



## **UCL Access Agreement**

### **1. Introduction**

- a) UCL has as one of its strategic objectives to be “true to its founders’ pioneering vision by providing educational opportunities of the highest quality to all capable of benefiting, regardless of background”.
- b) The maintenance of academic standards is fundamental to this. So too, though, is a recognition that there are some in our society who would welcome further support and encouragement to help them to attend one of the world’s leading universities.
- c) This Access Agreement sets out how UCL plans over the five-year period from 2006 to provide this support and encouragement while at the same time assuring equality of opportunity for all prospective students.

### **2. The Main Components**

- a) UK/EU tuition fee of £3,000 to be charged for all full-time, undergraduate degree programmes.
- b) All undergraduate students receiving the new Government Higher Education Maintenance Grant to receive, in addition, a UCL maintenance bursary equal to at least 50% of their grant.
- c) Enhanced UCL bursaries to be offered to all undergraduates with residual incomes of less than £15,000 and to those pursuing extended degree programmes which either incorporate a year abroad or permit the study of a subject in greater depth.
- d) Maximum UCL bursary payable in any one year to be £5,000.
- e) Introduction of a range of new outreach activities including study support schemes, assistance for prospective students with disabilities and a transitions programme aimed at building confidence and enhancing retention.
- f) Challenging milestones focused on increasing applications from lower socio-economic groups by 15% and low participation neighbourhoods by 50%.

### **3. Tuition Fees**

- a) With effect from the start of the 2006/7 academic session UCL will charge the maximum tuition fee permitted under the terms of Higher Education Act 2004 across all its undergraduate, full-time, degree programmes. In 2006/7 this fee will be £3,000. Except in the case of gap year students who defer their places before 1<sup>st</sup> August 2005,

all new UK and EU students will be liable for this fee. In accordance with previous practice, it is anticipated this fee will rise annually to take account of inflation.

- b) Charging the maximum fee will help UCL to maintain into the future a high-quality teaching and learning environment to the benefit of all its students.

#### **4. UCL's Undergraduate Bursary Scheme**

- a) From 2006/7 onwards repayment of tuition fees will be deferred until graduation and a Government-funded Higher Education Maintenance Grant scheme will be introduced to assist a significant proportion of students with day-to-day living costs. UCL shares the Government's concern that, notwithstanding these important changes, there is a risk that some students, particularly the less well-off, may be deterred from applying to enter university by considerations of cost.
- b) To counter this risk, UCL has developed a new maintenance bursary scheme specifically targeted at students from lower income households. The scheme is weighted toward the poorest students. UCL is keen, though, to offer support to those with relatively modest incomes who are often overlooked by bursary schemes of this kind but for whom the acquisition of what may be perceived to be high levels of debt may be a major concern.
- c) Thus, from 2006/7:
- **All undergraduate students in receipt of a Higher Education Maintenance Grant (HEMG) will receive, each year, a UCL bursary equal to at least 50% of their grant.**
- d) For example, those in receipt of a Higher Education Maintenance Grant of £2,000 will receive a UCL bursary of £1,000. Those in receipt of a grant of £200 will receive a UCL bursary of £100.
- e) The UCL bursary scheme is weighted toward assisting the poorest undergraduates. To this end, each student whose family's or whose own residual income is less than £15,000 will receive a UCL bursary greater than 50% of their grant.
- f) Thus, from 2006/7:
- **Those with a residual income between £14,999 and £13,000 will receive, each year, a UCL bursary of £1,500.**
  - **Those with a residual income between £12,999 and £11,000 will receive, each year, a UCL bursary of £2,000.**
  - **Those with a residual income of less than £11,000 will receive, each year, a UCL bursary of £2,500.**
- g) UCL has set itself the goal of encouraging an even greater proportion of its students to spend at least part of their degree programmes studying abroad. UCL believes students gain immeasurably from such an experience. To this end a number of new four-year degree programmes, both language and non-language based (for example, in the areas of Chemistry, Civil Engineering, Classics, Earth Sciences, Language and

Culture) have been and are being introduced. In addition, as a university that offers research-led teaching, UCL encourages students to pursue four-year MSci and MEng science and engineering degree programmes that enable the study of a discipline in greater depth. UCL wishes to ensure that all students have the opportunity to pursue these extended programmes regardless of their incomes.

- h) In order to provide support and encouragement to lower income students to pursue the programme that is right for them:
  - **In their fourth year of study eligible students returning from a year of Study Abroad (undertaken as part of their programme) and those progressing to the final year of an MSci or MEng programme will receive a UCL maintenance bursary equal to double the bursary value stated in UCL Bands 1, 2 or 3. If their income level falls outside the levels specified in Bands 1 to 3 students will receive a bursary equal to 100% of their maintenance grant or special support grant. All other eligible students in year 4 will receive a bursary at the usual UCL rate.**
- i) Thus, a student with a residual income of less than £11,000 who is eligible to receive one of these enhanced UCL bursaries, will receive a UCL maintenance bursary of £5,000 in their fourth year of study.
- j) It is anticipated that approximately 45% of UCL's UK undergraduates will benefit from the bursary scheme. The scheme subsumes the minimum £300 payment universities charging tuition fees of more than £2,700 have been asked to make to those in receipt of the maximum Higher Education Maintenance Grant. The value of UCL's maintenance bursaries will rise annually to take account of inflation<sup>1</sup>. All students, including those benefiting from the bursary scheme outlined above, will continue to be eligible to apply for those department-specific bursaries UCL currently offers to which academic criteria are normally attached. All students will also be able to apply for assistance from UCL's Friends Programme Hardship Fund. The Fund was established in 1998, with the generous support of alumni, to assist students during their studies. In 2004/5, £80,000 is available for award.

## **5. Provision of Information to Students**

- a) Providing prospective students with clear and accessible information on the financial support available to them and the likely cost of pursuing the degree programmes in which they are interested is essential.
- b) UCL's bursary scheme has been framed particularly with this in mind. It is our belief that the details of the scheme are simple to understand and should be easy to communicate. Applicants will be able to determine before they apply what they will receive from UCL if their applications are successful. To help them to do so, details of the scheme will be published on the UCL prospective students website. A new publication including information on UCL's bursary scheme and other sources of funding available to students will also be produced.
- c) The actual cost of pursuing a degree programme can vary greatly between students depending upon their individual needs, aspirations and lifestyles. It is only ever

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<sup>1</sup> For those students who entered the UCL bursary system prior to 2008/09; UCL will apply the revised income threshold levels set for students entering higher education from September 2008. This will provide parity in bursary awards for all UCL students and represents a higher than inflation annual increase.

possible to offer indicative advice. UCL already provides information on the cost of study in a range of publications, for example, its Student Accommodation Handbook, its Guide to Living in London, and in a pre-enrolment advice booklet sent to all incoming students.

- d) The new UCL student financial matters publication will seek to draw upon the best from these existing materials. The information on the cost of study will focus on accommodation, transport and reasonable day-to-day living expenses. Where students pursuing particular programmes are likely to incur costs significantly greater than the norm, for example Fine Art and Architecture students, this will be highlighted. Indicative information on the aggregate cost of study, including tuition fees, will also be provided.
- e) The new publication will be sent to all students who are offered places at UCL to ensure their final choice of university and programme is an informed one.
- f) To supplement this static information, prospective students will be able to make use of the interactive budget calculator UCL's Students' Union has available on its website. Web-based message boards covering money matters are already accessible from the UCL website. These message boards have proved to be an effective way for prospective students to learn about student life, including the cost of studying, directly from current UCL students. All message boards are monitored to ensure inappropriate postings are quickly deleted and factually incorrect statements are supplemented with accurate information.

## **6. Outreach Work**

- a) UCL is actively engaged in a wide range of widening participation-related activities. These include Summer Schools, a mentoring scheme, master classes and the innovative use of the UCL Bloomsbury Theatre and UCL's outstanding collections of artefacts and works of art. In November 2003, the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE) noted that UCL's report on its widening participation activity was exemplary and that a number of targets had been exceeded.
- b) Similar activities will continue beyond 2006 and will be funded at current levels.
- c) A new strand of activities, which will be funded from additional expenditure, will be phased in from 2006 onwards. Some of these activities will be open to all potential applicants or current students, as appropriate. Where this is the case, promotion of the activities will be targeted at students from lower socio-economic groups and at students from families who have had little contact with or experience of higher education. The new outreach activities are outlined in the remaining part of this section of the Access Agreement.
- d) *Pre-enrolment study support scheme*, to include a parental component, aimed at gifted students from lower socio-economic groups and/or with little direct experience of higher education. The focus will be upon subjects of particular relevance to pursuing science, engineering and modern language degree programmes. The scheme is currently in a developmental phase. The aim is to work with groups of students over a sustained period of time to help them to realise their full academic and personal potential. In developing this scheme it is intended to draw upon best practice from the

United States where such programmes have been operating effectively for a number of years.

- e) *Extended UCL degree programmes* in high demand, vocationally-oriented subjects where the transition to university study may be particularly challenging. In effect, students admitted to these programmes will take the current first year UCL syllabus over a two-year period. Once again, this programme will be targeted at gifted students from lower socio-economic groups and/or with little direct experience of higher education.
- f) *Pre-enrolment, employer placements*: UCL aims to work with a range of local employers, including those in the public sector, to offer year-long work placements to students who have been accepted onto a degree programme at UCL. Through their involvement in the scheme students will develop their confidence and earn some additional money to help them through their academic studies. Promotion of the scheme will be targeted at schools and colleges with a high proportion of students from lower socio-economic groups and/or without direct experience of higher education. UCL will offer bursaries to supplement employer payments.
- g) *People with disabilities (plus helper) "Visit UCL" pre-application bursary scheme* (to pay transport and, if necessary, accommodation costs): This scheme will be open to prospective undergraduates with disabilities. The aim of the scheme is to encourage such students to test their perceptions of what studying in London in general and at UCL in particular may entail before they complete their UCAS application forms. To supplement the scheme, a booklet bringing together currently available information for students with disabilities will be produced.
- h) *Post-enrolment transitions programme for new students*: Although this programme will be open to all new students, it will focus on issues of particular concern to students with little direct experience of higher education in their families. The aim of the programme will be to enhance students' confidence and improve retention.
- i) *Development of widening access recruitment materials*: UCL will develop a range of new materials more directly aimed at prospective students with little experience of higher education. These will supplement UCL's current prospective student literature.
- j) *Open Day*: UCL does not currently organise a general College-wide open day for prospective students. The event will be open to all but will be promoted strongly to schools with a significant number of students from UCL's identified target groups. This targeted promotion will include the provision of grants to schools to subsidise the transport and related costs associated with enabling their students to attend.
- k) *Families Day*: This will be a fun event open to all UCL staff and their families. A special effort will be made, however, to promote it to UCL's ancillary staff and their friends, many of whom fall into UCL's target groups. The aim of the event will be to break down the barriers of perception and to help those from the target groups to recognise that UCL is a welcoming, inclusive institution at which their children can legitimately aspire to study.

## **7. Milestones**

- a) UCL's milestones fall into two categories; those relating to applications from particular groups of students and those relating to the reach and impact of the new outreach activities outlined above.

#### Application-Oriented Milestones

- b) UCL's application-oriented milestones focus on the lower socio-economic group and low participation neighbourhood HEFCE performance indicator categories. UCL will be aiming by 2010/11 to have increased applications from prospective students from lower socio-economic groups by 15% and from low participation neighbourhoods by 50%.
- c) Allowing for the higher conversion rate of applications to accepted students that our new outreach activities will in part be directed at achieving it is estimated these increases in applications should enable UCL to realise its internal management objective of achieving the 2004 HEFCE published benchmark intake figures for these two categories of student by 2010/11.
- d) New programmes and activities designed to help achieve these milestones will take time to gather momentum and to have the anticipated impact on applications. We expect, therefore, that achievement will be weighted toward the end of the five-year period covered by this Access Agreement. Our aim is to have achieved 20% of the final application milestones within two years i.e. by 2007/8 and 75% within four years i.e. by 2009/10.
- e) UCL has not created a milestone or internal management objective focused upon applications from state/independent schools. A number of independent schools offer bursaries to students from low income groups, many of whom will fall into the lower socio-economic group and low participation neighbourhood categories. Other families of relatively modest means make considerable financial sacrifices to enable their children to attend independent schools. UCL would like to encourage independent schools to extend their bursary schemes and would not wish to influence either directly or indirectly parents' decisions on where their children should be educated.

#### Outreach Activity Milestones

- f) Milestones have been set for each of the new areas of outreach activity, as follows:
- Pre-enrolment study support scheme: Initially, 20 students in one subject. Ultimately, 60 to 80 students over three to four subjects.
  - Extended UCL degree programmes: Up to ten students to be admitted each year to two extended degree programmes.
  - Pre-enrolment, employer placements: 20 placements to be offered.
  - People with disabilities (plus helper) "Visit UCL" pre-application bursary scheme: 40 visits to be facilitated. 50% of those receiving assistance to submit applications to UCL.

- Transitions programme: 300 UCL students to participate in the programme. 100% of those completing the programme to progress to year two of their studies at UCL.
  - Development of widening access recruitment materials: Impact to be reflected in the application-oriented milestones.
  - Open Day: 1,500 prospective undergraduates to attend during the course of the day. Attendance assistance grants to be offered to twenty schools and colleges. 15% of those attending to submit applications to UCL.
  - Families Day: 1,500 people to attend.
- g) UCL will monitor on an annual basis the introduction of the new outreach initiatives and performance against the milestones. As a number of the activities are currently in the developmental phase, these milestones may require adjustment in the light of experience.

### **8. Monitoring Arrangements**

- a) Monitoring of UCL's maintenance bursary scheme, outreach activities and the progress toward achieving the milestones outlined in this Access Agreement will rest with UCL's Widening Participation Sub-Committee. The Sub-Committee meets three times each academic year. It will liaise with other UCL committees as appropriate. The Widening Participation Sub-Committee will report annually to UCL's Council on all matters relating to this Access Agreement.

### **9. Concluding Remarks**

- a) The measures set out in this Access Agreement continue the work UCL has undertaken for many years aimed at attracting the brightest students from all sections of our society. This work has always been guided with the individual applicant in mind. Everyone has different qualities, potential and aspirations. Thus, while aspects of this Agreement are targeted at particular groups which we believe are especially deserving of support and encouragement to study at university, each application for admission to UCL will continue to be considered on its own merits regardless of the applicant's background.

September 2005