

University of Gloucestershire

Access Agreement 2012/13

This document sets out the proposed Access Agreement for the University of Gloucestershire for the academic year 2012/13.

In agreeing its Access Agreement, the University has been mindful of the impact the scheme of bursaries and waivers may have on different groups of students and has undertaken an equalities review. In addition to the specific measures identified in this agreement, a new Hardship Fund has been created to minimise any adverse effects that may occur.

Fees

The University will set fees of £8,250 per annum for all full-time undergraduate students. Fees will rise in line with inflation as students progress to subsequent years of study. Fees for part-time students and for initial teacher training courses will be identified separately. Students on a sandwich course will be charged £1,000 for their placement year. Students on a foundation degree course will be charged £6,000 per annum. Fees for students at franchise colleges will not exceed £6,000 per annum.

Widening Participation Strategy and Progress

The Widening Participation policy of the University is filed at Annex A. The policy identifies the following four priorities for the University, which flow from its mission and from progress to date.

1. Placing the compact scheme at the heart of our widening participation and recruitment strategies within a framework that targets students from under-represented areas,
2. Developing student financial support which is relevant to the needs of under-represented groups and includes support for accommodation,
3. Improving the retention of existing students through study skills support, and
4. Identifying ways in which we can work with other HEIs, locally and nationally, to achieve efficient and effective outreach programmes beyond the scope of the compact scheme.

At present the University would assess its progress on widening participation as average. In terms of the HESA benchmarks we have made considerable progress in recruiting disabled students and students from state schools and colleges. We are making gradual progress on the POLAR2 measure, whilst remaining below our benchmarked position and our previously steady progress on the SEC 4-7 indicator was reversed in 2009, we believe as a result of our not

having entered UCAS Clearing during that recruitment cycle. The targets we set out below and the priorities that we have identified in our WP policy reflect these facts and are designed to encourage further progress, especially in terms of the POLAR2 measure, which we believe is key to ensuring a more diverse student population for the future.

Widening Participation Targets

The Widening Participation policy of the University identifies the following targets, which are designed to measure success in meeting the priorities above.

National targets

The University will seek to achieve and subsequently exceed its location-adjusted benchmark for young full-time undergraduate entrants in each of the following groups as identified by HESA;

- students from socio-economic classifications 4, 5, 6 and 7 (the benchmark was 34.1% in 2009)
- students from low participation neighbourhoods as measured by POLAR2 (the benchmark was 12.2% in 2009).

We will maintain our current position in the recruitment of students from state schools and colleges, which is above our location-adjusted benchmark (the benchmark was 92.9% in 2009). We will continue to grow our population of disabled students where we already exceed our benchmarked position (the benchmark was 4.9% in 2009).

The following table summarises progress to date on these measures and indicates milestones for progress over the next five years, where asterixed figures are actual data;

	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
NS SEC 4-7	36.1*	31.1*	32.0	32.5	33.0	33.5	34.0	34.5	35.0	35.5
POLAR 2	8.7*	9.0*	9.5	10.0	10.5	11.0	11.5	12.0	12.5	13.0
State School or College	95.4*	95.3*	95.0	95.0	95.0	95.0	95.0	95.0	95.0	95.0
Disabled Students	5.6*	5.8*	6.0	6.2	6.4	6.6	6.8	7.0	7.0	7.0

Local targets

The University will extend the compact partnership from 55 partners to 70 partners and to increase the number of students joining the University from compact partners to 800 students by September 2017.

The following table summarises progress to date on these measures and indicates milestones for progress over the next five years;

	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
Compact partners	43*	55*	55*	55	58	62	66	70	70	70
Students from Compact partners	438*	566*	478*	500	550	600	650	700	750	800

Internal targets

The University will reduce the non-completion rates for students to 7% from a current position of 8.5%. Non-completion is defined using an internal measure based on first degree full-time students and includes students who achieve a lesser award.

We have used this measure as it can be calculated on a departmental basis and will enable individual departments to work towards their own targets for retention, using measures that are felt appropriate to the subject involved. The following table summarises progress to date on this measure and indicates milestones for progress over the next five years;

	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
Non-completion rates	8.9*	8.5*	8.1	8.0	7.8	7.6	7.2	7.0	7.0	7.0

Taken together these targets provide an aspirational and realistic framework for evaluating progress towards the aims stated in the WP policy as well as reflecting the progress made to date.

Access Agreement Expenditure

The University of Gloucestershire has assessed itself as being average in terms of its benchmark position and progress to date on the measures identified above. Consequently we intend to allocate at least 22.5% of our additional fee income to Access Agreement expenditure. This will total an estimated £694,069 in 2012/13. The University considers that all expenditure will be countable.

Outreach and Retention Measures

The following measures are to be implemented by the University during the period 2012/2013 in order to address the targets identified above.

1. The evidence submitted in our Widening Participation Strategic Assessment Monitoring Report and in our WP Operating Report demonstrates the effectiveness of the compact partnership scheme in achieving the targets set in previous Access Agreements. We will, therefore, widen the scope of the compact partnership to include schools and colleges in neighbouring postcode areas, with a target cohort of 70 partners, including a differentiated scheme for schools without post-16 provision. New compact partners outside the GL postcode area will be recruited where they largely recruit pupils from wards classified as 1 or 2 under the POLAR2 methodology. It is our intention that the compact partnership should become a hub for raising aspirations across the county of Gloucestershire and neighbouring postcode areas. We will seek to work with schools, colleges, local authorities and the Royal Agricultural College to achieve this.
2. We are aware that students entering University in 2012 may miss some of the support and guidance previously provided by Aimhigher whilst arrangements are put in place for the new funding regime in 2012/13. Consequently we will provide transitional support funding of £75,000 for use on outreach initiatives designed to ensure that students entering HE in 2012 from Gloucestershire have access to appropriate information, advice and guidance from the University during the 2011/12 academic year. We will also continue to work with previous cohorts of Aimhigher students with whom we have an ongoing relationship.
3. We will establish a travel fund of £20,000 to facilitate transport to/from schools and colleges and the University for outreach events, as our partner schools and colleges have advised us that these costs represent a significant barrier to attendance at and participation in outreach activities.
4. We will undertake outreach work with at least one primary school per academic year in a ward classified as 1 or 2 under the POLAR2 methodology.
5. We will hold a minimum of two residential schools per year, targeted at years 10 and 12 from compact partners.

6. We will increase the number and size of parents evenings delivered at the University and at appropriate locations throughout the county.
7. Feedback from our students and partners indicates that the mentoring schemes previously operated under the Aimhigher Associates scheme were beneficial in encouraging participation in higher education and supporting IAG for potential students. We will, therefore, establish the 'Gloucestershire Mentoring Scheme' to provide mentors to schools within the GL postcode area.
8. We will identify specific outreach work to be conducted in association with the Royal Agricultural College on a collaborative basis. Whilst the University of Gloucestershire largely recruits from its regional population base, the Royal Agricultural College is a nationally-recruiting institution in academic areas not available at the University. We believe, therefore, that this creates a viable foundation for aspiration-raising activities that will enable both institutions to engage with a more diverse range of potential entrants to higher education.
9. We will provide a contribution towards accommodation costs to those students from low-income households in order to remove some of the financial barriers to retention that exist for this group. We will also participate in the National Scholarship Programme. Details of our student financial support schemes are provided below.
10. We will strengthen the Helpzone facilities, including the identification of staff specifically dedicated to supporting pre-entry IAG activities, particularly in the areas of financial and disability advice. We will also seek to become a conduit for impartial careers advice for prospective students, working in partnership with Connexions and other professional advisors.
11. We will develop initiatives designed to increase student achievement through generic study skills workshops and support for academic writing, presentation and numeracy skills, working in partnership with the Student Union.
12. We will review and enhance the personal tutor system, particularly in respect of those students identified as being at risk of withdrawing.
13. We will design and implement an induction evaluation project to evaluate and enhance the effectiveness of future induction events particularly in respect of the retention of students from under-represented groups.
14. Our visitors and partners have told us that our Student Ambassadors do an excellent job of providing peer-level information and advice to potential students, their parents and communities. We will continue to develop the Student Ambassador scheme and use this valuable resource in an increased range of outreach, IAG and student support activities.
15. We will provide a disabled students' sport scholarship fund to encourage diversity in our sporting community, which is a significant part of our academic and cultural contribution to Gloucestershire. This fund will be £6,000 in 2012/13, £12,000 in 2013/14 and £18,000 thereafter. Students

in receipt of the National Scholarship Programme bursary will not be eligible for funding from this scheme.

In order to ensure that these measures are co-ordinated in a way that maximizes their effectiveness the University will be conducting a review of outreach and student services in spring 2011 which will recommend appropriate structures to support the delivery of the activities listed above.

National Scholarship Programme

The University will also participate in the National Scholarship Programme (NSP).

In the 2012/13 academic year we will offer 92 (FTE) scholarships to first year full and part-time students whose household income is less than £20,000. Priority will be given to care-leavers, disabled students and students from compact schools and colleges. This will take the form of a £3,000 (pro rata) waiver of university fees in the first year of the course.

Students who receive this bursary in their first year will also receive a fee waiver of £1,500 in their second and final years of study. Part-time students will be eligible on a pro-rata basis. Students in receipt of NSP funding will not be eligible for other University bursaries, except for the Hardship Fund described below.

Student Financial Support

The University of Gloucestershire will provide appropriate student financial support to encourage and enable students to complete their course of study and reduce the likelihood of non-completion due to financial hardship. The bursary package offered by the University consists of three schemes, as detailed below, in addition to participation in the National Scholarship Programme (NSP). The total cost of these schemes, including the NSP, in 2012/2013 is estimated at £727,000.

Bursaries will be paid to all eligible University of Gloucestershire students, excluding those studying franchised courses who are paying less than £6,000 per annum in tuition fees and students on teacher training and social work courses for whom profession-related and other bursaries may be available.

1. The University will pay a Gloucestershire Compact Bursary of £1,000 for each full-time student entering from a compact partner institution whose household income is less than £25,000 and who is not in receipt of funding through the NSP. The bursary will be paid as a fee waiver in each year of their course, excluding any placement year.

2. The University will provide £1,000 fee waivers to all full-time students in their first year of study who are in receipt of the maximum maintenance grant, who are living away from home and who are not in receipt of funding through the NSP.

3. The University will establish a Hardship Fund of at least £70,000 in 2012/13. This fund will be open to applications from students who are in receipt of full or partial maintenance grant, including those in receipt of NSP funding and who can demonstrate financial hardship

4. The University will establish its own Scholarship fund that will provide £1,000 fee waivers for full-time students, whose household income is less than £42,875, not in receipt of any other bursary or scholarship, who demonstrate academic potential and commitment to their course.

Use of Contextual Data for Admissions

We believe that aspirations for wider participation can only succeed if they are supported by appropriate access measures, especially those related to entry. We are, consequently, committed to ensuring that applicants have timely, transparent and relevant information about our admissions criteria. We are committed to the use of systems designed to maximize the range of entry qualifications that we accept whilst maintaining the academic integrity of the students that we recruit. We do not believe that choices made early in a student's academic career should preclude them from entry to our courses, as long as they have the aptitude and aspiration to succeed on their chosen course.

The University of Gloucestershire has an Admissions Digest which sets out its formal admissions policies and is cross-referenced to the QAA Code of Practice. At its most recent Institutional Audit the University's Admissions Digest was identified as an example of good practice within the sector. The Digest is reviewed annually and the current review, to take effect for the 2012 admissions cycle, will specifically address the use of contextual data for admissions decisions. This review will reflect on the need to provide a transparent rationale for using contextual data and will consider guidance from SPA and QAA before recommending a suitable framework for their use.

Information for Prospective Students

The University of Gloucestershire is committed to ensuring that students have timely, accurate and transparent information regarding the pricing and content of their course. We will publish on our website details of our fees, financial support for students and as soon as they are approved by the Office for Fair Access. We will also provide this information to UCAS and the SLC for the purposes of informing their user groups.

We will hold an information and awareness campaign about our fees and financial support during the summer and autumn of 2011 which will incorporate the facts about our fees and financial support together with appropriate case studies and student profiles. This campaign will be in print, electronic and face-to-face form, including at open days and parent events. We will involve our compact partners and other local stakeholders, including the Student Union, in this campaign. We will also develop new media initiatives, through Facebook and Twitter, to ensure that enquiries from prospective students are dealt with promptly and that our published information reflects their needs. As previously noted, we will commit additional dedicated resource to information, advice and guidance on financial and disability issues for prospective and current students.

Review and Monitoring Arrangements

This Access Agreement is part of a well-established commitment to widening access and participation at the University of Gloucestershire. We acknowledge that the targets set above and the mechanisms deployed to achieve them will need to be flexible in order to meet the evolving needs of a rapidly changing Higher Education landscape. As a consequence the University will establish a Fair Access Review Panel whose remit is to review progress against targets and to recommend changes both to the Access Agreement and to the outreach and other activities described in it. The Panel will include representatives from departments with responsibility for delivering outreach activities, providing student support, finance and planning and appropriate student representation. We will also establish an appropriate resource to support monitoring and evaluation, including resources to identify the effectiveness of individual outreach and retention measures. The structure of these arrangements will be determined as part of the review of outreach described above.

12th September 2011

Annex A: Access agreements for 2012-13: OFFA template for mainstream ITT providers (HEIs and FECs)

Name of institution	UNIVERSITY OF GLOUCESTERSHIRE
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Please complete this template, and the Excel return at Annex B, and return to us using the HEFCE extranet by 30 March 2012.

Where your arrangements are the same as for other courses, we would encourage you to cross-refer to your main agreement wherever possible, rather than seeking to replicate information from that main document here.

Part one: Introduction to your agreement

A. Your current position in relation to access and, where appropriate, retention

As set out in our main agreement, we will make full use of our Compact Partnerships to widen access to Higher Education, and will develop these links to include access to ITT (undergraduate provision).

The university has a lower proportion of males enrolling on primary teaching courses against female primary teachers, as replicated in the sector. We will focus specifically on increasing applications and enrolments from males for primary teaching (undergraduate and postgraduate).

We will also work to increase our engagement with and intake of students from BME backgrounds applying for ITT courses.

Part two: Fee limits, spend on access and financial support for ITT trainees

B. Fees you are proposing to charge for your ITT courses

The University of Gloucestershire will set fees of £8,250 per annum for all full-time, undergraduate and postgraduate, ITT students. The University will apply annual inflationary increases in line with the amount set by Government each year.

C. Amounts of additional fee income to be spent on access measures

The University of Gloucestershire intends to allocate 22.5% of additional undergraduate ITT fee income, and 10% of additional postgraduate ITT fee income to Access Agreement expenditure. This will total an estimated £122,570 in 2012-13.

D. Financial support for trainees

The University of Gloucestershire will provide appropriate financial support to encourage and enable students to complete their course of study and reduce the likelihood of non completion due to financial hardship.

The University intends to offer the same financial support package to undergraduate ITT trainees, as is offered to all other eligible undergraduate students (see sub-section “Student Financial Support”, points 1. to 4. of our existing Access Agreement)

With regard to Postgraduate ITT trainees the University will pay a bursary of £350 to UK and EU trainees who meet any of the eligibility criteria as below:

- are from a low income family with household income of up to £42,600, as assessed by Student Finance England
- are from a BME background
- are from a lower socio-economic group or low participation neighbourhood
- are a male primary school teaching applicant
- disabled students
- care leavers

Financial support will be administered by the University.

Part three: outreach and retention

E. Outreach and retention work

Many of the outreach and retention activities articulated in the University’s main agreement also apply to ITT students and applicants. Our extensive links with schools and colleges via our Compact scheme provide pre-and-post-16 access to talks, sessions and residential summer schools that are available to all students, including those who have expressed an interest in becoming a teacher.

We will continue to enhance our links with local primary schools in partnership with our current ITT students to raise aspirations and awareness of Higher Education.

In addition, we propose to develop specific outreach activity in respect of ITT. This will include a pre-entry conference, primarily targeted at the key under-represented groups to raise aspirations and minimise any perceived barriers in entering the teaching profession.

We will also extend the Gloucestershire Mentoring Scheme to specifically mentor students who aspire to teach in the future. Mentees will be selected from under-represented groups, such as male learners who are thinking of entering primary teaching.

We have found that a number of our highly regarded undergraduate Student Ambassadors and our students who participate in the Gloucestershire Mentoring Scheme embrace their experience of working with young people so much that they subsequently wish to apply for a postgraduate initial teacher training course. We will ensure that these mentors and ambassadors are given appropriate information, advice and guidance to pursue their career ambitions and aspire to apply to an ITT course at postgraduate level. In particular, we will target activity with our BME and male undergraduates who express a desire to pursue a career in teaching.

We will develop our marketing and recruitment activities to deliver a specific open day for those wishing to apply to one of our ITT courses. Incorporated into this promotional activity will be separate segmented marketing campaign targeted at encouraging attendance amongst under-represented groups.

In terms of retention, we will continue to offer the full range of support and advice to ITT students via our very successful Helpzones.

As our relative withdrawal rate is slightly higher for male primary trainees, we will hold a new, specialist induction event for male primary (undergraduate and postgraduate) trainee teachers. We will also work to establish a specialist mentoring scheme for male primary teacher trainees – linked to both their success/achievement and also their social/personal wellbeing. We will work to engage current male teachers in the county to act as mentors.

Part four: Targets, milestones and monitoring

F. Targets and milestones

Our milestones and targets in our existing agreement apply to our ITT entrants.

We have established additional statistical targets in terms of the number of students reached in outreach activities, specifically the pre-entry ITT outreach conference and the Open Event for prospective undergraduate and postgraduate ITT students.

G. Your monitoring arrangements

The University statement in respect of the review and monitoring arrangements, as set out in our existing 2012-13 access agreement, extends to the inclusion of ITT provision.

Part five: Information to students

H. Provision of information to trainees

The University of Gloucestershire is committed to ensuring that all students, including ITT trainees, have timely, accurate and transparent information on fees and financial support through a wide variety of information channels.

The University commits to update the sub-section, "Information for Prospective Students", in our existing 2012-13 access agreement to include the provision of information to GTTR, where appropriate, for the purpose of informing their user groups.

