



ACCESS AGREEMENT

SUMMARY

The University of Reading intends to charge the maximum allowable tuition fee of £3,000 pa for all full-time Home/EU undergraduate students.

The University will allocate *not less* than 25% (actually 33% in the first year and nearer 29% by 2010) of its estimated additional income from variable tuition fees to:

- a. bursaries aimed at improving access (including a Standard Bursary level of £1300 pa (ie £300 minimum plus £1000) for students receiving the maximum SLC grant);
- b. and to additional widening participation outreach activities;

The University is confident that it will achieve the milestones for improving access outlined later in this Agreement and will provide ring-fenced contingency funds in order to meet the cost of additional Standard Bursaries, should these milestones be exceeded.

The University anticipates that further expenditure from its additional income will be required to support the increased administration associated with these activities and has budgeted for a figure not exceeding 2% pa over the first five years.

The University will allocate up to a further 5% to other bursaries or scholarships to support recruitment to specific subject areas, to attract high-achievers and to encourage a variety of campus activities eg sport and the performing arts. Whilst these bursaries will not necessarily be of direct benefit to under-represented groups, they are underpinned by the University's Fair Access admissions policy.

LEVEL OF FEES

All full-time Home/EU undergraduate students studying at the University of Reading will be charged the maximum allowable tuition fee of £3,000 pa from the academic year 2006-07;

Students studying at member colleges of the regional New Technology Institute but on Foundation Degrees funded via the University of Reading will also be charged £3000 pa as follows:

FDS Information Communication Technology
Strode's College Egham
Bracknell & Wokingham College
Newbury College

FDEd Supporting Childhood Development & Learning
Berkshire College of Agriculture
Bracknell & Wokingham College
Newbury College

BURSARIES AND FINANCIAL SUPPORT TO BE PROVIDED FROM ADDITIONAL FEE INCOME, AND OTHER SOURCES

Fair Access Bursaries

(a) Standard Bursary

The University of Reading undertakes to support students in the greatest financial need by providing an annual Standard Bursary of £1300 a year for maintenance purposes. Estimated figures for 2006 indicate that about 1000 students will be eligible for this bursary ie approximately 12% of the full-time UK undergraduate student population.

Students receiving 76% or more of the state HE maintenance grant will receive the full £1300 bursary, with those below that threshold receiving a proportion of the Bursary on a sliding-scale down to 1% of state support as follows:

76%-100% of HE grant:	£1300
51%-75% of HE grant:	£975
26%-50% of HE grant:	£650
1%-25% of HE grant:	£325

All UK students will be eligible for this Bursary; it is not intended to make separate arrangements for Scottish or Welsh students, although this policy will be subject to review under the annual monitoring exercise.

The Bursary will be provided in the form of a financial award for maintenance, and will be increased annually in line with any inflationary rises in the fee limit.

The University will subscribe to the UUK Model Bursary Scheme which offers an administrative structure for the calculation and distribution of bursaries in cooperation with DfES and the Student Loan Company (SLC).

(b) Other Fair Access Bursaries

The University will be offering Pre-Entry Bursaries to provide support for applicants from low-income families and others who face additional barriers to HE entry. Variable amounts up to £300 will be made available to cover travel and other costs associated with attendance at UCAS Applicant Visit Days and admissions interviews at Reading, and to provide individual or group mentoring support from current undergraduates during the application process. It is anticipated that some 200 students a year will take advantage of this scheme.

The University will be offering Pre-Application and Pre-Entry Bursaries for Disabled Students to provide additional support for disabled applicants so that they may visit the University prior to applying or accepting an offer to ensure their support needs can be fully met and that they are able to prepare for transition to HE. Variable amounts up to £500 will be made available to cover travel and other costs

for the applicant and, where appropriate, a carer to visit the University and to provide additional specialist support during the application process as necessary. It is anticipated that 10-15 bursaries will be taken up each year, with some students being able to benefit from more than one visit if appropriate.

The University will be expanding its existing Vice-Chancellor's Bursary Scheme aimed at students nominated by Berkshire state schools participating in the Aim Higher scheme. As these students all meet widening participation criteria, the scheme is included in its entirety as bursary investment for the purpose of this Access Agreement. The current figure of one new student pa will be expanded to three; the bursary will be worth £1,000 in a student's first year and £500 for each year of undergraduate study.

The University's Alumni and Development Annual Fund, established in November 2004, has identified the support of the Fair Access Bursaries and existing Hardship funds as one of its goals in support of the aims of the Access Agreement.

A small number of existing bursaries and prizes, some linked to specific subject-areas or academic attainment, will be reviewed in line with the University's Fair Access policy and included in the information on financial support made available to students.

Students will be allowed to aggregate up to two bursaries during each year of their degree programme (ie in addition to pre-entry bursaries) and, should any be eligible for more than two, to select the most advantageous for their situation.

NATURE AND COST OF OUTREACH ACTIVITIES FROM ADDITIONAL FEE INCOME AND OTHER SOURCES; INCLUDING DESCRIPTION AND ESTIMATED NUMBER OF ACTIVITIES, AND TARGET GROUPS

The University is planning a year-on-year expansion of outreach activities in line with the University Widening Participation Strategy. Current expenditure (2004/5) on these activities is £204k. The proposed additional funding will be in the region of £260k in the first year, rising to £351k by 2010, including additional staffing.

(a) In support of its widening participation strategy the University will use £100,000 in 2006 (rising to £120,000 in 2010) of its additional fee income to support targeted outreach activities which aim to increase participation in subject areas and departments where participation by groups under-represented in Higher Education is lower than the University and/or regional norm. The University will:

- Embed previously piloted work on the monitoring and review of widening participation/diversity statistics on admissions and retention by means of information gathering, dissemination and review;
- Support the dissemination and review of widening participation/diversity data at programme level by means of action planning; target setting and research;
- Enable departments to work with the Widening Participation Office to develop and run activities to encourage participation in programmes by groups currently under represented in the student body where indicated. This will be achieved by means of a range of appropriate outreach activities and targeted information.

- (b) The University plans to allocate £70,000 in 2006 (rising to £100,000 in 2010) of additional fee income to increase its support for regional and national strategies and activities that have been shown to be effective in widening participation. This will comprise continued support for Aimhigher Berkshire which it hosts, and for which it provides accommodation, accounting and management facilities free of charge. In addition the University will underwrite continuing and/or expanding Aimhigher Mentoring Programmes after the expiry of current funding guarantees for the Aimhigher Programme in 2006 and will continue to provide staffing for HEFCE and Aimhigher Summer Schools.
- (c) The University will allocate £18,000 of additional fee income to expand the role of student ambassadors and mentors in supporting widening participation work with school pupils and college students on and off campus. Learning mentors support individual pupils in their transition to GCSE and A Level Study in schools. Student Ambassadors host subject and HE awareness days on campus and in schools. 2000 young people will take part in aspiration and attainment raising activities led by undergraduate mentors and ambassadors, currently consisting of 2000 hours work rising to 4000 by 2007 onwards. The scheme is expected to cost £30,000 by 2010.
- (d) The University intends to allocate £12,000 of additional fee income to extend the Berkshire Schools and College's Compact to schools and colleges in other regions. The Compact provides a range of pre-application support and guidance in the first year of A Level Study for students from families with no tradition of HE. It also allows for early consideration of course application to those requiring local study or who require support with transition to HE and for whom the University of Reading provides an appropriate HE setting.

In 2003/4 69 pupils from non-traditional backgrounds took part in pre-entry support activities and 12 applied for the Compact (of whom 10 were accepted). Two former Summer School participants accepted a Compact. The Target for 2006 is for 240 to take part in the scheme and for 30 Compacts to be entered into rising to 60 in total by 2010 at a cost of £21,000.

- (e) The University will build on the current (2003/4) expenditure of £17,000 by an additional £30,000 to expand its support for curriculum enhancement and extension in schools and colleges. This will be achieved by additional Master Classes, extra Science Week Activities and the development of curriculum extension activities in line with the Tomlinson recommendations on 14-19 education.

Activities are targeted at able young people in state schools with low progression rates to HE as defined by HEFCE POLAR statistics and aim to enhance learning for GCSE and A Level pupils, to increase understanding of HE requirements, and to raise aspiration.

In 2003/4 350 pupils in years 9-12 attended Science Week and 17 activities were offered. An annual Schools Summer Science Lecture was inaugurated and 750 pupils attended. Three Masterclasses were offered and 90 pupils attended.

The target for 2006 is to offer 30 Science Week activities with 600 attendees; and 8 Master Classes with 240 attendees. Extension Activities will be developed in collaboration with LEA subject advisers.

- (f) The University will allocate £30,000 (rising to £45,000 in 2010) of additional fee income to hold additional University Orientation Days for potential HE applicants from non-traditional backgrounds and extend support to a further 40 HE events and fairs in schools and colleges in low participation neighbourhoods not currently targeted for support from this University.

PROVISION OF INFORMATION ON FINANCIAL SUPPORT TO STUDENTS AND APPLICANTS

1. The University provides information on financial support to students in the following ways:
 - a. In the prospectus (printed and on-line)
 - b. Information on bursaries sent to applicants as appropriate
 - c. Via the Student Financial Support web-page (information on the Access to Learning Fund, bursaries, scholarships, Student Loan Company information, plus budget advice)
 - d. Ongoing advice for current students in person via the Student Financial Support Office or Students' Union Advice Centre.
2. The University will inform all prospective students of the fees to be charged for the completion of a programme before a student is committed to undertaking that programme. Where available, the University will provide details of annual inflationary increases in the fee in line with government regulations.
3. The University informs students about Hall Fees when offering information about applying for a hall place (usually during the admissions process).
4. The University informs students about how fees can be paid:
 - a. before commencing the programme (in the enrolment pack)
 - b. during Freshers' Week
 - c. termly via communications from the Finance Office
5. At present (2004/5) there is no automatic right to pay fees in instalments, but in each of 4a, 4b and 4c the University makes clear that it is always happy to consider instalment arrangements as required.
6. The University will provide information to students about its Access Agreement by publishing the Agreement on its website as soon as it has received approval from OFFA.

INSTITUTIONAL MILESTONES AND OBJECTIVES

The proposals outlined in this Access Agreement have been made on the basis that the University of Reading fully supports the concept of widening participation through fair access, and that its focus on meeting state-school recruitment and other fair access indicators must continue to be maintained, but that these priorities must be seen in the context of student anxiety regarding debt. For these reasons, the University has chosen to invest a substantial amount of its additional fee income into the Standard Bursary and associated fair access bursaries, and to developing existing and instigating new outreach activities.

The University Corporate Plan assumes a 1% reduction annually in the number of UK/EU students, relative to HEFCE contract numbers, for the period of the plan (2004-2009) or until the HEFCE cap is lifted. The current assumption is that by the end of the planning period, student numbers will be at a level which can be regarded as stable and sustainable into the future. The Institutional Milestones outlined below reflect this approach.

Milestones associated with Fair Access Bursaries

- (a) Standard Bursary: Based on figures for the number of students currently receiving a waiver of 76% or more of their tuition fees, the University anticipates that 12% of our full-time UK undergraduates will benefit from Standard Bursaries. 700 students will receive the full Standard Bursary and 300 a partial Bursary in 2006/07, rising to 1450 (550) in 2007/08 and 2250 (850) by 2008/09, with steady-state maintained thereafter.
- (b) Pre-entry Bursaries: The number of students in receipt of this bursary from 2006 will be monitored, with the aim of achieving a 5% increase each year to 2010. A baseline figure is not yet available for this new bursary but we estimate that 200 students will take up the bursary in 2006, rising to 250 by 2010.
- (c) Pre-application Bursaries for Disabled Applicants: The applicants in receipt of this bursary from 2006 will be monitored, with the aim of achieving a 5% increase each year to 2010. A baseline figure is not yet available for this new bursary but we estimate that 8-10 bursaries will be taken up in 2006, rising to 15 by 2010.
- (d) Vice-Chancellor's Bursary: The number of bursaries offered under the Vice-Chancellor's Bursary scheme will rise from 3 in 2003 to a total of 12 by 2008 and thereafter.

Milestones associated with Outreach Activities

- (a) Mini-Milestones linked to specific activities:
 1. 100% increase in hours (currently 2000 annually) worked by Student Ambassadors by 2007 onwards;
 2. 240 students annually (69 in 2003/04) to take part in Berkshire Schools Compact scheme and for 30 Compacts to be entered into in 2006 (currently 10) rising to 60 in total by 2010;

3. 30 Science Week activities (currently 17) with a total of 600 attendees (currently 350); and eight Master Classes (currently three) with 240 attendees (currently 90) from 2006 onwards;
4. Supporting a further 40 HE events and fairs in schools and colleges by 2006. The additional events will be in low participation neighbourhoods and state schools not currently targeted for support from this University.

(b) Recruitment from State Schools

The percentage of state-school applicants who go on to accept Reading as their firm choice via UCAS is currently 16.3% (2004/05); the University aims to increase this to:

17.0% in 2006/07
 17.5% in 2007/08
 18.0% in 2008/09
 18.5% in 2009/10
 19.0% in 2010/11

(c) Recruitment from low participation neighbourhoods

The percentage of applicants from low participation neighbourhoods who go on to accept Reading as their firm choice via UCAS is currently 14.4% (2004/05); the University aims to increase this to:

14.8% in 2006/07
 15.1% in 2007/08
 15.4% in 2008/09
 15.7% in 2009/10
 16.0% in 2010/11

(d) Recruitment from ethnic minorities

At present the University's Home (UK) student population closely reflects the ethnic population of England as a whole as follows:

White	89.9%	(90.9% in England)
Mixed	2.1%	(1.3%)
Asian	4.5%	(4.6%)
Black	2.1%	(2.3%)
Chinese	0.7%	(0.5%)
Other	0.7%	(0.4%)
Unknown	-	(0.7%)

These figures will be monitored in line with the Race Equality Policy and Action Plan with the aim of maintaining parity as a baseline performance indicator.

(e) Recruitment of disabled students

The percentage of the student population with a disability in October 2004 was 5.7%; the University anticipates that by 2006 this figure will have increased to 6.3% and it aims to increase this figure each year to have reached a steady-state of 7.5% of the total student population by 2010. [See also Pre-application Bursaries section above].

COMPLIANCE MONITORING

The University of Reading undertakes to monitor its compliance with this Access Agreement, particularly its progress towards the institutional milestones and objectives. Monitoring will take place by regular (termly) reports to the Senior Management Board and University Board for Teaching and Learning as part of the existing implementation of the Corporate Plan. Operating statements will be developed for 2004/05 and outline plans for 2005-2009, with target outcomes and clear allocation of areas of responsibility to persons/groups within the University.