

BIRMINGHAM CITY UNIVERSITY

ACCESS AGREEMENT 2014-15

1. Fee Levels

We are proposing that fees will remain at one of four fee points, as indicated below. These represent the maximum fee that will be charged for these subjects at each fee point.

£6,000

All HND, HNC and Foundation degrees.

£7,500

Full time first degrees in Business and Management; Sociology; Childhood and Young People; Computing, Information and Communication Technology; Architectural Technology; Property, Construction and Planning; English; and Health and Social Care (other than those courses delivered under the NHS contract). PGCE courses in Post Compulsory Education.

£8,200

Full time first degrees in Art and Design; Architecture; Law; Engineering; Digital Media Technology; Engineering Design and Manufacturing Systems; Psychology; Criminology; Media and Communication; and Community Theatre.

£9,000

Full time first degrees in Jewellery; Music; Acting; Stage Management; and Initial Teacher Training. PGCE courses in Initial Teacher Training.

Where a full-time undergraduate student opts to extend the normal length of a Bachelor's degree by an additional year in order to take a full-year work placement there will be no fee for the additional placement year.

The fees for part time courses have been set pro rata to full time courses. Under these arrangements no part time student will be charged more than £6,750.

The fee set for entrants will apply to them for the duration of their studies. Fees will be subject to an annual inflationary increase, where allowed by the Government.

The fee set for technology based programmes is based on the assumption that Funding Council financial support for this strategic subject will continue. If this funding is removed then the fee will be set at £9,000 as this is a high delivery cost subject.

The University's latest report on entrant participation for 2012/13 indicates that the University's course fees have had no adverse effect on the proportion of student entrants from low participation neighbourhoods (LPN), low socio-economic (LSEC) backgrounds and Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) backgrounds, all of which report a slight increase on the previous year as indicated below:

	LPN entrants	LSEC entrants	BME entrants
2012/13	13%	48%	45%
2011/12	12%	43%	42%

2. Performance and Expenditure

Birmingham City University performs exceptionally well both in absolute terms and by comparison to the adjusted sector benchmark in indicators of widening participation. Examination of the HESA performance indicators for 2011-12 reveals:

- for young full-time undergraduate entrants
 - 96.8% from state schools or colleges (above the benchmark of 94.3%)
 - 42.7% from NS-SEC classes 4, 5, 6 & 7 (significantly above the benchmark of 36.4%)
 - 12.1% from low participation neighbourhoods (just below the benchmark of 12.3%)
- for mature full-time undergraduate entrants
 - 10.3% with no previous HE qualification and from low participation neighbourhoods (just below the benchmark of 10.4%)
- for part time undergraduate entrants
 - 1.9% of entrants with no previous HE qualification and from low participation neighbourhoods (just below the benchmark of 2%)

Indicators of student success reveal the following:

- non-continuation following year of entry
 - a further trend of a reduction in non-continuation, which at 7.9% is better than the sector-adjusted benchmark of 9.5%
 - within the above, the University performs better than benchmark in the proportion of young full-time first degree entrants from low participation neighbourhoods who do not continue in HE: at 9.1%, compared to 10.6% for the sector adjusted benchmark
 - non-continuation of mature full-time entrants remains better than benchmark for those pursuing first degrees (at 10.8% for those without a previous HE qualification it is better than the benchmark of 12%, and at 9% for those with a prior HE qualification it is better than the 11% benchmark and the UK average of 10.4%)
- projected learning outcome
 - the proportion of full-time first degree entrants projected for neither award nor transfer has improved further to 14.3% and is now 0.1% better than the adjusted sector benchmark. This significant improvement means that the target set in our 2013 Access Agreement for project outcomes to be 15.2% by 2016-17 has already been exceeded so the target and milestones have been amended accordingly for this Access Agreement, as outlined in Table 6 of Annex B.

The Equality and Diversity Committee (a sub-committee of Senate) maintains an overview of the University's performance with regards to improving student opportunity. It receives various sets of student statistical analyses to explore possible significant relationships which may exist between student performance and the various 'protected characteristics' identified under the Equality Act 2010 for which data is held (age, gender, disability and race). During 2012/13, the analyses covered the following areas:

- participation – examination of levels of diversity within enrolment to University programmes;
- retention – examination of retention rates of new entrants continuing their studies at the University;
- progression – measuring the completion of all study within the expected time-span for their programme;
- achievement – examination of the variation of First Degree classifications;
- employability – examination of responses to the six month Destination of Leavers from HE survey.

Additional factors including entry qualification and subject area were included in the analysis as these have been shown at sector level to be significant factors in understanding student performance. Where significant relationships were discovered, these were highlighted and recommendations made for further investigation. For example, the key findings for monitoring of students with protected characteristics under the Equality Act 2010 and for whom data was available, showed a correlation between:

- disability and participation;
- age and retention and efficient completion (that is, completion within the expected timescale); and
- ethnicity and achievement (degree classification) and employability.

Senate uses the reports and analyses from the Committee to develop targeted support interventions to assist students.

The Committee has or plans to implement the following actions during this Access Agreement period:

- to extend the equality data fields (e.g. sexual orientation, religion and belief) for student enrolment 2013-14 in line with HESA recommendations;
- gather good practice examples regarding the retention and completion rates of mature students and disseminate to faculties as institutionally, students aged over 20 years old are significantly less likely to complete their courses efficiently when compared to young students;
- to investigate the implementation of a BME mentor and role model initiative to help address some of the barriers to achievement often faced by BME students, which is an increasing population within the institution.

The findings of the Equality and Diversity Committee have been taken into account when compiling this Access Agreement. In addition, an equality impact analysis of this Access Agreement has been conducted which has established that no evidence

has been found to suggest there would be any adverse effects on any group or groups of people on the basis of their shared and protected characteristics as defined by the Equality Act 2010.

Our evaluation of performance in relation to access and student success is that we have a demonstrable record of achievement in relation to widening access and have consolidated our recent solid progress in relation to first-year retention. The University has now also improved its performance in relation to progression and completion after the first year. The focus of our access agreement expenditure will remain upon the provision of tailored investment to support retention and success in achieving an award along with some increased expenditure on outreach activities

We therefore intend to commit approximately 15% of additional fee income (10% for postgraduate ITT students), for countable expenditure on additional access and student success measures. This will include our National Scholarship Programme match funding, continuation of the regional collaborative activity that has replaced the Aim Higher Scheme, University outreach activity and new activities to increase and support student retention, progression and achievement. We intend to continue expenditure on maintaining sector adjusted benchmark for the participation of students in receipt of disabled students' allowance and we will meet all bursary commitments for continuing students.

2.1 Access

2.1.1. Financial Support

National Scholarship Programme

Our revised allocation from HEFCE is £664,000. This will provide 332 scholarships to the value of £2,000 per scholarship offered as a fee waiver to first year students. Eligible part time students will receive a pro rata fee waiver.

The University consistently attracts more students per year from a family income background of £25,000 or less than will be able to receive a scholarship. Therefore, the following additional criteria will be used to select scholarship beneficiaries:

- firm acceptance of a conditional or unconditional offer by 13 June 2014;
- demonstration of excellence in academic achievement, performance or potential, giving priority to those students from partner schools or colleges.

The University will offer an additional £1,473,000, as committed in our 2013 Access Agreement. This will be offered to the same students in subsequent years in the form of a further fee waiver of £2,500 in year 2 and a cash award of £2,000 in year 3 (or a further fee waiver of £2,000 for any eligible EU students).

2.1.2. Outreach

Birmingham City University has always been committed to delivering and participating in outreach activities. The most recent institutional performance indicators have shown that the University continues to perform above benchmark in recruiting young First Degree students from state run schools, low income households and neighbourhoods with historically low participation.

The University's Widening Participation Strategic Assessment contains further information on the various widening participation activities undertaken.

Many of the advice and guidance activities undertaken by the University's outreach team, including our generic ones, automatically capture disadvantaged learners. Our main catchment areas include a high proportion of learners from a widening participation background. Research from the Birmingham and Solihull Aimhigher partnership shows that 66% of the schools and colleges in the Birmingham and Solihull area fall into the higher category in comparison with 29% nationally.

The table below identifies the University's top 12 feeder institutions with their widening participation prioritisation classification by Aimhigher, nine of which are 'High Priority'. This ranking considers the proportion of targeted learners in those institutions who fall within a widening participation classification using a range of indicators, such as eligibility for free schools meals, Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD), National Statistics Socio-Economic Classification (N-SEC 4-8), and no parental engagement in HE. Despite the sector-wide downturn in UCAS applications for 2012 entry, applications to Birmingham City University from these targeted feeder institutions all increased compared to 2011.

Key feeders: UCAS applications	Priority status	2011	2012	% change
Birmingham Metropolitan College	High	1,018	1,216	1.19
Solihull College	Medium	412	477	1.16
Halesowen College	High	409	497	1.22
Walsall College	High	306	358	1.17
Joseph Chamberlain Sixth Form College	High	272	375	1.37
Bournville College	High	252	292	1.16
Dudley College	High	246	297	1.21
South Birmingham College	High	237	355	1.5
The Sixth Form College, Solihull	Low	210	326	1.55
Stourbridge College, Stourbridge	Low	205	222	1.08
Cadbury Sixth Form College	High	158	200	1.27

Further evidence of the success of our outreach strategy has been demonstrated by recent research from Aimhigher, which undertook tracking of pupils from 2009 against 2012 Higher Education entry. This found that of 146 tracked learners across the Partnership, 67 were accepted at one of the Partnership's four Birmingham universities and of these a quarter (17) were accepted at Birmingham City University.

In June 2012, as part of the Aimhigher partnership, Birmingham City University ran a two-day non-residential summer school for 27 Year 12s, entitled 'Get Clued up to move up'. This featured a range of activities to support transition from school/college to Higher Education and was delivered by our Centre For Academic Success. All participants completed the event and 95.8% were satisfied or very satisfied. Furthermore, there was a 10% increase in the proportion of learners who

definitely/probably wanted to go to HE, a 19% increase in the proportion of learners who definitely/probably knew enough about HE to decide whether to go or not; and a 29% increase in the proportion of learners who felt that University was now for people like them.

The University's own research through an online student evaluation survey post events in 2011/12 found that 70% of the 456 respondents wanted to go to university; 77% said they learned something new at the session and over half (52%) said they were more likely to apply to Birmingham City University following on from the activity they attended.

As we have demonstrated, Birmingham City University's Outreach team works closely with key feeder schools and colleges in communities with low participation rates to raise aspirations and encourage applications to higher education. We intend to continue to offer a comprehensive range of activities, which include subject enrichment workshops, master classes, campus visits, one-to-one surgeries giving advice on UCAS applications, attendance at parents' evenings and careers fairs, talks on student finance and what to expect at university, and conferences for college students and their advisors.

We will undertake activities to maintain our performance at or above the sector adjusted benchmark in relation to entrants from state education, social class and low participation neighbourhoods.

Monitoring and evaluation of outreach activities will be undertaken through a range of methods, including:

- Tracking learners who take part in intensive activities such as mentoring and master classes to monitor applications and progression to the University.
- Carrying out a sample of pre and post- event evaluations to monitor attitudinal shift and effectiveness.

It should be noted that the tracking of student data can be problematic as it requires parental consent so data capture is not always comprehensive. Since outreach activities are targeted at various age groups, there is often a delay before application or conversion analysis can be completed.

The indicator relating to the recruitment of students in receipt of Disabled Students' Allowance has in the past shown the University performing below benchmark. While the percentage of students in receipt of Disabled Students' Allowance rose consistently year on year in the student populations analysed, this trend was matched by a corresponding increase in the benchmark. The University proposed to improve the participation of students with disabilities to match or exceed benchmark. The most recent figures suggest that the University has dropped below benchmark again having exceeded it for full time and part time undergraduates for the previous two years. We will continue to devote resource to enable us to improve this position.

2.1.3. Collaborative working between institutions

Birmingham City University will continue the collaborative Aimhigher West Midlands partnership established in 2011-12 with the University of Birmingham, Aston University and University College Birmingham. The partnership exceeded its baseline year milestones in 2011/12 and is on target to do so again in 2012/13. We, therefore, confirm our intention to increase the number of young people from

disadvantaged backgrounds engaged in Aimhigher's intensive mentoring and residential activity to 750 in 2013/14 and to 1,000 each year from 2014/15.

In response to demand we will also continue to deliver less intensive activities to a larger number of young people and parents and to support events for higher education advice and guidance practitioners working to support the progression of disadvantaged young people.

Birmingham City University will jointly fund Aimhigher with a contribution of £35,000 in 2014/15 and will continue to be intimately involved in its governance and management. Opportunities to engage other HEIs in elements of the Aimhigher programme will be pursued, as will opportunities to align with the National Strategy for Student Access and Success and other relevant policy developments and initiatives. These partnership activities will complement Birmingham City University's own extensive programme of widening access and fair access measures outlined elsewhere in this agreement.

The Aimhigher partnership's collaborative evaluation of the impact of its work has progressed to schedule. Longitudinal evaluation and tracking, commenced during the nationally funded phase of Aimhigher, continues via a PhD linked research project with the Centre for Higher Education Equity and Access. The study's control and experimental groups span the 14-19 phase and include young people who meet all, some or no WP targeting criterion. Analysis to date suggests that Aimhigher engagement during Key Stage 3 and 4 generates increased aspiration towards higher education (+12.5% above non-participants) and is associated with improved KS4 attainment (62.1% of learners engaged 6 times achieved 5 GCSEs at A*-C, including English and Maths, compared to a cohort average of 56%). Initial findings suggest the full-time HE application rate for the cohort of Aimhigher beneficiaries attaining the age of 18 or 19 during 2011/12 is higher (43.7%) than that for the local population of 18 and 19 year olds (30.6%). More detailed analyses by different socio-economic indicators are ongoing.

2.2. Student Success

As previously reported in our Access Agreements, Senate in 2011 adopted recommendations from its working group on retention, progression and achievement. More recently these have been augmented and incorporated into a university-wide initiative: 'Partners for Success' which is being implemented from 2012-13.

Partners for Success incorporates a comprehensive Project Plan, divided into four main categories: Target Setting; Admissions and Transition; Student Engagement and Support; Employability and Employment. A Project Board has been formed to oversee the Partners for Success work and a Project Manager appointed to lead work in this area. Progress will be monitored through reports to Senate and as part of annual monitoring at programme, faculty and professional service level.

Partners for Success actions include:

- evaluation of previous work on transition and induction with development of student-delivered induction material. For example, the *Level Up* online support initiative, delivered from the point of confirmation in 2012 in the School of Media, will be trialled elsewhere in the University;
- expansion of outreach work with key local FE providers;

- successful initiatives in Student Academic Mentoring are being expanded across the institution, including exploration of the potential roles for senior students in providing personal tuition for junior students;
- enhanced co-ordination of mentoring initiatives through the Centre for Enhancement of Learning and Teaching
- programme teams being encouraged to develop new approaches which ensure full scope for personalisation of learning
- joint work with Birmingham City Students' Union (BCSU) seeking fuller roles for students in all aspects of curriculum design and delivery
- work in partnership with BCSU to develop a full range of extracurricular activities aimed at enhancing employability
- encouragement of programme directors and other key programme teams to make better use of timely data on student performance, with early identification of those 'at risk';
- expansion of the Careers Team and adoption of an approach that places additional emphasis on work located in faculties closer to curriculum delivery;
- expansion of our "OpportUNlty" programme to exploit fully the range of employment opportunities on campus and the benefits of such employment for students;
- ensure for all students a work-related experience in each year of study;
- provide full support for students to ensure that they are able to develop and record their achievement of employability attributes;
- support students in preparation for employment through, for example, CV development and mock interviews;
- make available entrepreneurship support to all students and for three years after graduation

3. Monitoring and evaluation

Information about monitoring and evaluation against specific activities is included in the appropriate sections above.

In addition, all data relating to student participation, retention and progression are routinely reported to the University's Senate. Progress against the milestones set out in this agreement will be monitored by Senate, which already monitors progress against, and reviews the action plan of, the Widening Participation Strategic Assessment, which is also reported to HEFCE as part of the institution's annual monitoring.

The Students' Union has sabbatical officer membership of the Academic Standards and Quality Enhancement Committee, which will be monitoring progress against the action plans for progression and retention, and of Senate, which will be monitoring progress against the milestones set out in this Access Agreement.

4. Student communications

4.1 Student Voice

Prior to completing and submitting our Access Agreement for 2012-13 the University consulted widely on the fees and National Scholarship criteria to be introduced. This consultation included discussions at the Board of Governors, whose membership includes the Students' Union President; the University Senate, which has Student Union sabbatical representation, and the Corporate Management Group, of which the Students' Union Chief Executive is a member.

The University senior leadership team held a meeting with the Students' Union sabbatical team and the Vice-Chancellor held a separate meeting with the President of the Students' Union as well as attending an open student question and answer session, held before the Students' Union AGM, to explain the University's approach to fee setting for 2012 and answer questions both about that process and about the agreed fee levels. This has become an annual event, alongside regular monthly meetings between the Students' Union officers and a Pro-Vice-Chancellor.

Both parties are in agreement that the fee setting process was fair, transparent and consultative and the Students' Union has not challenged either the process or the outcome.

There was a difference of opinion about the National Scholarship Programme initially; both parties were in agreement over the additional criteria introduced by the University in order to target the scholarships more specifically. However, the Union wished to see the scholarships awarded as cash to support living costs rather than fee waivers. Following further discussions with the Students' Union, the scholarships for students entering the University in 2014/15 will now include a cash sum in Year 3. The Students' Union has also been consulted about the changes to the criteria for 2014/15.

More generally, a number of initiatives are under way aimed at enhancement of communication with students. As part of an HEA "Students as Partners" Change Initiative, BCSU is delivering a Student Voice Project aimed at delivery of a range of outcomes to modernise the whole approach to capture of student views and enhancement of participation in University processes. One of these includes a reconstitution of the former Student Representation Coordination Group into a new Student Voice Group with wider representation and focus on delivery of the outcomes of the project.

Students' Union officers and the Head of Membership Engagement continue to work closely with the Director of Learning Experience and the Centre for Enhancement of Learning and Teaching to optimise the student role in academic development.

4.2 Communication/information to prospective students

Clear, accessible and timely information on fees, loans, bursaries and scholarships will be provided to applicants and students in the following ways:

Outreach Activities

Outreach staff, student mentors, student ambassadors and the course enquiry team will provide information on fees, loans, grants, scholarships and bursaries as part of their outreach activity.

University web site

The web site will give comprehensive information about course fees, aggregate fees, the scholarship scheme, bursaries, loans and grants and the Access to Learning Fund and other financial support available to students. Clarification of any additional course costs will be provided and an indication of accommodation costs will also be available.

Prospectuses

The undergraduate and postgraduate prospectuses contain information on finance and provide links to the BCU website and Student Services website for further up to date information.

Open Days and Visit Days

Staff from the University's Education Liaison Team and Student Services give Open Day talks and provide information on fees and financial support to prospective students, applicants and their families.

These specialist staff provide current information for faculty based visit days and events.

Student Services Web Site

The Student Services web site gives information about all financial support available to students and includes a budget-balancing student calculator.

Tuition Fees and Funding leaflet

The leaflet will give an overview of current fees, with reference to detailed fee information on the University web site. It also contains information about all aspects of financial support available to students.

Student Services Money Matters leaflet

This leaflet outlines the financial support services offered, has a frequently asked questions section, gives information on how to contact the Student Finance Advisors and how to apply for financial assistance.

The University is committed to providing such timely information to UCAS and SLC as they reasonably require to populate their applicant facing web services.