavers will support its offer of opportunities to these under-represented areas. Applications and recruitment from these areas will be carefully monitored.
- The College will have a plan in place by the end of March 2011 that will enable it to increase progression from work based learning provision.
- The College will examine all of its policies and procedures by July 2011 to ensure that they are helping reduce barriers to people wishing to access higher education.

#### **g) Institutional Monitoring Arrangements**

The milestones outlined above (as well as those highlighted in sections D and E) will be monitored by the Higher Education Strategy and Culture and Group. Any

potential negative impacts on the delivery of the Access Agreement will be identified by this group and the appropriate course of action taken.

Following the establishment of the new College structure, the centralised HE department has developed a new system for assessing its HE provision and is producing a more comprehensive annual self assessment report. This now includes a section on widening participation and monitoring of new cohort data including comparable statistics on age, gender, disability, entry qualifications and geographic origin including those resident in widening participation areas.

The College recently took part in a research project organised by the Association of Colleges into the background of students studying HE in FECs and their decisions to study at a College. The results of this will be circulated later in the year and will also inform our monitoring of student data. Initial feedback from this indicated that students chose the College because of its reputation for good teaching and high levels of student support and that the cost of tuition was not a factor.

#### **h) Additional Actions**

The College has taken the decision to increase its full-time tuition fees to £3,037 for new students entering in September 2011. This brings our fees in line with other local and regional providers and our research among applicants has identified that this is considered to be a fair fees for our provision and would not be a barrier or a decisive factor in choosing to study here.

To ensure that students are not disadvantaged by this increase in fees, we will continue to monitor our recruitment from designated widening participation postcodes. In 2009/10, 62% of new entrants came from WP postcodes; the College will continue to compile and analyse data on new entrants to monitor recruitment from these areas and to maintain or increase this level of widening participation.