



Access Agreement *Office for Fair Access*

The University's policy on fees and fair access is driven in equal measure by its mission and situation:

- Established as the University in Lincoln only since 2001, we aim to create a university of high quality, rooted in traditional values and structures, but addressing the contemporary agendas
- Based in the centre of an historic cathedral city and in the heart of England, we serve a community and an extensive region previously without a university of its own and geographically isolated.

The University intends to set its fee level from 2006 at £3000, adjusted only by inflation until 2010. The additional income generated will be employed in four ways:

- activities which enrich our students' experience of university life and which enhance the quality and standards of our programmes
- extended outreach activities to encourage participation in higher education
- special bursaries/scholarships for students from under-represented groups.

This access agreement describes the extended outreach activities, and the bursaries and grant-aid for those on state support and from under-represented groups. We will commit, as a minimum, a total of £2.65M¹ to these activities. This represents approximately 18% of the estimated additional fee income.

Context

Despite its nominal location within the East Midlands, Lincolnshire is cut off from the main transport arteries of the country and appears, therefore, relatively remote. Family income, with little modern inward investment to the region, is relatively low, and family patterns remain largely traditional. The absence of an accessible university has not encouraged understanding of higher education. These factors have all contributed to a very special pattern of educational performance:

- Lincolnshire schools perform strongly, averaging an A-level point score of 282.6 per entrant, as against a national average of 258.9.
- although the majority of our full-time students come from across the UK, a very substantial minority come from north Nottinghamshire, south Yorkshire, North Lincolnshire and the eastern and southern parts of Lincolnshire: these areas all

¹ Figure for 2008/09 when the higher fee applies to all undergraduate provision

have a progression to higher education rate of less than 29%, with some under 26%. Lincoln's own participation rate is under 21%.

In addition, there is a large, historic reserve of capability, indigenous to Lincolnshire, which has not experienced the advantages either of school, further or higher education. For these students, access to affordable part-time provision is important.

Within our particular regional context, we believe that the relatively simple strategy set out below will extend the pool of qualified applicants to higher education so that it is more socially inclusive, and provide real and tangible help to those most in need while at university.

Access Bursaries/Scholarships and Additional Support for Students

In addition to the mandatory bursary the University is committed to providing an award of £300 pa to students on full state support, and proportionately smaller awards to other eligible students. Eligibility for this top-up bursary will be assessed by the Student Loans Company on the basis of household income, the thresholds for which will be determined annually by the University. In managing these bursaries, we will sign up to the model bursary scheme as devised by UUK and SCOP.

We will create additional special university bursaries/scholarships to be set aside for students who have been in local authority care and for those students who demonstrate strong evidence of performing at a national or international standard at junior or senior level in any sporting event recognised by Sport England.

Both the top-up bursary and the additional university bursaries/scholarships will take the form of cash-in-hand for the students to spend as they wish.

These additional university bursaries/scholarships will operate to encourage students to engage with higher education.

We will set aside an annual sum to be disbursed as one-off grant aid to students whose personal circumstances have changed, putting them under severe financial hardship, and for whom some immediate help can make the difference between completing their programme or withdrawing. As this will be partially demand-driven, it will be reviewed annually, but our initial allocation is estimated to be as follows:

2006	2007	2008
£45,000	£90,000	£145,000

Based on our past widening participation performance, we estimate that a minimum of 35% of students will also be eligible for our top-up bursaries.

Given the importance for our students of part-time provision, we will establish a fee structure which continues to encourage participation by local people on this basis.

We will set aside a minimum of £2M for such direct fee, bursary and support aid.

Outreach Activity

We are committed to widening participation in higher education as an integral part of our mainstream activities, and currently perform above national benchmarks for entrants from lower income groups (34.9% as against 29.2% nationally) and from low participation neighbourhoods (18.4% as against 13.9% nationally)¹. This performance stems from activities such as our Children's University and our Aiming Higher programme, begun in advance of national initiatives. We welcome the opportunities afforded by the higher fee level to extend these activities.

We will continue to develop our own FE provision for Foundation Degree initiatives and as a base for Access/Step Into programmes, giving those who had an unsatisfactory school experience the opportunity to realise their potential. We will also maintain our existing solid partnerships with local Further Education Colleges over the development of progression links and top-up programmes.

Our extended activities will focus on two areas of engagement: schools and colleges, and summer school opportunities.

We will create a common interest network of targeted partner schools to

- help prepare their students for higher education through on-campus project work; arts, science and profession-based taster programmes; and impartial advice in opportunities in higher education in support of their careers tutoring
- develop common programmes with them to access their own feeder schools in promoting and preparing for higher education

We will develop a range of directed summer schools to

- provide the necessary study and academic skills for specific groups of entrants, for example mature entrants or first-generation entrants
- develop specific skills for particular programmes where these have not been fully addressed at school level, for example, visual awareness courses for those entering art and design degrees from A-level rather than foundation level.

At its heart, this strategy is not about reducing in-take ability, but about capturing the imagination of those with ability, converting the latent talent in Lincolnshire to an enthusiasm for higher education, and providing appropriate help along the way.

We will set aside a total of £650K for this extended outreach activity.

Information to Students

As well as placing clear information on fees, scholarships and bursaries in the Prospectus and on the web-site, we recognise the requirement to ensure prospective students are fully aware of the costs they will incur through their programmes and the nature and source of financial support available to them.

¹ 2004 figures

We will provide all students with the total cost of tuition for their programme before they enrol.

The Corporate Affairs Directorate will take the lead in producing materials on costs, charges and support:

- a clear and simple brochure containing all the information on fees, bursaries/scholarships, general costs of living, and sources of support
- leaflets for specific programmes which detail, as well as the fee and bursary/scholarship information, any projected expenses, for example, books, art materials, etc. which might add to base-line costs

These materials will be distributed as appropriate to all faculties and departments, and specifically, the Enquiry Centre, the Academic Registry, Student Services, the Students' Union, to ensure all staff are fully informed and have the information to hand. The materials will be sent to all students on making initial enquiry and on pre-entry acceptance, and be available at all open days. Each partner school and college will have the full range of material available.

We will add a personal touch to reinforce the provision of materials through:

- visits to each partner school and college specifically to discuss the range of support available and answer any questions
- a special authoritative help-line for enquiries about particular cases
- a dedicated 'access' help-desk at all open days

In this way, any prospective student in doubt will be able to talk directly to an informed person about their own circumstances.

Milestones

We will establish our milestones primarily using the existing data published by the HEFCE in the annual *Performance Indicators in Higher Education in the UK*.

We already perform significantly above both the sector-wide benchmarks and the adjusted benchmarks for those PIs which monitor the participation of under-represented groups. Taking into account anticipated developments in the sector generally, we consider that it will be a significant achievement to maintain the university's relative position.

Milestone 1:

The University of Lincoln will seek to maintain its position in terms of the performance indicators measured by HEFCE at on or above the Location Adjusted Benchmark. The specific PI Tables are T1 & T2, Participation of under-represented groups in higher education (young full-time entrants & mature and part-time entrants respectively), and T7, Participation of disabled students in higher education.

We currently perform below the sector benchmark and the adjusted sector benchmark for those PIs which monitor non-continuation and believe that there is a strong correlation between our performance against these PIs and our student profile.

Considering our historic success in encouraging fair access to higher education, we believe that the ability to deploy the additional income generated by the introduction of variable fees to enhance our academic and student support infrastructure represents a significant challenge and opportunity.

Milestone 2:

The University of Lincoln seeks to improve its position in terms of the performance indicator measured by HEFCE PI Table T3, Non-continuation following year of entry, in order to converge with the Adjusted Sector Benchmark by 2008-9.

We have historically taken a leading role in the promotion, co-ordination and implementation of a range of innovative regional initiatives designed to raise aspirations and to widen access and participation. These initiatives are measured against annual objectives, established after review and revision, and reported to HEFCE through our Annual Monitoring Statement. The scope of our provision in this area already extends well beyond the widening participation grant allocation which we receive from HEFCE; we regard it as critical and will maintain it.

We will further extend its current scope through making a step change in the depth of our educational partnerships. We will develop agreements with our regional ‘feeder’ FE College and Sixth Form College partners for the promotion of higher education, as we believe that the opportunities afforded by participation in HE are more effectively explained to their students, and those of their own ‘feeder’ schools, on the ground. Our own bursary and scholarship structures, together with joint marketing and student/parent advice and support systems, will be important components of these arrangements. This development is naturally dependent upon the agreement with partners, but we have established very good relationships both with our regional colleges and with LEAs, who welcome working with us.

Milestone 3:

The University of Lincoln will maintain its historic commitment to the access and widening participation agenda, focusing in particular on:

- *raising aspirations through Aiming Higher work with schools and summer schools extended by the establishment of comprehensive access agreements with 14 of its regional ‘feeder’ FE College and Sixth Form College partners by 2008-9 and, through the partners, with their ‘feeder’ institutions*
- *facilitating access to higher education for looked after children in collaboration with local authorities, Aim higher and the Frank Buttle Trust*
- *further development of our foundation degree and related access/step-into provision, working with both established partners and our own FE department*

Monitoring

The University has established a range of key performance indicators to monitor performance against our strategic plan. As part of the strategic planning process we also monitor performance against the objectives and milestones set out in this access agreement, which is overseen by the University’s Senior Management Team.