

## **ST. MARTIN'S COLLEGE ACCESS AGREEMENT**

On 1<sup>st</sup> August 2007 St Martin's College amalgamated with Cumbria Institute of the Arts to form the University of Cumbria. For academic year 2007-08 the access agreement for St Martin's College will remain in place. From academic year 2008-09 and onwards the University of Cumbria has a single approved access agreement.

Link to [access agreement for Cumbria Institute of the Arts](#)

Link to [access agreement for the University of Cumbria](#) (2008 onwards)

# ST. MARTIN'S COLLEGE ACCESS AGREEMENT

## INTRODUCTION

1. This Access Agreement will be operational during the period of the College's new Corporate Plan. This Corporate Plan sets out a clear vision of the future of St Martin's College which will see it delivering "*a distinctive HE experience to learners attracted by the breadth and depth of the curriculum, the support available to them as learners and as individuals, best practice learning and teaching and a focus on employability*".
2. At the centre of this vision is the College's commitment to foreground the experience of students as members of our learning community. In determining this we have also recognised that that learning community will be enriched to the extent to which we can ensure the fullest possible diversity of learners – in mode of study, gender, age, ethnicity, social and geographical background, and previous educational attainment. Additionally the College recognises that its location – notably its presence in Cumbria as the largest provider of opportunity in HE – will give it special responsibilities in growing participation within that county generally and west Cumbria specifically.
3. St Martin's has a strong track record in widening participation and fair access but it has signalled in its Corporate Plan an intention to build further on this foundation. In its Corporate Plan the College has stated the aim of ensuring

*Through effective outreach, partnership, learner support and innovation in core academic areas, that the College attracts, retains and facilitates achievement in learners from all backgrounds against stretching targets and access policies designed to deliver a student body representative of the society in which we work while making a fundamental difference to regional/sub-regional participation in HE*

4. In that context St Martin's has welcomed the development of an Access Agreement as vital leverage in progressing an ambitious agenda. In developing the original Access Agreement for 2006/2007 the College utilised particularly the HEFCE/HESA Performance Indicators to emphasise the importance of improving performance against the indicators for
  - Young (HEFCE/HESA defined) FT entrants from state schools
  - Young (HEFCE/HESA defined) FT entrants from NE-SEC classes 4-7
  - Young (HEFCE/HESA defined) FT entrants from low participation neighbourhoods
  - Mature (HEFCE/HESA defined) FT entrants with no previous HE experience
  - Mature (HEFCE/HESA defined) FT entrants from low participation neighbourhoods

**FEE LIMITS:**

5. The full-time undergraduate tuition fee at St Martin's College from 2006/07 was charged for appropriate programmes at a level of £3000. St Martin's recognises that the marketplace in which it will be operating is a new one and intends to keep its options as flexible as possible. It will review consistently its performance in this marketplace and develop, in discussion with OFFA, its access agreement and fee policies as necessary. In that respect this Access Agreement represents a minimum position.
6. Fees will be subject to the annual inflationary increase announced by the government. The College website ([www.ucsm.ac.uk](http://www.ucsm.ac.uk)) will carry further information on the programmes to which this fee level will apply as well as further details on the implementation of the Access Agreement.
7. The level of bursary offered by the College will also be subject to the annual inflationary increase announced by the government so as to ensure that support offered to eligible students will not be reduced in real terms by inflation.
8. Where students are in receipt of the full Higher Education Maintenance Grant (HEMG) the College will meet the difference between the level of grant and the tuition fee as adjusted for inflation. In addition, as indicated below, the College will provide further bursaries and scholarships for eligible students.
9. St Martin's utilises the model bursary scheme and the bursary support offered to students will be delivered through this scheme.

**FINANCIAL SUPPORT FOR STUDENTS**

10. St Martin's intends to invest all of the additional income derived from fees directly in support of further enhancement of the learning experience of students. It has published a Corporate Plan for 2004/09 which expresses clearly a vision for the future which has the student experience firmly at its centre. All additional income will be invested in the delivery of this Corporate Plan.
11. The College also intends to deploy a significant amount of the additional income directly on bursary and scholarship support for targeted students, on outreach work, on supporting student retention and success and on additional administrative support for these activities. While acknowledging that the reputation of the College in widening participation might be a justification for a smaller additional investment, St Martin's believes that the realisation of the vision of the Corporate Plan necessitates a strong additional commitment to investment in the mission-critical areas of widening participation and access.
12. In deploying the additional funding the College will seek to minimise funding identified for administrative support so as to focus resource on support of targeted students. It recognises that the proportions allocated to bursary/scholarship support, outreach and on course support may vary across the period of the Access Agreement. The College affirms that the allocation of

funding to bursaries, scholarships and outreach activities are additional to previous activities and support.

13. Bursary support for targeted students is in the form of cash awards rather than fee waivers. The College may in addition award non-transferable cash credits for College services or products.
14. With regard to the level of bursaries which are available to eligible students, the College will provide some financial support to all students across four bands based broadly upon the HEMG profile.

### **Bursary Levels**

15. Bursaries are means tested and targeted in line with the intentions of the Corporate Plan on students from lower socio-economic groups. Individual eligibility is determined through application via the local LEA as assessed by the Higher Education Bursary Scheme and information about eligibility will be described more fully on the College website, through advice and guidance documentation and directly from trained college liaison staff. A particular, though not exclusive, early focus for the Access Agreement targeting will be identified areas of low participation in Cumbria – notably the West Cumbrian coastal areas and rural Cumbria.
16. Bursary support is on a sliding scale and will result in the following level of bursary for 2007/08 (Band 1 includes the difference in funding between the fees charged and the HEMG) being made available to students as SMART Grants.

<b>HE Maintenance Grant Entitlement (HEMG) £2765</b>	<b>SMC SMART Grant</b>	<b>Income level</b>
Band 1	£1230	£17,910 or less
Band 2	£1020	17,911 to 27120
Band 3	£410	27,121 to 38,375
Band 4	£205	38,376 or more

17. Students commencing a 4 year QTS course will be awarded a grant of £1,840 which is not means- tested. This is in recognition that the course requires one year's additional fees expenditure in comparison with a 3 year programme of study. Students will not be eligible for the SMART Grant in Year 1 of the courses, but will receive it in Years 2, 3 and 4. They are eligible to apply for a SMART Scholarship.

18. In addition we hope to make available from 2007/2008 an "Achievement Grant" of £100 is available to every student to which the Access Agreement applies on successful completion of their current year of study at first attempt and enrolment onto the following year of study. This would be in the form of a non-transferable credit for College provided services or products.

### **SMART Scholarships**

19. Scholarships focus on students from lower socio-economic groups, first generation higher education, low participation neighbourhoods, and disabled students. Applicants also need to demonstrate potential for achievement in the community, cultural or sporting fields. A single level of scholarship is available which provides £1000 per annum for the duration of the course with the college normally awarding a maximum of 30 new scholarships each year. This is in addition to any bursary support.
20. Further details of the Scholarship scheme, including the numbers available in any year, the kinds of scholarships to be awarded and the application process is available on the College website.

### **PROVISION OF INFORMATION TO STUDENTS**

21. St Martin's recognises that the changes in the fee regime could have a depressive impact on the market for HE simply because of the lack of clear and high quality information available. This will be especially relevant in relation to under-represented groups with no or limited tradition of HE entry in their families or communities.
22. The College is determined that no student will be deterred from exploring and achieving entry to an appropriate St Martin's programme because of poor information – in terms of quality and accessibility.
23. All significant written materials pertaining to what are potentially complex financial arrangements will attain a "crystal mark".
24. All promotional material including reference to the financial aspects of study will contain at minimum
- explanation of the mechanics of the fee regime
  - explanation of the grants available and eligibility
  - explanation of the scholarships available and eligibility
  - FAQs
  - access to further information or opportunities for discussing issues further.
25. While the College makes use of a variety of paper-based and electronic media to communicate its "offer" it also invests in training and development activities related to understanding of the new fee regime and its implications for widening participation and the College Corporate Plan.

26. These activities will be delivered not only to staff with a core outreach/information role but also all staff in the college who might have a role – however indirect – in provision of advice or answering queries from prospective students.
27. In addition the College recognises that it must work imaginatively with an extensive group of external partners broadly within the “supply chain” for potential students. It already works closely with Aim Higher and has developed good relationships with key FECs and, through the university for Cumbria project, a wide range of Cumbrian stakeholders.
28. The College recognises that to deliver the quality of information it believes essential for informed decision to enter HE by groups currently under-represented will necessitate an active and continuing role in working “on site” with such groups wherever they are within target areas. It sees its outreach staff as essential in providing information to potential students and will continue to invest in their quantity and quality.
29. A particular concern for the College in communicating its message regarding the St Martin’s “offer” will be to work closely with families and family/community-based organisations within targeted low participation neighbourhoods.

#### **WIDENING PARTICIPATION AND OUTREACH WORK**

30. St Martin’s was founded by the Church of England in 1964 to provide educational opportunity of a particular character in the North West. It conceives of itself as an institution committed from its origins to a widening participation mission. The College has built on that mission and now provides such opportunity to over 13000 students across three campuses in the North West and Cumbria as well as a major site in the East End of London which has a special widening participation role for the College in the area of ITT.
31. It is a record of achievement of which the College is justly proud but it is not seen as a cause for complacency. St Martin’s recognises that it still has a considerable distance to travel if it is to achieve its objectives and the Access Agreement expresses this commitment to enhance performance in key areas.
32. It is not intended to provide a comprehensive history of St Martin’s activity in widening participation but rather to identify some key aspects which provide the foundations on which the Access Agreement will be implemented and which encourage confidence that the agreement will be delivered effectively.
33. Such foundations include
  - During 2005/06 the College was granted Taught Degree Awarding Powers; this will provide the degree of curriculum flexibility and partnership potential central to strong engagement with widening participation in the future.

- The College has a comprehensive strategic planning process involving faculties and services engaging with delivery of the key objectives of the integrated plan.
- The College has for some time operated an effective Compact Scheme (*Smartpact*) which provides a range of services to targeted feeder institutions and/or individual students so as to support and encourage successful applications from those who feel they may not or cannot achieve a place in higher education.
- College practice in Equality and Diversity is recognised as best practice. Thus the College was the only HEI in the North-West to join other HEI's nationally to review national consultation procedures and practices and was also invited by HEFCE to give critical feedback on national information roll out on equality and diversity Annual Reports may be viewed at [www.ucsm.ac.uk/about/equality/](http://www.ucsm.ac.uk/about/equality/)
- Over the last few years the College has established a strong presence in Cumbria through its two campuses and associated sites. It is currently the largest provider of HE in Cumbria and in the course of the current Corporate Plan will build from this position to ensure that it is the provider of choice for both young people and returners to education throughout the whole county.

34. Additionally the College is active in outreach, information-giving and aspiration-raising in a variety of ways so as to maximise the opportunity for prospective students and their influencers to engage with Higher Education and reduce concerns about potential barriers. These include:

- Talks and interactive workshops delivered to groups and individuals in schools, colleges and community settings
- Taster events to help raise aspirations and prompt engagement with higher education
- Activities as part of *Smartpact* the St Martin's College Compact Scheme
- Partnership activities as part of the Aim Higher initiative across Lancashire and Cumbria
- Written information in our prospectus, on our website and provided in a range of student-focussed publications.
- The use of trained Student Ambassadors who provide effective 'word of mouth' communication and who also act as role models and mentors
- Advice and guidance sessions at Open/Visit Days and Interview Days
- Referral for specialist one-on-one guidance from the College Student Development and Advisory Service
- Information provided as a part of a comprehensive pack to all students who have accepted a place at the College (including a guide to finance).

35. Current College core investment in outreach and related activities averages c£175,000 per annum. Additionally St Martin's currently receives project-based funding from Aim Higher – Lancashire and Cumbria – to the value of c£40,000. St. Martin's also participates in several Summer School initiatives.

36. In delivering this Access Agreement the College is aware that it will need to augment further its activity aimed at widening participation and supporting achievement. This will include:
- The regular review of all outreach and student support materials
  - The continued development and expansion of *Smartpact* and the Student Ambassador Programme.
  - Closer working with AimHigher and the developing university for Cumbria
  - Increased activities aimed at parents as key influencers in the decision to enter HE
  - Increased activities in local communities in non-traditional locations (e.g. community and leisure centres, rural events, WEA etc.).
  - Increased support for vulnerable students to both improve retention and achievement
  - Increased support for students in financial planning and debt management
  - Increased investment in learning support and student facilities

### **KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS AND MONITORING**

37. The key indicators of success against the Access Agreement will be further refined but will focus on quantified improvement in both process measures such as
- application rates from target groups
  - attendance at outreach events related to target groups
  - attendance at taster days
- and outcome measures such as
- the PIs for social class entry
  - the PIs for LPN entry
  - retention of target groups
  - achievement of target groups
38. Internal monitoring of achievement against milestones set will be provided through
- regular reports to MRER Senior Management Team by our Strategic Planning and Policy Support Service
  - an annual report to Academic Board
  - an annual report to Governing Body.
39. Operational co-ordination of achievement against Access Agreement is the responsibility of MRER supported by the Strategic Planning and Policy Support Service. The lead senior manager is the Assistant Principal (Academic).