

## MYERSCOUGH COLLEGE

### Access Agreement

2016-17

#### 1. Introduction

This access agreement sets out the tuition fees and financial support arrangements for students entering higher education programmes at Myerscough College that are direct contract with HEFCE from 01 September 2016. It describes the amount of tuition fee income to be spent on access and success measures and how this income will be spent in order to safeguard and maintain fair access and promote high levels of retention and success.

Myerscough College is one of the largest UK further education colleges delivering higher education programmes in land based and sports subjects. The 2014-15 year 1 cohort comprised 534 students of which 316 were full-time and 218 were part-time. Indicative applications for 2015-16 full time higher education programmes at Myerscough indicate continued high levels of demand.

The College strap line is '*Opportunities for all to Succeed*'. This core priority is reflected in the College strategic objective: '*We will lead our peers in promoting equality of educational opportunity & outcome for all*' (Myerscough College Strategic Plan 2012-22). This reflects the high level of long-term commitment from the College to widening participation and the emphasis on quality of delivery and student support in the development of high level academic and employability skills.

The 2014 QAA Higher Education Review for the College commended the quality and enhancement of student learning opportunities (2 commendations) and identified 10 areas of good practice with no recommendations. The College QAA Higher Education Review report endorsed the College's commitment to widening participation and student success and identified good practice in '*the comprehensive support for learners in their transition to higher education*' and '*the wide-ranging support mechanisms targeted to meet individual needs that enable students to develop their academic, personal and professional potential*'.

All higher education programmes at the College are awarded by the University of Central Lancashire (UCLAN). Myerscough is the largest partner college of UCLAN and has a mature and established relationship with the University. Myerscough is an Associate School of UCLan. This strengthened partnership provides opportunities to enhance access and success measures for students and the College has consulted with UCLAN in the production of this Access Agreement.

#### 2.0 Tuition Fee Limits

The specialist nature programmes at the College means that the majority of provision is resource intensive and falls into price band B.

Tuition fees for all Myerscough full time higher education programmes for new UK and EU students will be £9000 per year for 2016-17 (international student tuition fee rates may apply for non-EU students). Continuing full time students will remain on their current fee rates.

Tuition fees for the Foundation Degree Veterinary Nursing placement year (year 2) will be £1500 for 2016-17.

Tuition fees for all Myerscough part time higher education programmes for all UK and EU students will be £900 per module for 2016-17 (international student tuition fee rates may apply for non-UK students studying online programmes). Part time students only study up to 4 modules per year, equating to up to £3,600 tuition fees per year which is below the OFFA Regulated fee level for part time students.

The College may increase tuition fees annually by the inflationary amount and/or agreed amount set each year by the Government.

#### 3.0 Access and Student Success Measures

The College continues to invest in significant access and student experience initiatives as identified in the sections on outreach and success below. Expenditure on financial support and additional access and success measures is based on estimates of the proportion of students from under-represented groups and indicates overall levels of spend of approximately 23% of the fee income above the basic fee. This is consistent with levels of spend in previous years. The College will maintain this approach, where appropriate, to prioritise sustained

investment in activities and infrastructure that support access and student success in the light of any future changes to higher education funding.

Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA) widening participation and retention data with breakdown by priority groups are not available for Colleges nationally. However, to ensure comparability in reporting the College has reviewed the way in which internal data on widening participation and student success are measured to match HESA criteria as closely as possible. The College recognises the need to capture meaningful higher education data on priority groups for widening participation and student success and works closely with our partner University, the University of Central Lancashire (UCLan), to continually improve data reporting.

### 3.1 Outreach

The College is committed to widening participation and internal data on recruitment from priority groups suggests indicative performance against national widening participation indicators remains good. The table below indicates internal data on proportions of higher education students for 2014-15 according to different priority groups.

Priority Group		2014-15	National (HESA)
Gender	Female	48%	56%
	Male	52%	44%
Age Group (Start of Course)	Under 19	32%	80%
	19-25	54%	
	25+	14%	20%
Ethnicity	All other ethnic groups	3%	20%
	White	94%	78%
	Unknown	3%	2%
Learning Difficulty or Difficulty	LLDD – Yes	11%	93%
	LLDD – No	88%	
	LLDD - Unknown	1%	
POLAR 3 Recruitment of young people in the start year from different participation areas (1 = lowest participation areas)	1	16%	89%
	2	17%	
	3	20%	
	4	28%	
	5	19%	

Key points:

- The gender gap has closed and is better than the national trend.
- Participation from young applicants has increased.
- The ethnicity gap remains low compared with the national trend. This is reflective of the national picture for land-based studies where there is low participation from black minority ethnic groups.



- Recruitment from those with learning difficulties and / or disabilities remains above the national trend.
- The proportion of students from Polar 3 group 1 (those areas with lowest participation) has increased and remains above the national trend.

The College will continue to increase investment in time and resources for the sustained development of long-term strategically targeted outreach activities that broaden the applicant pool, raise aspirations among potential applicants from under-represented groups and encourage them to apply to higher education. Key aspects of this work will focus on targeted activities to improve participation from ethnic groups and low-participation areas in POLAR 3 group 1 as identified in the assessment of performance outlined above. The total OFFA-countable spend on specific outreach activities will be increased to £41,000 for 2016-17. This increased spend will be focussed on activities which include:

- Targeting secondary schools and their feeder primary schools in the North West of England with a high proportion of students from under-represented socio-economic groups. The College increased activity in this area from 335 activities in 2012-13 to 369 in 2013-14. The College invests in a dedicated Schools Liaison team to deliver a range schools outreach activities. Key schools outreach activities in 2013-14 that contributed to achieving this increase included 255 school career conventions and parents evenings, 33 school assembly presentations, 27 mock interview events, 3 schools enterprise days, 22 campus tours for schools and 29 schools drop-in sessions. This work represents one of the key initiatives for improving long term outreach and access of under-represented and disadvantaged groups and will be one of the key areas where we will continue to focus the increased spend and provide sustained investment in outreach work.
- Working collaboratively with the Lancashire and Cumbria Networks for Collaborative Outreach to offer a menu of College-based outreach activities for local schools and their primary feeder schools to raise awareness of higher education opportunities in land-based and sports subjects.
- The expansion of delivery of further education programmes at outreach centres in East Lancashire and Merseyside. This supports long-term investment in the enhancement of opportunities for progression and social mobility for applicants in these areas which have a high proportion of low income households and traditionally low participation in higher education. A proportion of the increased spend will be targeted to further increase provision of information, advice and guidance about progression to higher education for our feeder routes at our Croxteth Centre which has an extremely high proportion of students from low income households.
- Collaboration with local schools to deliver of vocational 14-16 programmes in land-based and sports subjects at the College to raise early aspirations of GCSE students and enhance awareness of vocational pathways to higher education. The College will be approaching more local Schools to set up this form of Collaboration for 2016-17.
- The development of a portfolio of programmes that provides progression routes at the College for all subjects from level 2 through to level 6 (including some to level 7) has been successful in improving opportunities for local access to higher education. Continued improvements will be made in the portfolio to provide long-term enhancement of progression opportunities, particularly for students from the College centres in East Lancashire and Merseyside. This work supports the enhancement of opportunities for progression and social mobility for applicants in areas with a high proportion of low income households and traditionally low participation in higher education.
- The appointment of an applicant information officer to provide a direct point of contact for additional information, advice and guidance to applicants has been extended to cover the full recruitment cycle and provide additional support and guidance for applicants who need it most at key decision points in the UCAS calendar. This was complemented by the introduction of a VLE site for applicants and increased use of social media to provide clear and easy access to information such as interview arrangements, course details, travel, finance, enrolment and joining instructions. These key initiatives are particularly beneficial for mature applicants and applicants from backgrounds with traditionally low participation in higher education who may not have access to usual information sources regarding higher education study.
- The provision of face to face interviews for all full time applicants. Where applicants have declared a learning difficulty or disability the interviews are attended by a member of the College Inclusive Learning team to discuss the support available. This is of particular benefit for applicants who may be applying for DSA, mature applicants and applicants from backgrounds with traditionally low participation in higher education.

- Continued review of our admissions, recruitment and marketing strategies to ensure the College is accessible to students from all protected characteristics and thereby further widen access and participation.
- The introduction of a series of financial support measures (as detailed in section 4) to help promote access and progression to higher education and to support students in their transition to higher education in their first year of study.

### 3.2 Student Retention and Success

Student retention and success has been a significant area of focus for the College in recent years. Internal data is generated for in-year student retention based on HESA criteria.

The internal figure for overall full time HE in-year retention in 2013-14 was 92%. This is above the equivalent overall HESA projected outcome benchmark of 90% for England institutions in 2012-13 (2013-14 figures not yet available). In-year retention for all students including part time was 90%.

The College produces internal figures for overall in-year higher education student success from student retention and achievement data. The table below indicates internal data on higher education student success for 2013-14 according to different priority groups.

Priority Group		Student Success Rate Expected end year 2013-14
Total - All HE Programmes		84%
Gender	Female	87%
	Male	81%
Ethnicity	All Other Ethnic Groups	78%
	White	84%
	Unknown	86%
Learning Difficulty or Disability	LLDD = Yes	77%
	LLDD = No	83%
	LLDD Unknown	85%

Key points:

- Female student outperform male students by 6%.
- The gap in success for students from different ethnicities is 6% but the low number of students from other ethnic groups makes further analysis of this impractical.
- The gap in success for students who have a learning difficulty or disability is also 6% and the College will continue to prioritise this area in the retention and success measures outlined below.

The success of student retention and success initiatives is evidenced in the 2014 National Student Survey (NSS) and in the 2014 QAA HE Review Report for the College. In the 2014 NSS student satisfaction for questions relating to Academic Support was 87%. This is above the national upper quartile of 84%. The 2014 QAA HE Review Report for the College identified good practice in *'the comprehensive support for learners in their transition to higher education'* and in *'the wide-ranging support mechanisms targeted to meet individual needs that enable students to develop their academic, personal and professional potential'*

The College places a strong focus on the development of student employability and enterprise skills. The outcome of the 2014 NSS optional question *'As a result of my course, I believe that I have improved my career'*

*prospects'* was 93% satisfaction. The 2012-13 cohort DLHE survey for destinations of higher education students reported Positive Outcomes (the proportion that had secured employment or further study) for Myerscough graduates were 97%. Direct comparisons from national figures are not available but the nearest equivalent for positive outcomes of all UK first degree full time students was 89%, confirming high levels of employability and progression opportunities for Myerscough higher education students. The 2012-13 cohort DLHE survey outcomes for Graduate Prospects (the proportion that had secured graduate level employment or graduate level further study) were 59%. Graduate prospects for Myerscough provision are not always a true reflection of outcomes for our graduates as some positions of high responsibility within the industries that we serve are not always recognised as graduate positions by the survey. Actions to remedy this are currently being explored through relevant professional bodies. However, this will be a continued area of focus in the retention and success measures outlined below.

The College will continue to increase investment in strategically targeted measures to maintain and improve student retention and success and narrow the gaps for priority groups across the student lifecycle. Key initiatives to enhance the transition into higher education and support student retention, success and progression to employment or postgraduate study for priority groups include:

- Implementation of the extended induction period for new students that includes a strong focus on supporting students through the initial transition to higher education. The College has developed a standard induction package for new students which includes a combination of centrally organised cross-College activities and subject-specific activities to support students in the early stages of their programme. To avoid information overload at the initial stages, the induction package includes an initial orientation in week one, followed by a 6 week extended induction period to provide a series of tutorials and seminars to discuss expectations, study skills, learning styles and personal development and introduce the services and support they can access as higher education students. Tutors arrange the induction schedule for their own student groups around the central elements of the induction pack and this enables them to differentiate their induction activities to meet the needs of different groups of students. The induction package includes the introduction of a formative assessment to prepare students for the requirements of summative assessment and a personal tutorial to provide tutors and students with an early indication of expectations, academic level and areas where individual support may be required. In the 2014 student induction survey, 97% of students stated that following induction they felt more confident about their course and 98% of students stated they knew where to get help if they needed it. These high levels of student satisfaction evidence the success of the measures that the College has introduced to enhance the transition to higher education for students.
- Delivery of the College 'E-fest' initiative to enhance the student induction programme. The 'E-fest' is a cross-College event for higher education students to help raise awareness of the ILT technologies and software resources available to them to support their studies. All higher education students are scheduled to attend the 'E-fest' in groups during induction week. At the event, a series of round table events are presented to students covering ILT resources and software such as Socrative, 'MyApps' (College study skills software), presentations from JISC and a range of other resources. Students receive a stamp for each presentation they attend and those that receive four stamps receive a free memory stick with all the software on it (in reality every student that attended received a memory stick). Almost the entire year 1 higher education student population were given memory sticks with study skills software on it, enhancing their awareness of a range of ILT technologies and software available to them. This initiative is particularly useful to enhance awareness of software to support study skills, particularly students in priority groups such as second career and mature students, ethnic minority groups and those in receipt of DSA.
- Implementation of the College 'MyMentor' scheme offering peer to peer support to work alongside the student support services offered through the 'Core' Student Support Centre. Student mentors are recruited and trained in preparation to begin mentoring the new students in the September of the new academic year. This initiative is linked in with the Student Support Register as a key measure to provide enhanced support for students. The scheme has been accredited under the Approved Provider Standard by the Mentoring & Befriending Foundation. MyMentors are matched with one or two students who they meet on a weekly basis and give additional pastoral support to some of our most vulnerable students. The beauty of the scheme is that everybody gains something. The mentors gain valuable experience, employability skills and extra-curriculum activities to add to their CV, the mentees gain extra support which helps their studies, builds confidence and enhances their transition into higher education. The support is particularly useful to support the transition to higher education for students from traditionally low-participation backgrounds.





- Continued enhancement of the central student support services centre, 'The Core' to provide extensive additional academic and pastoral support for students throughout their studies and to support progression to employment or further study. The Core services include the provision of a student finance advisor to provide additional IAG on financial help available for students from low income households.
- Continue to work collaboratively with UCLan to enhance awareness of UCLAN student support mechanisms and improve access to initiatives such as 'WISER' (study support skills) and the '1' (the University one-stop student enquiries and information centre) and 'Careers' service through the extended student induction period. These initiatives provide valuable additional support throughout their studies for priority groups such as second career and mature students, ethnic groups and those in receipt of DSA.
- Continued development and implementation of the electronic Student Support Register to assist early identification of student concerns in order to offer an appropriate level of support to improve retention, achievement and the student experience. The percentage of students who were on the Student Support Register and were retained through successful monitoring and support increased to 79% in 2013-14 (increase from 72% in 2012-13). Further analysis shows that the main areas of concerns were around student attendance and course concerns (academic ability and behind with work) and health concerns. Student attendance provides an early indicator of disengagement and the College monitors student attendance closely as outlined in the College Management and Monitoring of Student Attendance Policy. All course assessment strategies have been revised to help address course concerns relating to assessment. The Student Support Register provides joined-up on-line support for tutors in monitoring 'at risk' students and provides enhanced monitoring and support for students in priority groups with academic and / or personal difficulties, such as those receiving DSA and from low participation areas or other ethnicity groups.
- Continued collaboration with UCLan to extend the Lancashire Student Volunteering programme to College students. The programme offers students opportunity to experience something new, develop their employability skills and work with a range of community volunteering organisations with potential accreditation from the Institute of Leadership and Management. This is particularly beneficial as a step in to employment for students from disadvantaged areas who may have little or no previous work experience.
- Enhancement of the delivery of course and personal tutorials to ensure a focused approach to the development of academic, personal and wider employability skills to support students in preparing for employment or further study. This will be linked to implementation of the College 'Learn2Work' programme to provide a framework of learning materials, support and recognition for the development and enhancement of student employability skills, particularly for students from disadvantaged backgrounds who may have little or no previous work experience and for mature students seeking to build on their existing portfolio or start a second career.

#### **4.0 Financial Support for Students**

The College will provide financial support to eligible students through the Myerscough College Higher Education Bursary Scheme. Bursaries will vary and will be tailored to those in the greatest need and who meet the criteria, regardless of academic year, the maximum award per student will be £2,000. Students will be able to select how they would like the funds to be allocated through a financial bursary and/or discounted accommodation, course equipment, food and travel or other similar institutional services. Bursaries will be targeted at students from low income households with a declared income of less than £25,000 to ensure students with the greatest need receive the maximum award. Full details of eligibility and support arrangements will be published for potential applicants on the College website in the 2015-16 academic year.

The College is introducing a series of new Scholarships and a 'Welcome Package' for 2016-17 onwards to complement the access measures and bursary arrangements and provide additional financial support thereby providing new students with a full and robust package of support and access measures.

A significant 'Welcome Package' is being introduced to help support students in their first year of study and support their transition into higher education. This will include a waiver of the resources and facilities fee and other benefits such as free gym membership and £50 voucher to help with initial book purchases. These benefits will be made available to all new entrants and will be of particular benefit to those from low-income households.

All students who progress from FE to full time HE at Myerscough will also receive a £500 cash award in the first year of their programme. Again this will be of particular benefit to promote progression and social mobility for applicants in areas with a high proportion of low income households and traditionally low participation in higher education, particularly for students progressing from the College further education centres in East Lancashire and Merseyside.

The College will also make available 20 Scholarships for new applicants. The Scholarships will consist of a £1000 cash payment in the first year of the programme. Some of the Scholarships will be prioritised for applicants who have undertaken extensive voluntary work or community work with under-represented groups in relation to their chosen subject to help raise awareness of higher education opportunities among these groups. Successful applicants for Scholarships must meet one or more of the following criteria:

- Evidence of external representation of their School or previous College at regional level or wider in their chosen subject through competitions, exhibitions, presentations or other similar activities.
- Extensive evidence of volunteering work or charity fund-raising work in relation to their chosen subject.
- Evidence of extensive community work with under-represented groups in relation to their chosen subject.

Applicants must also choose Myerscough as their first choice, be on a full-time HEFCE funded Undergraduate course resident in the UK or Europe and enrolled on the programme (i.e. not withdrawn or suspended) at the time of each payment. Scholarships are paid in the first year of study subject to the following criteria:

- £500 to be paid before Christmas as long as students have >90% attendance (excepting extenuating circumstances)
- £500 to be paid at the end of year 1 as long as students have successfully passed all modules at the June assessment boards (excepting extenuating circumstances)

Full details of the scholarships and the application form will be published for potential applicants on the College website in the 2015-16 academic year.

The College is aware that financial support on its own is not the most effective support measure and will monitor the impact of direct financial support to ensure that the funds are being targeted correctly. This will include monitoring of the demand for Scholarships from under-represented groups.

The overall allocation of financial support for 2016-17 through the Myerscough Higher Education Bursary Scheme and other financial support measures detailed above is £215,000. The amount allocated is based on the proportion of students from low participation areas and is monitored and reviewed on an annual basis to ensure sufficient funds are available.

## **5.0 Targets and Milestones**

The College's specific targets and milestones for 2016-17 are outlined in Annex B. Internal College data sources are used to set targets and milestones as HESA widening participation performance indicators do not cover further education colleges.

Where possible, the College has aligned internal data reporting with HESA and UCLan criteria to establish comparable data, which can be benchmarked to HESA and UCLan widening participation, retention and completion performance indicators.

Other targets outlined in Annex B set out the desired outcomes of outreach and retention initiatives to improve the recruitment, retention and success of students from under-represented priority groups.

## **6.0 Monitoring and Evaluation Arrangements**

The Deputy Principal Finance and Funding and the Assistant Principal Higher Education are responsible for the delivery and monitoring of this Access Agreement. Monitoring and evaluation of progress against the targets will be measured using internal data streams and external data sources via UCAS and HESA.

Monitoring and evaluation of progress against the targets will be reported through the College Equality and Diversity Strategy Group and the Curriculum Quality Group who report to the Senior Management Team and ultimately to the Corporation Quality and Standards and Finance committees. The Corporation Quality and Standards Committee includes student representation membership. Evaluation of progress against the targets will feed into the College Equality and Diversity Annual Report and action plan to help prioritise activities and initiatives that have greatest impact.

## **7.0 Equality and Diversity**

The College is committed to equality and diversity and has achieved the 'Investors in Diversity' kite mark. The measures detailed in this Access Agreement will positively impact on access and success measures for identified priority groups and complement the work of the College Equality and Diversity Strategy Group. The College has taken reasonable steps to ensure that the financial support, access and retention measures covered in this agreement eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimization, enhance equality of opportunity and foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not as detailed in the Equality Act 2010. This Access Agreement has been consulted on and approved by the College Equality and Diversity Strategy Group who will monitor progress and report to the Curriculum Quality Group and Senior Management Team.

## **8.0 Provision of Information to Prospective Students**

Information for students on the fees and financial support available will be detailed in the College prospectus and on the College website. The College will ensure that information is provided to UCAS and other key organisations in a timely manner to populate their applicant-facing web services.

Information, advice and guidance (IAG) on tuition fees and financial support for higher education students are provided by the student enquiries, student finance, student services, admissions, course tutors and marketing teams. A series of course advice events and open days are held throughout the year to provide IAG to prospective students and many external marketing events are attended including UCAS events.

All full time applicants are offered face to face interviews where information regarding the fees and the financial support available through the College can be discussed further. Where applicants have declared a learning difficulty or disability the interviews are attended by a member of the College inclusive learning team to discuss the support available.

A site has been set up on the College virtual learning environment (VLE) to provide further information, advice and guidance to applicants throughout the admissions cycle.

The Inclusive Learning team provides specialist advice for students with additional learning needs and those in receipt of DSA. The central student support services centre, 'The Core', provides a student finance advisor and other sources of support on academic, personal and career development for current students. These teams continue to provide advice and support for students throughout their programme to ensure that appropriate IAG is provided through all stages of the student life-cycle.

## **9.0 Consulting with Students**

The College has consulted with the Students' Union, via the Student President in the development of this Access Agreement and the financial support, access and retention measures contained within it. The Student President sits on the Corporation Quality and Standards Committee who will be ultimately responsible for monitoring of performance of the Access Agreement.

This 2016-17 Access Agreement is subject to ratification by the College Corporation.

M. Cottam, Assistant Principal Higher Education  
April 2015