

DURHAM UNIVERSITY

ACCESS AGREEMENT WITH THE OFFICE FOR FAIR ACCESS 2012/13

1. FEE LIMITS AND FEE INCOME ABOVE £6,000

The University intends to charge a tuition fee of £9000 for all full-time undergraduate new entrants in 2012-13. Those who in subsequent years undertake a placement year or study year abroad will be charged half of the full-time fee during their year of placement or study abroad.

The University estimates that there will be 3,290 entrants in 2012 subject to the new £9,000 fee.

In order to maintain the value of the fees in real terms, the University will apply annual increases in line with inflation and any permitted rises each year set out by the Government.

2. EXPENDITURE ON ADDITIONAL ACCESS AND RETENTION MEASURES

2.1 ASSESSMENT OF THE UNIVERSITY'S ACCESS AND RETENTION RECORD

The HESA key performance indicators (HESA KPIs) relating to the requirements of the new access agreement cover two areas:

- Access indicators for students from under-represented groups in Higher Education
- Non-continuation rates and projected outcomes

The following assessment makes use of the adjusted sector average (the HESA 'benchmark') to evaluate the relative performance of the University. The adjusted sector average is an average for the sector weighted according to the subjects of study, qualifications on entry and age on entry of the University's students. As an average, there will inevitably be institutions both above and below this 'benchmark' and it cannot therefore be taken as a target. It is nonetheless useful as a means of comparing student profiles and student retention across the sector.

State School Entrants

Durham is a highly selecting institution, with demanding degree programmes and a high ratio of very highly qualified applicants per place. The University therefore works hard to identify those with the greatest merit and potential amongst applicants from all school types. The University adopts a holistic approach to its assessment of merit and potential, including the use of information about the context of prior academic achievement. Nonetheless, academic achievement remains the most important factor in determining which applicants receive an offer of a place. There are significant disparities in prior attainment across school type. The University therefore faces a significant challenge in maximising the number of applications from students from under-represented school types and identifying those who have the ability and potential to succeed at Durham.

As an example of its work in this area, over the last two years the University has been developing a Supported Progression Compact Scheme, which provides a progression route for a targeted cohort of the most able, but least likely to apply students from County Durham and Teesside. Through this scheme the University is making a significant contribution towards increasing applications from state schooled students from NS-SEC categories 4-7 from a region that has one of the lowest HE participation rates in England. Participants in the first cohort of the scheme are currently holding offers for admission to the University and whilst enrolment data is not yet available, 35 have accepted their offer as their firm choice in the UCAS system. Attitude surveys among the cohort have also provided encouraging evidence, showing a 30% improvement in the measure of participant confidence and aspiration and a 50% improvement in the measure of knowledge of Durham University and higher education in general. 70% of participants have stated that the scheme has improved their academic attainment. The results of the survey correlate with the views of staff in the participants' schools and colleges, and 85% of staff surveyed noted an increased interest amongst the school population in applying to Durham University. (See section 3.1 for details of numbers of participants.)

Significant resource has also been dedicated to developing the use of contextual information in admissions in order to provide selectors with sharper tools to identify merit and potential. (See section 3.1 for further information on the use of contextual information.) Since the University began using contextual information, the quality of student intake, as measured by average tariff scores, has risen.

The University's proportion of young, full-time first degree entrants from a state school background was 59.2% in 2009/10, which was below the adjusted sector average of 74%. Until the most recent figures Durham's proportion of state school entrants had been steadily declining since 2002/3, but the measures described above have ensured that the decline has halted, with the proportion of state school entrants levelling out in 2008/9 and 2009/10. These measures have been part of a wider revised admissions strategy, aimed at identifying merit and potential at a time of increasing competition.

Low Participation Neighbourhoods (LPN)

At 4.7%, the proportion of new entrants to the University from Low Participation Neighbourhoods in 2009/10 was below the adjusted sector average of 5.4%, but was higher than the previous year's figure in absolute terms.

Social class

In 2009/10 12.8% of Durham's young home/EU entrants were from the NS-SEC 4-7 classifications, which was 5.4 percentage points below the adjusted sector average. Data for the previous eight years show that Durham's performance relative to the adjusted sector average remained broadly stable.

The social class indicator is particularly challenging because the University does not have access to NS-SEC classification at the point of application, preventing this contextual information being used in the assessment of applications. The University has used LPN classification as a proxy measure, but the correlation between LPN and NS-SEC has been decreasing, following the move to the POLAR 2 dataset. The University would therefore urge UCAS to release social class information at the point of receipt of the application, in order to inform decision-making through the selection process.

Mature Students

The University performs well on its proportion of full-time mature entrants who have come from a low participation neighbourhood and do not have a previous HE qualification. 19.3% of mature students were in this category in 2009/10, exceeding the adjusted sector average of 12%, which mirrored the performance in the previous year. Success in this measure is attributable in large part to the University's Foundation Centre, which targets home applicants who have few or no formal qualifications, or have experienced a break in their education.

Students in receipt of Disabled Students' Allowance

The proportion of full-time first degree students in receipt of disabled students' allowance has remained fairly constant since 2007/08 at just under 3%. The 2009/10 figure was 2.7%, against an adjusted sector average of 3.2%.

Non-continuation rates

Student retention is one of the University's key strengths. Less than 1.6% (2009/10) of its students do not continue with their studies, which is better than the adjusted sector average of 2.6%. Financial reasons account for only 5% of withdrawals; the majority are academic or personal. In absolute terms the retention rates of mature students and students from Low Participation Neighbourhoods are not as strong but are nonetheless in both cases close to the adjusted sector average.

Projected Outcomes

The University outperforms the adjusted sector average on its projected first degree completion rates, with a rate of 91.5% (2009/10). If account is taken of those projected to transfer to another institution, such as Durham's cohort of Phase 1 medical students to Newcastle University, Durham's projected completion rate is 97%.

Conclusion

There are positive conclusions to be drawn from the University's access record, particularly in relation to the work it has undertaken under the previous access agreements, such as the Supported Progression Compact Scheme, and the University has an enviable record in student retention. However, because of the University's current student profile with respect to participation from state schools and lower social classes, the University's future work will focus on access to Durham from these under-represented groups, using collaboration with schools and colleges as a key means to achieve this.

2.2 ESTIMATE OF EXPENDITURE ON ADDITIONAL ACCESS AND RETENTION MEASURES

The Office for Fair Access guidance suggests that if an institution has a low or very low proportion of under-represented students, it should spend between 30 and 35 per cent of its fee income above £6,000 per fte on access commitments. The University accepts this guiding range and will work towards a figure of 32.3% in steady state after the period of transition. Therefore, with a fee of £9,000, this will

approximate to a total of £9.8 million per annum when all UK/home students are subject to the new fee. The £9.8 million will be divided between financial support packages and access outreach activity.

As part of the annual review of its access agreement, the University will consider the impact of its access activities, and if appropriate adjust the individual activities and the level of financial commitment.

The balance between non-financial measures and financial support

In its previous access agreement, the University recognised the value of highly targeted outreach activity, and spent proportionally more on this than was typical across the sector. Whilst the University will, through this access agreement, commit more resource to targeted outreach activity in absolute terms, it recognises that the higher graduate contributions consequent on a £9,000 fee will make financial support more important than previously. The University therefore intends to include significant additional financial support packages beyond the compulsory participation in the National Scholarship Scheme to support enrolments from the target access groups. The University believes that offering high value financial support packages to applicants who are recruited through its outreach activity will strengthen the impact of its access measures.

By 2015/16, when all UK/home students are subject to the new fee, the University estimates that, on the assumption that this 2012/13 agreement is renewed, it will be committing approximately £6.7 million per annum to financial support packages. £1.6 million of this sum will provide bursaries for those students who progress from the Supported Progression Compact Scheme. Most of the remaining £5.1 million will be targeted at students from households where the income is below £25,000 per year, with a lower level of support where the income is between £25,000 and £42,600 per year. The £5.1 million will be supplemented by funding from the National Scholarship Programme. (See section 3.2 for further details.)

At the same point, the University estimates that it will be spending £3 million on widening access activity, the details of which are set out below. It will also commit £100k to researching, developing and evaluating the methods it uses in assessing merit and potential in its selection processes, and to evaluating the efficacy of its widening access measures, and it will commit £100k to providing study skills support for students in the under-represented groups, particularly students progressing from the Supported Progression Compact Scheme and the University's Foundation Centre programme, as an aid to retention.

In the first year of this agreement (2012/13), with only one cohort of students on the new fees, the commitment to the new financial support packages will be lower, but the bursary commitments to those students subject to the old fee will still be honoured. This will result in an estimated commitment to financial support packages of approximately £3.4 million. Of this, £1.3 million will be committed to the old bursaries and £2.1 million to the new financial support packages. The investment in widening access activity will be approximately £2.7 million in 2012/13, with an additional £300k on retention, evaluation and development of selection tools.

3. ADDITIONAL ACCESS MEASURES

3.1 OUTREACH ACTIVITIES

In 2012/13, the University will expand its programme of well-targeted and high quality outreach activities to which it committed in the 2008 access agreement, with a focus on enhancing applications to Durham University from a specific range of backgrounds. The University recognises that the activities play a broader role in extending educational opportunities to those from non-traditional backgrounds but the specific target is to promote fair access to Durham by increasing applications from students from state schools or colleges and NS-SEC 4-7 backgrounds who do not traditionally apply to Durham.

The feedback from participants has shown that activities which work best in raising aspiration and attainment are those where there is direct engagement of students and teachers with the University: in particular summer schools, teacher conferences and the Supported Progression Compact Scheme with its series of residential events. Under the present agreement the University therefore intends to expand all of these activities. It will expand school liaison more broadly, but it will ensure that contact with schools is followed up by invitations to staff and students to engage in day-long and residential events at the University. The University is therefore increasing the volume and coverage of its most successful outreach programmes.

The University will therefore continue to use additional tuition fee income to provide:

- a dedicated team of staff working specifically on realising the aims of the widening access plan,
- a compact scheme involving regular targeted contact with students from Year 10 onwards,
- dissemination of financial information to applicants and prospective applicants,
- residential summer schools,
- school and college visits,
- leadership for the Durham Excellence in Education Partnership,
- the expanded Foundation Centre programme, offering a direct progression route into Durham degrees for LPN, mature, and non-traditionally qualified students ,
- conferences and events for teachers who support higher education progression.

The Compact Scheme

A priority will be placed on expansion of the Supported Progression Compact Scheme, which is a series of intensive activities focussed on the most able, least likely to apply, disadvantaged students from targeted areas. It is making a significant contribution towards increasing applications from state schooled students from NS-SEC categories 4-7 from a region that has one of the lowest HE participation rates in England. Impact will be achieved both with students participating in the scheme and among their peers at school or college, as one of the intended outcomes of the scheme is removing publicly-held real and perceived barriers to accessing a Durham degree. The expansion of the scheme in 2010-11 to include other existing outreach activity is creating an integrated portfolio of contacts with individual students starting in Year 10 and continuing until Year 13.

In the 2009-10 pilot year of the scheme for Year 12 students, 62 participants started the scheme, with 52 attending the assessed summer school. 49 successfully completed the summer school, of which 41

have applied to the University and 39 received an offer for entry in October 2011. 35 have accepted that offer as their firm UCAS choice. In 2010/11, 120 students in year 12 enrolled on the scheme, who will be applying for University entrance in September 2012.

In 2012/13, the University aims to expand the number of students participating in the scheme in both the pre- and post-16 age ranges. Selection for the scheme will include the criteria of being from a state school or college and the NS-SEC 4-7 classifications. When the new scheme reaches its full potential, it will be providing 90 entrants per year to the University from these under-represented groups.

Contextual Information

Durham has worked closely with the organisation, Supporting Professionalism in Admissions, in leading a national group on the use of contextual data in admissions and has already developed systems to use contextual data in its selection process to ensure that applicants with the greatest merit and potential receive offers.

The University intends to pursue these developments further by looking at the availability of other predictors of success at undergraduate level as a basis for selection. The University will employ the services of its Centre for Evaluation and Monitoring (CEM), which is the largest independent provider of educational monitoring systems in the world and provides specialist research and evaluation services to a wide range of organisations including universities.

In its use of contextual information, the University plans to replace POLAR2 data with the ACORN data set as the socio-demographic indicator. This will provide more precise contextual data for the selection of both UCAS applicants and applicants for the Supported Progression Scheme.

Student retention and success

The University will commit a modest level of resource to ensuring that it maintains its excellent retention levels. Post-entry support measures will be targeted on study skills support for students in the under-represented groups. The University hopes that these measures will play an indirect role in encouraging under-represented groups to apply, who may be unnecessarily concerned about their ability to cope with a demanding programme of studies.

Collaboration

The University will continue to work collaboratively with key partners, including:

- Local, regional and national staff in schools and colleges
- Gifted and Talented Co-ordinators in schools and colleges
- Parents, guardians and other opinion leaders
- The Training and Development Agency for Schools
- The Open College Network (through the Foundation Centre)

The University will retain former Aimhigher-funded activity which has most impact on recruitment to Durham University, albeit in a reduced form, including:

- State school visits (regional and national)
- The Student Ambassadors scheme
- The Year 11 Summer School
- Open Days and Campus Tours
- Day-long conferences for teachers and advisers

3.2 FINANCIAL SUPPORT FOR STUDENTS

The University has concluded, following consultation with its Students Union, that the loan arrangements available through Student Finance England make fee waivers a less attractive offer to prospective students, whereas packages that provide financial support in cash or in kind will be preferred.

Durham is a collegiate university and participating in a college community is an integral part of the student experience. For this reason, living in college in the first year is a regulatory requirement for most students. Therefore, financial support will be targeted at facilitating this participation, by offering the support in the form of free or subsidised college accommodation, where appropriate.

Bursaries for Students Progressing from the Supported Progression Compact Scheme

The University will introduce a financial bursary scheme for students who progress from the Supported Progression Scheme who will be offered £5,500 per annum for the duration of their course. It is estimated that 90 new entrants per year will be offered the bursaries. In 2012/13 with the first year of entry from the Supported Progression Compact Scheme, this will cost up to £495k, rising to £1.5 million by 2015/16 when there will be students in all four undergraduate years who have progressed from the Scheme. In their first year, students will be offered at least part of the bursary in the form of a subsidy for college accommodation.

Bursaries and Accommodation Subsidies for those with Household Income below £25,000

Through a combination of the National Scholarships Programme (NSP) and the Durham Grant Scheme, the University will provide financial support packages of £3,000, either as discounted college accommodation or as a cash bursary, for every year of their course to all home undergraduate students resident in the UK where the residual household income is below £25k per annum (as assessed by Student Finance England in accordance with its guidance on Assessing Financial Entitlement). Approximately 1,800 students in total will be in this category so that by 2015/16 the total sum committed to these will be £5.4 million, of which, it is assumed, approximately £1.3 million will be received from the government under the NSP scheme.

The Government's restrictions on the use of NSP funding mean that the University will use the NSP funding and the matched NSP funding provided by the University for college accommodation subsidies only. Any cash bursaries will be offered through the Durham Grant Scheme.

Therefore, as a condition of receiving financial support, students will be required to apply for college accommodation in their first year and in their final year of study. (The condition will be relaxed for students studying at Queens Campus where college accommodation is more limited.) If they are

successful and are accommodated in college, the financial support will normally be given in the form of an accommodation subsidy through the National Scholarship Programme. In the years when qualifying students are not in college accommodation they will receive the financial support in the form of a bursary of £3,000 from the Durham Grant Scheme.

By 2015/16, approximately 860 students (575 in year 1 and 285 in year 3) will be in receipt of a National Scholarship Programme scholarship of £3,000 as discounted accommodation charges, and approximately 940 students will be in receipt of a Durham Grant Scheme cash bursary of £3000.

Financial Details of the University's Commitment to the National Scholarships Programme

As stated above, in 2012/13, under the auspices of the NSP, the University will provide £3,000 towards the cost of college accommodation to every first year student who comes from a household where the residual household income is below £25k per annum. Approximately 575 students will be in this category so that the cost of the scheme in 2012/13 will be £1.73 million, of which £0.43 million will be provided by the government and the remainder, £1.3 million, as matched funding by the University.

The scheme will similarly provide 575 individual subsidies of £3,000 each to entrants in subsequent years. In 2013/14, it is assumed that £860k will be provided by the Government and approximately £870k by the University. In 2014/15, when the Government contribution is assumed to reach £1.3 million, and is matched by £1.3 million from the University, the scheme will provide 575 college accommodation subsidies in year 1 and 285 in year 3. This will be 860 scholarships in total.

Bursaries for those with Household Income between £25,000 and £42,600

For home students resident in the UK, where the residual household income has been assessed as between £25K and £42.6k per annum, the University will provide financial support packages of £1,000 from the Durham Grant Scheme for each year of their course. By 2015/16 approximately 1000 students in total will be in this category so that the total sum committed to these bursaries will be £1 million. In 2012/13 the cost of this provision will be £320k.

Total Commitment for Financial Support

All these new arrangements will reach steady state in 2015/16, at which point the total commitment for financial support under the Access Agreement will be of the order of £6.67 million.

Total Countable Expenditure

The commitment to financial support of just over £6.67 million and the commitment to outreach, evaluation and retention activities of just over £3.16 million gives a total commitment under the access agreement under steady state of approximately £9.8 million. All this expenditure is countable under the guidance provided by the Office for Fair Access. It consists of expenditure in previous access agreements that the University is continuing to make and expenditure on new access and student retention measures consistent with the guidance.

4. TARGETS AND MILESTONES

Access Targets

The University aims to make sustained progress in increasing the proportion of students from under-represented groups.

The OFFA guidance suggests that, in choosing what targets and milestones to use to evaluate the effectiveness of access measures, the University might consider both the HESA Key Performance Indicators and other statistical measures. The HESA KPI where the University is furthest from its adjusted sector average is the proportion of young state school or college entrants, followed by the KPI for the proportion of entrants from socio-economic classifications NS-SEC 4-7. The University will therefore set milestones and longer-term targets for its HESA state school or college and NS-SEC performance indicators, supported by milestones and targets for its Supported Progression Compact Scheme. The University anticipates that the achievement of the Supported Progression Compact Scheme milestones will lead to consequent improvement in the HESA KPIs.

The University will therefore aim to increase the proportion of state school or college enrolments by three percentage points and NS-SEC 4-7 enrolments by two percentage points relative to the most recently published HESA KPI figures, which are for 2009 entrants. The HESA measure counts students from state schools or colleges as a proportion of those who are Home/EU fee status, UK domiciled, and under 21 years of age, as a proportion of the full set; and similarly for NS-SEC 4-7.

1. To increase the proportion of young entrants from state school or college as measured by the HESA KPI to 62% by 2015/16 and to reduce the number of percentage points below the HESA KPI adjusted sector average (the 'benchmark') to 12 by 2015/16.
2. To increase the proportion of entrants from NS-SEC 4-7 as measured by the HESA KPI to 15% by 2015/16 and to reduce the number of percentage points below the HESA KPI adjusted sector average (the 'benchmark') to 3.2 by 2015/16.
(This HESA NS-SEC classification KPI is particularly challenging because UCAS does not provide access to the classification information at the point of application, preventing this contextual information being used to inform the selection process. To assist in the identification of disadvantage, the University plans to change from using POLAR2 to the more precise ACORN dataset.)

Proportional intermediate milestones for entrants from state schools and colleges and from NS-SEC classifications 4-7 will be set for each academic year.

The targets relating to the Support Progression Compact Scheme are as follows:

1. Applications to Durham from those who participated in the Supported Progression Compact Scheme. From the 2013/14 application cycle: 105 per year
2. Enrolments at Durham from those who participated in the Supported Progression Compact Scheme. From 2014 entry: 90 per year

3. Enrolments at other selective universities from those who participated in the Supported Progression Compact Scheme. From 2014 entry: 5 per year
Selective universities are defined by entry tariff score, as those with an institutional average of 375 tariff points or more.

Proportional intermediate milestones in the period up to the target year will be set for each academic year.

Retention Target

The University already has an excellent retention rate and therefore its target for non-continuation is to maintain the current excellent record in absolute terms, at 2%.

5. MONITORING AND EVALUATION ARRANGEMENTS

The University will employ the services of its Centre for Evaluation and Monitoring (CEM) to undertake evaluation and monitoring. The Centre, which works with schools nationally, has access to very large quantities of relevant background data against which to evaluate the University's access measures.

Policy in respect of widening access is developed by the Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Education) through the University Executive Committee, the Education Committee and Senate, the latter two having student membership. Operational performance in respect of widening access is monitored by the same governance structures.

The Student Recruitment and Admissions Office has institutional responsibility for the implementation and delivery of measures to promote access to the University.

6. PROVISION OF INFORMATION TO PROSPECTIVE STUDENTS

Through its website, the University will publish clear, accessible and timely information for applicants and students on the fees that it will charge and the financial support that it will offer. The University will also disseminate information via its outreach and recruitment activity. Within the University's Academic Office there is a student financial support service, which will work with staff in the University's constituent colleges to ensure that all existing students have access to the financial support information that they need.

The University will also provide timely information to UCAS and SLC to populate their applicant-facing web services.

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

Name of institution	Durham University
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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

Please see our main agreement, paragraph 2.1.

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 intends to charge a tuition fee of £9,000 for all full-time undergraduate and postgraduate ITT new entrants in 2012-13.

In order to maintain the value of the fees in real terms, the University will apply annual increases in line with inflation and any permitted rises each year set out by the Government.

The fee income from undergraduate ITT students has not been separately declared in the spreadsheet as we have already counted this in our main agreement.

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

Please see our main agreement for details of spend on undergraduate ITT students (paragraphs, 2.2, 3.1 and 3.2).

The University plans to recycle 14% of the fee income over £6,000 for postgraduate ITT students. With a fee of £9,000, this will approximate to a total of £100,000 per annum, which will be spent on access measures.

As part of the annual review of its access agreement, the University will consider the impact of its access activities, and if appropriate adjust the individual activities and the level of financial commitment.

D. Financial support for trainees

Please see our main agreement for details of financial support for undergraduate ITT students (paragraph 3.2)

For postgraduate trainees, the University will provide financial support packages of £1,000, as a cash bursary through the Durham Grant Scheme, to all home students resident in the UK where the residual household income is below £25k per annum (as assessed by Student Finance England in accordance with its guidance on Assessing Financial Entitlement) in 2012-13. An estimated 100 students will be in this category, so that the total sum committed to these will be £100,000.

Part three: outreach and retention

E. Outreach and retention work

Outreach and retention work is covered in paragraph 3.1 of our main agreement

Part four: Targets, milestones and monitoring

F. Targets and milestones

We intend to apply all of our existing targets and milestones in our main agreement to undergraduate ITT students.

G. Your monitoring arrangements

We do not wish to add anything further to our main agreement

Part five: Information to students

H. Provision of information to trainees

Through its website, the University will publish clear, accessible and timely information for applicants and students on the fees that it will charge and the financial support that it will offer. The University will also disseminate information via its outreach and recruitment activity. Within the University's Academic Office there is a student financial support service, which will work with staff in the University's constituent colleges to ensure that all existing students have access to the financial support information that they need.

The University will also provide timely information to UCAS and SLC to populate their applicant-facing web services.