

BRUNEL UNIVERSITY ACCESS AGREEMENT - applying to new entrants commencing courses in 2013/14

Summary

In line with new legislation Brunel University wishes to charge fees in excess of £6,000 and is therefore submitting an Access Agreement which sets out how it intends to utilise a percentage of the extra fee income generated to continue and expand the activities that have proved successful in widening access and delivering positive outcomes for students from under-represented backgrounds at the University. Although the outcomes from our first OFFA agreement are as yet unknown this second agreement seeks to continue to build on what clearly works for our student body as well as recognising recent changes in the HE landscape. In particular, and in line with guidance so far issued, we intend to increase significantly the percentage of the additional fee income we spend on retention initiatives from 0.6% to 1.6% by 2016, whilst maintaining our outreach expenditure at constant levels and as additional expenditure to our extensive outreach activities funded from our HEFCE Widening Participation allocation.

We have consulted with the President of the Student Union in preparing this agreement and he has consulted the Unions' executive with regard to its content. As members of Senate and Council the Student Union will continue to have strategic input to this agreement and will be represented on the University's Fees and Funding Group which works to deliver the agreement on a practical level.

Given that the University has a very diverse population our OFFA Agreement will focus on students from Low participation Neighbourhoods, Low socio-economic groups, mature students, students with a registered disability and care leavers and will not specifically focus on any particular ethnic minority.

Brunel University has a strong reputation for widening access both within the sector and with its partners in both mainstream education and further education. It also undertakes considerable activity to improve transition, retention and employability for its Widening Participation cohort and we believe that our efforts to widen access are amongst the strongest of any Pre-1992 research-intensive university.

The University has a diverse student population and currently meets or exceeds the majority of benchmarks for "under-represented" groups in HE. We will seek to maintain our record of fair access and diverse admissions whilst extending our outreach activities to encompass mature students, a cohort currently under-represented at Brunel.

We also intend to increase our work in the areas of transition and retention to ensure our under-represented groups achieve outcomes comparable to our student population as a whole. We intend to match the Government's National Scholarship Scheme in a way which benefits our students both fairly and flexibly, recognising the diversity of need represented within our student population. To aid retention we intend to offer NSP students funding for the full three years rather than focus support in the first year.

The University's current highly successful Widening Participation Strategy is available at <http://www.brunel.ac.uk/about/strategy/strat/wps>.

Since its inception in 1966 Brunel University has also had a very strong focus on employability and employer engagement and this OFFA Agreement also contains details of schemes to ensure that under-represented groups can benefit from internships and placement years which we believe can improve outcomes for those students..

The University intends to set a fee of £9,000 for all Home & EU undergraduate students commencing full-time undergraduate studies in Autumn 2013 and to subsequently review tuition fees annually in line with inflation. For students on four-year sandwich courses the fee for the sandwich year is £1,000. With regard to our BEng and BSc programmes with an integrated foundation year, we will charge a fee of £3,500 for the initial year. This agreement also gives a commitment to reduce the final year tuition fee for the four year masters programmes to the national basic fee. Full information on the university's fee and scholarship levels will be published on the University's website at <http://www.brunel.ac.uk>.

The University has a small number of undergraduate courses in the Arts, Health and Social Care and Sport which recruit part-time. The fee for admission to a part-time undergraduate course will be based pro rata on the enhanced fee. The University will continue to pro-rate the standard fee for those students taking only part of their programme of studies in order to redress academic failure or to make up time lost through illness.

Scholarships will not be available to those undergraduates whose fees are funded by other agencies (except ITT students) or where the full tuition fee is not charged. Students from the EU, Northern Ireland and Scotland are also ineligible for Scholarships.

The University's Access Agreement has four main strands:

- Current Performance
- Outreach
- Transition, retention and employment outcomes for students
- Targets

Current Performance

The University's undergraduate cohort for 2011/12 can be broken down into the following structure in absolute numerical terms:

Socio group 1-3	Socio group 4 - 7	Socio group unknown	Low participation	Regular participation	Participation unknown	Disability	Mature	Total
4089	1828	2639	299	5239	3018	718	1070	8556

2011/12 HEU FT UG population (excluding NHS and Associate students)

With regards to performance against HESA benchmarks Brunel performs well in relation to students from Low socio-economic groups, exceeds the national average for students with disabilities and is close to reaching the location adjusted benchmark for low participation neighbourhoods. A new outreach programme was featured in our 2012 access agreement to look to increase our penetration of the mature students' cohort. This programme will start shortly and it is anticipated that we will build on successful elements of that programme during the life of this agreement.

Young full-time first degree entrants									
HESA Table T1a	From Social Classes 4-7				From low participation neighbourhoods				
	Year	Brunel %	Benchmark	Location adjusted Benchmark	UK Average	Brunel %	Benchmark	Location adjusted Benchmark	UK Average
	2010/11	37.1	33.1	33.9	30.6	6	10.9	6.5	10.5
	2009/10	36.4	32.1	32.1	30	6	11	6.4	10.311.
	2008/09	37.8	35.5	35.7	32.3	5	10.9	6.1	10.1
	2007/08	38.6	32.6	31.1	29.5	5	10.4	5.7	9.7

MATURE – Full Time First Degree Entrants				
<i>HESA Tables T2a</i>	From low participation neighbourhoods			
Year	Brunel %	Benchmark	Location adjusted Benchmark	UK Average
2010/11	6.7	13.9	8.2	11.7
2009/10	5.1	14.9	7.4	11.9
2008/09	4.5	14.9	6.5	11.6
2007/08	3.5	15	6.7	11.6

ALL STUDENTS - Full Time Undergraduates			
<i>HESA Table T7</i>	In Receipt of Disabled Students' Allowance		
Year	% with DSA	Benchmark	UK Average
2010/11	7	5.2	5.3
2009/10	5.4	4.7	4.9
2008/09	5	4.8	4.7
2007/08	4.1	4.6	4.5

Brunel National Scholarship Programme

The University will offer the allocated number of NSPs to eligible prospective students who choose Brunel as their 1st choice of institution (i.e. have unconditional firm status with Brunel University) and meet appropriate criteria, including income. The funding for those NSP prospective students who fail to achieve their predicted grades and are rejected by the University will be reallocated to students coming in through Clearing who meet the established criteria.

Brunel has been allocated 252 FTE NSP students in 2013 rising to 378 places by 2014. However the University intends to offer a further 252 places within the scheme in 2013 and will fund scholarships for these 504 at £3000 per year for three years. Students at will be provided with two-thirds of this £3000 package as fee waiver and £1k in cash or kind dependent upon individual choice and circumstance. It is clear from experience in 2012 that students require much greater clarity from institutions around scholarship offers and a small number of simple schemes and therefore we have focussed our major scholarship offering on NSP Scholarships going forward. It is anticipated that Brunel will offer in excess of 1,000 scholarships to students in 2013 and will be providing almost £4m pa in scholarship support by 2016/17.

Local Borough Scholarships

We intend to continue our Local Borough Scholarships which will be worth £6,000 annually, subject to satisfactory progression, paid as £5k in fee waiver and £1k in cash or kind. They will be provided to 30 undergraduate students in 2013, on the basis of academic excellence and require high levels of academic achievement.

Eligible students must have attended a maintained school or college (not an independent or private school) in one of the six London boroughs with whom the University operates

Widening Participation partnerships – Brent, Ealing, Hammersmith and Fulham, Harrow, Hillingdon and Hounslow.

Students must also meet one or more of the following under-represented criteria:

- have a disability, including dyslexia
- are a care-leaver
- come from a low-income or low socio-economic background (i.e. are entitled to a full Government Maintenance Grant or Special Support grant).

Scholarships and awards additional to those funded through our OFFA Agreement

The University has a range of existing annual scholarships currently available to new full-time undergraduates at Brunel which are not included in our OFFA arrangements.

Applicants cannot receive more than one Scholarship. The University has been successful in obtaining support from The London Borough of Hillingdon, TATA Beverages and Ford UK to provide additional scholarship opportunities for our students.

Excellence Scholarships

Excellence Scholarships are worth £3000 per year and are available to up to 150 students who achieve three A's at A-level or equivalent subject to satisfactory academic progress.

Alumni Scholarships

Brunel Alumni Scholarships (funded by alumni donations) are non-repayable* cash awards of £6,000, paid each year on the same basis as Local Borough Scholarships to the 5 applicants who achieve the highest number of UCAS tariff points.

Brunel Urban Scholarships

Brunel Urban Scholarships are non-repayable cash awards of up to £3,000 per year for all students who have attended the renowned Urban Scholars programme at Brunel University for a minimum of two years, who achieve academic excellence and who meet the criteria for obtaining UK fee and maintenance support. TATA Beverages intend to contribute an additional £20,000 pa to expand this scheme.

Brunel Mathematics Scholarships

The Department of Mathematical Sciences offers up to 10 scholarships annually for UK students admitted to one of the undergraduate Mathematics degree programmes (Mathematics, Financial Mathematics, Mathematics and Computing, Mathematics with Computer Science, Mathematical and Management Studies or Mathematics and Statistics with Management). To qualify for a scholarship, students must achieve at least grades AAB at A-level, with grade A in Mathematics or Further Mathematics. Successful applicants will

receive £1,000 in each year of study (except in a placement year), subject to the recipient maintaining at least an upper second class honours standard of academic performance.

PGCE Access Scholarships

Up to 20 one year scholarships will be available to students on our PGCE Course. Consisting of a £2500 fee waiver, these scholarships will be available to students from under-represented groups.

For full details of Scholarships available from Brunel University see:
<http://www.brunel.ac.uk/ugfunding>

Outreach Activities

Brunel University has a strong reputation for widening access both within the sector and with its partners in both mainstream education and further education. The University has had a dedicated team since 2001 focussing on outreach, transition and retention and has achieved considerable success both directly with local Schools and Colleges in West London and through its award winning partnership programme with the London Borough of Hillingdon. Brunel also is recognised by Buttle UK for its efforts to encourage the entry of care-leavers into the University.

It is no surprise that Brunel meets and in many cases exceeds its benchmarks with regard to attracting students from Low socio-economic backgrounds and State Schools. Each year 4,000 children attend aspirational events delivered by Brunel. It is our aim to maintain this level of performance in attracting students from Low socio economic groups through continuation of our Outreach activities, although we will need to work hard to do so as other Universities may target our current student cohort.

Detailed targetry for our Outreach activity can be found within our University Widening Participation Strategic Assessment. We are examining targetry for our new outreach programme for mature students with our corporate and educational partners in the light of the impact of the economy on this cohort. We anticipate continued efforts will be required during the period of this agreement to make any headway with thus cohort in the current climate.

The University has been very successful in its Outreach activities and is widely recognised for its aspiration raising work in the region but in our 2012 Access agreement we recognised that in order to attract more mature students we would need to undertake an entirely new and separate form of outreach targeted at the 21+ population in both the workplace and in local colleges. We remain committed to this work but will adjust our approach once we have seen the results of the work due to start in 2012/13.

In our 2012 agreement we anticipated that we would look to support a UTC in collaboration with the London Borough of Hillingdon as we recognise that there are many pathways into Higher Education. To this end we are a partner in the bid of the Heathrow Aviation UTC which if successful will provide a range of pathways into engineering and other STEM subjects. If this bid is successful we will look to support the UTC with further targeted outreach activity.

Brunel University strongly believes that a collaborative approach to outreach can bring a wider range of higher education opportunities to local students and as such we are founder members of AccessHE, a social enterprise developed within London's HE sector formed from within the former Aimhigher partnerships of the capital. We believe that this collaboration complements our existing, and highly successful, outreach programme.

AccessHE enables the development of new approaches and the sharing of best practice through specific forums. Brunel is already a participant in the LAC forum, Disability forum and retention forum. Membership also provides valuable data to monitor progress on access issues across London in a holistic way.

Joint activities on IAG and collaborations between Brunel and the Central School of Speech and Drama and Royal veterinary College have already taken place and we are targeting four events in 2012/13. We anticipate further collaboration to bring a broader perspective on HE to our local WP cohort.

It is anticipated that we will be particularly active in the following areas of collaboration:

- Participation in outreach/learner events organised by AccessHE, London South Aimhigher and other WP groups
- Contribution to WP forums and conferences convened by AccessHE and other groups (focussing on care leavers, retention issues, disabled students and student ambassadors)
- Provision of Information, Advice and Guidance (IAG) sessions in collaboration with partner HEIs
- Input into the London Access Data Service run by AccessHE for partner institutions to provide more accurate monitoring and tracking of WP students

We also recognise the contribution that AimHigher has made to aspiration in Hillingdon, an area with historically low participation rates, and will look to continue this activity within our OFFA agreement. Indeed given the evidence of the importance of raising aspiration in primary schools, in order to drive increasing participation in education post 16, we will look to build on recent work undertaken in this area which will require a further increase in our outreach activities. We will continue the expansion of our current gifted and talented “Urban Scholars” programme, and its associated research programme, to focus on Hillingdon and other West London Schools which was funded from our 2012 access agreement.

An additional aspect to our outreach for 2013 will involve a programme amongst our own students to encourage students from non-traditional backgrounds to take up teaching through our one year PGCE course.

Transition, retention and improved employment outcomes for students

Brunel has piloted a programme called “Head Start” which aims to give students with little or no experience of Higher Education a clear insight into the level of work expected at University and the study skills required. We will use our additional fee income to continually increase the numbers of students taking advantage of this pre-sessional scheme either through online materials or increased on site skills workshops. It is our experience that transition is key in ensuring widening access students have a successful start at university and this contributes significantly to retention. We anticipate our success in attracting widening participation students requires an increase in retention expenditure and this is captured in our Agreement.

Data analysis has also shown that certain groups, including mature students, are less likely to achieve the retention levels common to other cohorts. We will continue to fund and develop pilot schemes within academic schools to examine how best to deliver an improvement in retention amongst specified groups, including care-leavers, with the aim of rolling out best practice. This rolling programme of retention activities will be in addition to major pan-University retention programmes allied to our Learning and Teaching Strategy and funded by an increase in the percentage of additional fee income devoted to retention during the period of this Agreement. This Agreement also details our targets for retention of Mature students for the future.

Our analysis suggests that outcomes and retention are improved where students take an industrial or other work related placement. As an institution Brunel University strongly believes in a student experience built upon the foundations of employer engagement and research-led teaching and has continued to provide placement options across its portfolio. However our research shows that students from Low participation neighbourhoods and

mature students are less likely to take up this option. In order to improve take up of placements by under-represented groups we will provide a fee-waiver to students from such groups during the placement year. Where placements are unpaid, we will provide £1k to each student where applicable to ensure take up of this opportunity. We also intend to provide up to 500 bursaries by 2016/17 to ensure students from under-represented groups are able to take up internships and therefore assist with entry into low mobility professions.

To encourage high performing students from under-represented groups to apply for, or transfer to, our four year integral under-graduate Masters degrees in Mathematics and Engineering we will offer successful candidates a fee waiver of £3k for the fourth year of study. This reduces the cost to the national basic fee and encourages such students to pursue excellence in STEM subjects.

Targets

The University's aim is to sustain its performance as measured by the percentages from the various groups identified in relevant HESA Performance Indicators whilst delivering improvements over time in measures related to low participation neighbourhoods and mature students.

We intend to examine how the use of contextual data might add to our ability to meet target against a backdrop of changes in admissions criteria and in HEFCE student number controls and anticipate funding this work through our access agreement.

The table below sets out our targetry and milestones relating to performance against benchmarks from 2012 /13 onwards. Note that Brunel does not have a portfolio which attracts a significant part time cohort (around 10 fte) and we have therefore not set targets for part time students although they will be eligible for our scholarship packages.

Criteria	Baseline year	Baseline data	2010/11 Performance	Target 2012 -13	Target 2013 -14	Target 2014 -15	Target 2015 -16	Target 2016 -17
Social Class 4 - 7	2009/10	36.4	37.1	37.1	37.1	37.1	37.1	37.1
Low participation neighbourhoods	2009/10	6	6	6.4	6.7	7	7.3	7.6
Mature	2009/10	14.9	16.4	16.5	16.8	17	17.5	18.5
Disability	2009/10	5.4	7	7	7.0	7.2	7.3	7.5
Retention	2009/10	15.7	17.4	14.5	13.8	13.1	12.4	11.7
Postgraduate ITT: Disabled	2009/10	6.1	N/A	6.2	6.2	6.2	6.2	6.2
Postgraduate ITT: Mature	2009/10	54	N/A	55	55	55	55	55

Brunel is currently developing a revised learning and teaching strategy for the institution and it is intended that issues such as retention and employability will be central to that strategy as will the use of data to drive enhancement.

Institutional Monitoring Arrangements

The Strategic Planning and Resources Committee of the University (a joint committee of Senate and Council) has responsibility for monitoring progress towards the strategic goals of the University and considers performance against targets through the Annual Monitoring Statement report, which is submitted to Council and to HEFCE annually. In addition the University intends to create a management board to oversee both our Access agreement and our Widening Participation activity funded by HEFCE to ensure the best possible cohesion and synergy in our overall outreach and retention activities.

Publication of details of fees and financial support available

As previously summary information detailing the Scholarships and benefits package and eligibility criteria will be made available in print form, and via the web, prior to the University's June Open days for 2013 entry. Detailed information regarding the timing, processes and procedures necessary to receive or apply for a scholarship will be available prior to our September Open days for 2013 entry and will made available to prospective students and HE advisors within Schools and Colleges in both print and electronic form.

Meeting our responsibilities under the Equality Act 2010 and setting our Equality Objectives 2012-2016

The publication of the Equality data on 31st January 2012 met part of the University's statutory requirements under the Equality Act 2010. In publishing its Equality Objectives on Friday 6th April 2012, the University met the remaining requirements.

The Equality Objectives are set out in the University's Equality Plan in which the University is accountable to staff, students and other service users. It also gives the public the information needed to hold the University to account as far as our performance on equality is concerned. The publication of the Objectives is part of the University's Specific Duty under the Equality Act 2010. The Specific Duty requires the University to:

- set and publish equality objectives no later than the required date and review these objectives annually

Public bodies subject to Specific Duties must publish information to show their compliance with the Equality Duty, and all published information must show that the University has due regard to the need to:

- eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and any other conduct prohibited by the Act
- advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and people who do not share it
- foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and people who do not share it

The three aims of the Equality Duty are intended to support good decision-making by ensuring that the University considers how different people are affected by its activities. They also help us to deliver policies and services which are efficient, effective and accessible to all, and which meet different people's needs.

The protected characteristics covered by the Equality Duty under the Equality Act 2010 are:

- age
- disability
- gender reassignment
- marriage and civil partnership (but only in respect of eliminating unlawful discrimination)

- pregnancy and maternity
- race, including ethnic or national origins, colour or nationality
- religion or belief, including lack of belief
- sex
- sexual orientation

The Equality Strategy Group formed part of the consultation process in the formulation of the Equality Objectives.

