

OFFICE FOR FAIR ACCESS / AGREEMENT

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1. Level of Tuition Fees

- 1.1 The University of Central Lancashire has an excellent record of widening participation, with 50% of our student population receiving support with payment of the standard tuition fees and substantial numbers eligible for payments from the Access to Learning Fund.

From 1 August 2006 the University will charge tuition fees on the following basis:

- Full time undergraduate programmes: £3,000.
 - Fees for programmes at partner colleges will be subject to the same fee structure as those at UCLan but may have separate bursary and scholarship arrangements. Partner colleges will guarantee the minimum £300 bursary for students on full state support, although it is intended that such payments will exceed the minimum value.
- 1.2 The tuition fee of £3,000, together with details of bursaries and scholarships will be clearly set out in all marketing and publicity materials to ensure that all readers / enquirers understand the financial implications of studying a complete programme as a full time undergraduate at this University. For sandwich programmes the fee will be 50% ie £1,500.
- 1.3 The higher level tuition fee will not apply to students who started their programmes of study prior to 1 September 2006. Nor will the higher level tuition fee apply to gap year students deferring entry to 2006 / 2007.
- 1.4 The UCLan student population will benefit from such a strategy as the intention is to invest the additional revenues in supporting the student body, rather than spending on administrative structures. The proposals are straight forward and simple to communicate to students when inquiries are made.

2. Bursaries /Scholarships

- 2.1 After careful consideration it has been concluded that our priority will be to provide financial assistance to as many students as possible, ensuring that the impact of top up fees is minimised and that all students in need of financial support benefit from the scheme. It is intended that any student in need of financial assistance will have access to bursaries.
- 2.2 It is the University's intention to ensure that students undertaking an undergraduate programme leading to one of its awards may be eligible for financial assistance in the form of a £1,000 per annum bursary payment. Such bursaries will be assessed to reflect student need and be payable to those students from homes where the principal earner's gross salary is less than £60 k per year. This

approach will allocate support for those students most in need of assistance and will reduce the need for complex means testing. It is an approach that will be easily understood, simple to promote and deliver equality of opportunity. It is estimated that such an approach will benefit some 90% of our first year student intake in 2006.

- 2.3 The potential for adopting a more complex means tested approach to the initiative has been given serious consideration and rejected at this stage, on the basis that administration will be complex and students will not know the position relating to their eligibility for a bursary in advance of a means testing process that will be time consuming. However, the University will review this position in line with potential developments at a national level, should the Student Loans Company agree to involvement in the assessment process via the sharing of student / LEA assessment schedules.
- 2.4 The University has chosen this flat rate bursary approach to minimise the use of means testing and to ensure that students can be 100% confident of securing a bursary. In the first year of the scheme, UCLan wishes to ensure that its students from less advantaged backgrounds have the certainty of a bursary.
- 2.5 The University has recently launched a fundraising campaign for a Harris Bursary Fund (named after one of its Founders and benefactors). This is to provide financial assistance for local students who, for financial reasons, may not be able to finance their progression to Higher Education. The Fund will provide additional benefits to our student population. This initiative will make financial allocations from 2006, coinciding with the introduction of the tuition fee top up.
- 2.6 Students studying in general F.E. colleges that are close partners of UCLan may receive higher levels of bursary / scholarship payments to reflect the particular role played by such colleges in attracting non-traditional learners. We have a common link with such colleges where there are a very high proportion of mature students who are living at home and this group is less likely to be attracted by the deferred fee position.
- 2.7 The University will establish a range of Excellence Scholarships, targeting particular subject areas and Partner Company Scholarships that will develop employer / sponsor relationships that will benefit the widest possible range of students.
- 2.8 Excellence Scholarships will be introduced to attract a number of students with excellent pre-entry qualifications. These will be in excess of the flat rate, £1,000 value, and will be allocated to approximately 100 students. The details will be worked through and specific areas will be targeted.
- 2.9 Partner Company Scholarships will be introduced to strengthen our relationships with the business sector, reinforcing the message about employment and progression and the long term benefits of movement to higher education. This approach will attract students who otherwise may not consider a move to higher education.

- 2.10 The bursaries will be offered as a means of financial assistance to students gaining a conditional or unconditional firm accepted offer through UCAS, with signed acceptance, by a specified date. These bursary payments will be phased over the academic year to support the student retention strategy, with an amount being paid on completion of enrolment, and phased payments throughout the year, with the balance being awarded on successful completion of the programme.
- 2.11 The bursary payments will be financial and not 'in kind' for discounted services such as reduced rent, although as soon as the DFES offer guidance on students in receipt of means tested benefits the University will further review this position.
- 2.12 The bursary / scholarship proposals are not linked to tuition fees and will not, in the first instance, apply to European Union students, although this will be reviewed.
- 2.13 The bursaries and scholarships will be available to new entrants in 2006 and will continue at the same value for years 2 and 3, subject to the availability of funding and other factors outside the University's control.
- 2.14 The bursary and scholarship policies will be reviewed annually from 2006.
- 2.15 For sandwich programmes the level of fee will be 50% of £3,000, ie £1,500 and the associated bursary payments will also be made at 50% of the full value for the sandwich year.
- 2.16 The University will respond to advice and guidance that is awaited on the impact bursary / scholarship payments may have on students in receipt of means tested benefits such as, Child Care Allowance, Tax Credits, DFES Hardship Fund and Independent Living Fund. It is understood that the Department for Education and Skills is considering the potential impact that the bursary / scholarship schemes will have on students in receipt of such benefits and it is our intention to consider the advice that is due on this matter with a view to reducing any impact the bursaries / scholarships may have on students in receipt of benefits. Over 60% of UCLan students do not pay the full tuition fee at present. It is the University's intention that any student in receipt of benefits should not be disadvantaged by the offer of a £1,000 bursary or scholarship payments. The University will follow DFES guidance on how this may be achieved.

3. Outreach Activities

- 3.1 The University consistently performs above benchmark in its recruitment of students from the widening participation categories. It is an active partner of Aimhigher initiatives which complement its long-standing Mission-led commitment to the widening participation agenda. The University invests heavily in programmes designed to

attract and support the transition and progression of students from diverse backgrounds.

- 3.2 The University will build on existing success with outreach activity by moving to a customised approach that is student focussed. A review in this area in the period up to and beyond 2006 will help maintain and build on our excellent track record in attracting students from under represented sections of the population. In the first instance there will be a need to counter negative perceptions of higher education generated by the public debate over tuition fees. Longer term there will be an increasing need to customise the advice and support offered to potential students and their families through the decision making process.

Specifically, the University intends to:

- increase its contribution to **Aimhigher**
 - strengthen its **external liaison** team to carry out additional and in depth advisory sessions with potential students, families and teachers
 - strengthen its admissions and student services team to offer a more **customised service** to applicants with a greater emphasis on individual advice and guidance
 - provide a **financial advice** service including a help line, web based information and printed fact sheets offering answers to questions
 - extend its call centre and technologically based customer **relationship management** systems to track potential students and to reduce the risk of drop out
 - further develop its programmes for supporting the most **vulnerable students** and their families in the transition to higher education
- 3.3 The University has developed highly successful partnership arrangements with colleges within the region and will continue to develop the potential for student progression, meeting the needs of full time, as well as part time students and addressing the requirements of the mature, adult student population, particularly from vocational and other areas that are currently underrepresented.

4. Information on Financial Support

- 4.1 The University will provide enhanced levels of general advice on the benefits of higher education, as well as the costs and financial support that is available, including details on tuition fees, bursaries / scholarships, student loans, financial hardship, income tax and council tax. Such information will be made available to applicants, students, families, employers and sponsors, as well as partner institutions.
- 4.2 Financial information is currently available within the Student Information Centre (The 'i') as well as the Student Services Hardship

Team and the Admissions and Course Enquiry Teams, where detailed information will be held. In addition to maintaining our web site capabilities on this subject a telephone help line as well as an email address, will be established to support all enquiries on this subject.

5. Access Measures

- 5.1 The approach to be adopted in 2006 to improve access to Higher Education is based on an increase to the top level tuition fee in order to improve the quality of provision to all students studying at this University. Schemes to improve recruitment and retention include Summer Schools, Flying Start, Fresh Start, Mentoring, Buddying, Open Days, Applicant Days and Welcome Teams. These initiatives target student groups from under represented areas. Additional income generated through higher level tuition fees will be allocated for a range of strategic initiatives, as designed to improve facilities, reward and retain staff, invest in strategic developments such as the improved provision of Higher Education across our campuses within Cumbria.

6. Milestones and Objectives

- 6.1 The University will be particularly interested in the success of its approach to the introduction of higher tuition fees and the supporting scholarship arrangements. Detailed analysis will be undertaken at various stages in the recruitment process, from course inquiry stage during 2005 / 2006. The recruitment targets set for the 2006 intake will be closely monitored. Systems and procedures are in place to routinely provide student data relating to enquiries, applications, conversion and enrolments. It is the University's intention that growth should continue and access widened for the benefit of those students currently under-represented within Higher Education. Our successful delivery of the widening participation strategy is measured by the increasing numbers of students who do not pay the full tuition fee (currently over 60%). UCLan will continue to promote this success and offer bursary and scholarship schemes to as many students as possible.
- 6.2 The recruitment targets will be developed with milestones and objectives for each of our 5 Faculties, and supporting Service areas, covering undergraduate, post graduate, part time and international recruitment. Targets are set annually and the University will continue to work towards increasing recruitment in accordance with the strategy to widen participation. UCLan intends to expand student numbers in all academic areas and is developing specific strategies for the recruitment activity within the campuses in Cumbria, where significant growth is intended over the next 3 years. Commitment to the planned growth is underpinned by a £30 m capital investment for Health, Lancashire Business School, Science and the Students' Union, funded from the 2004 / 2005 and 2005 / 2006 financial years. At the same time the strategy underpinning retention will be monitored to ensure continued improvement as a consequence of the additional investment in this priority area.

7. Monitoring

- 7.1 Recruitment will be carefully monitored to provide assurances that widening participation targets are being achieved and that previous success in this area is not compromised.
- 7.2 Each Faculty and Service currently establishes performance measures as part of the annual process supporting the Corporate Planning activities. This exercise relates to the corporate objectives and the associated key performance indicators. Performance monitoring does incorporate recruitment and retention issues and is carried out at 3 stages during the academic year. This established process will continue in 2006 and beyond, enabling the monitoring of progress against objectives that are set.
- 7.3 The University has invested considerably in the acquisition of a Corporate Reporting Tool (Oracle Discoverer) and extended use will be made of this application to ensure the availability of accurate and timely management information to support the planning, monitoring and decision making processes.
- 7.4 Information on the fees and bursaries strategies will be presented to the Senior Management Team, Directorate, Academic Board and its committees. Annually, such information will be incorporated within a formal report to the University Board.

8. Complementing Existing Activity

- 8.1 The introduction of the Excellence Scholarship will be offered in particular areas of our provision, and will be used to complement current success in specialist areas such as sport, art, fashion, computing, science, law etc. The creation of 'centres of excellence' will be enhanced by this approach that will attract applicants with excellent pre-entry qualifications, or those students excelling in a particular field.
- 8.2 The Partner Company Scholarships will further enhance the excellent work currently undertaken with employers and local business. There are a large number of major companies within the region and a link to a scholarship that promotes employability will be a valuable and important part of the progression agenda for our students. We currently deliver considerable work placement experience and will build on this to provide the potential for recruitment interviews which will be a considerable enhancement to our strategy for recruiting and retaining students.

9. Conclusions

This summarised document outlines the principles to be applied by this University when introducing the top-up fee in 2006, with the accompanying outline for scholarship provision. This Access Agreement is submitted to the Office for Fair Access for consideration. The University has undertaken extensive, internal consultation on these matters, concluding that we meet the requirements of the Higher Education Act 2004, with an approach that offers a fair and equitable solution for prospective students planning to study at the University of Central Lancashire.

November 2004
Revised March 2005