

BIRMINGHAM CITY UNIVERSITY

ACCESS AGREEMENT

1. Context

Birmingham City University, formerly The University of Central England in Birmingham, is a large, diverse urban university with a commitment to widening participation, graduate employability, professionally orientated teaching programmes, regional economic development and applied research and consultancy.

The university was formed through a process of merging separate institutions, and has roots stretching back to 1843. The eight faculties, located on seven campuses across the city, deliver over 300 courses to more than 24,000 students. The catchment area extends from inner Birmingham to the Far East and the USA and local, regional and international partners play a key role in much of the University's work.

Over 60% of the full-time undergraduate students are drawn from greater Birmingham or the West Midlands and 44% of all students study part-time.

The University has a commitment to widening participation with successfully embedded strategies for outreach activities and pre-entry advice and guidance as well as active collaborative participation in regional Aimhigher projects.

2. Fee Limits

In 2008-09 the University proposes to set a maximum fee of £3,145 for all full-time first degree courses for UK and EU students. In subsequent years we propose to raise the fee by the inflationary increase, as determined by Parliament.

Fees for HND, HNC, Foundation Year 0 and Foundation Degree courses will not be raised above the standard level.

3. Bursaries and other financial support

Bursaries will be awarded on a sliding scale, with a maximum bursary of £523, to all students in receipt of a full or partial maintenance grant studying on a first degree with a course fee of £3,145.

4. Provision of information to students

Information on the fee limit will be available to prospective students via the University's website, UCE Choices, (the University's pre-entry advice and

guidance service) and other printed information, (please see below). A reference to the fee limit and bursary scheme will be placed in the university prospectus for 2006 entry, with the web address for students to access current information. Owing to printing deadlines it has not been possible to include the detail of this information in the prospectus for 2006-07 but this will be possible in future years.

Financial information, including current fee and bursary details, will be provided in the following publications from 2008-09:

Prospectus

- Tuition fees, loans, bursaries, NHS bursaries including how to apply and who to contact
- Details of what is provided by the Student Finance Service, including advice, workshops, debt counselling, hardship funds
- Council Tax and where to obtain student certificates

Pre-arrival Guide

- Tuition fees, banks, working while studying, insurance, accommodation costs
- Details of financial support available including loans, HE Maintenance Grant and Special Support Grant, DSA, Parents Learning Allowance etc

Birmingham City University Web site

- Tuition fees and the bursary scheme
- Details of what is provided by the Student Finance Service

Student Services Website

- Information about all financial support available to students

Student Finance Leaflet

- Services offered, frequently asked questions, how to contact the advisors, how to apply for financial assistance

Student Finance staff also give information and advice to prospective students and their families at Open Days and subject Visit Days and can be contacted by phone or e-mail by prospective students.

Financial information is also given by the Education Liaison team and student mentors and ambassadors as part of outreach and aspiration raising activities and by staff in UCE Choices.

5. Outreach Work

As part of its widening participation policy, Birmingham City University has always been committed to delivering and participating in outreach activities. The UCE Character and Mission statement included this statement:

‘ UCE’s programmes and services should be available to all who can benefit from them, irrespective of social, economic, cultural and ethnic differences. UCE is active in reaching out to all parts of the community and will continue to be a major force in the struggle against social exclusion’.

This commitment was confirmed in UCE’s Policy and Planning document for 2006 onwards.

Birmingham City University’s vision, set out in its Corporate Plan, 2007-2012, states that the University will be recognised as ‘a force for equality and inclusion’.

The University is engaged in a comprehensive outreach programme. These activities are listed in Appendix 1 and include summer schools, a student mentoring scheme and the Reach Out to Learning programme, all of which have established plans and funding for continuation and development which we do not view as additional activity.

Additional Outreach Work

Our policy of inclusion and active aspiration raising has placed the University above benchmark in the following areas, according to the HESA National Performance Indicators:

- Participation of mature students
- Participation of students from state schools
- Participation of students from NS-SEC social classes 4 to 7
- Participation of students from neighbourhoods with low participation in HE

Young FT **First degree** students

	BCU %	Benchmark%	Difference%
2005/2006 State Schools	97	93.4	3.6 <i>significantly better</i>
Social class	42.8	34.7	8.1 <i>significantly better</i>
Low part neighbourhoods	18	15.9	2.1

Young FT **Undergraduate** students

	BCU %	Benchmark%	Difference%
2005/2006 State Schools	97.1	93.7	3.4 <i>significantly better</i>
Social class	43.8	35.3	8.5 <i>significantly better</i>
Low part neighbourhoods	19.1	17.3	1.8

Young FT Other Undergraduate students

	BCU %	Benchmark%	Difference%
2005/2006 State Schools	99.1	98.2	0.9
Social class	60	44.8	15.2 <i>significantly better</i>
Low part neighbourhoods	24.2	23.6	0.6

Mature Full Time students

	BCU %	Benchmark%	Difference%
2005/2006 First degree	15.8	14.4	1.4
All undergraduates	19.6	17.7	3.1 <i>significantly better</i>

Part Time undergraduate students

	BCU %	Benchmark%	Difference%
2005/2006 Young	14.2	18.6	-4.4
Mature	6.8	5.6	1.2
All entrants	7.2	6.3	0.9

Proposed Activity:

We propose to maintain our position at or above benchmark in these areas and do not believe it will be necessary to engage in additional outreach activity to achieve this. However, should we fail to meet benchmark in any area, specific activity will be undertaken in order to rectify our position and appropriate funding from the additional income will be allocated for this.

Areas below benchmark:

The participation of full-time undergraduate students with disabilities in 2005-06 was 0.4% below benchmark:

All undergraduate students

	BCU %	Benchmark%	Difference%
2005/2006 Full time first degree	4.5	4.9	-0.4
Full time Undergraduate	4.2	4.4	-0.2
Part time Undergraduate	1.0	1.3	-0.3

Proposed Additional Activity to Increase the Participation of Students with Disabilities.

Although this is not statistically significant, the University proposes to improve the participation of students with disabilities to match or exceed benchmark. We will identify additional resources of 1% of the extra fee income to assist us in achieving this objective.

This activity will be co-ordinated by the University's Disability Service and Education Liaison departments and will develop an initiative that originated from a Hefce funded project; this produced information and discussion materials for students with disabilities and their tutors in FE colleges and was designed to support the students' transition from FE to HE. The new activity will produce materials for younger age groups and will target pupils in years 9, 10 and 11 in local schools. Campus visits and taster sessions for the target group will be run and support for students with disabilities to attend all aspiration raising activities for this age group, such as Summer Schools, subject taster sessions etc. will be developed.

The University has no plans to increase outreach activity beyond these levels and has a widening participation policy that places at its centre the on-course support of students recruited from under represented groups. We recognise and appreciate that these students have additional support needs if they are to progress through higher education, gain their undergraduate qualifications and aspire to graduate level employment. Therefore we are already committing widening participation funds to pastoral and learner support and initiatives to maximise student progression and retention. This commitment will continue.

Therefore, except in the area of disability, the University does not believe that additional expenditure on access measures will be necessary, other than for the bursary offer proposed in paragraph 3 above.

6. Milestones

As described above, the University will maintain its position at or above benchmark, as defined by the HESA National Performance Indicators, for the participation of mature students and students from state schools, from NS-SEC SOC classes 4-7, and from neighbourhoods with low participation in HE.

The University will seek to increase the participation of students with disabilities to the benchmark or above.

7. Institutional Monitoring Arrangements

All student statistics are received and analysed by the University's Senate. It will be the responsibility of Senate to monitor the University's progress towards its student participation targets and to recommend remedial action where necessary.