THE UNIVERSITY OF CAMBRIDGE

Access Agreement with the Office for Fair Access (OFFA)

1. Summary

This Agreement is submitted in accordance with the requirements placed on those HEIs which intend to charge the higher rate of fee to UK and EU undergraduates and PGCEs with effect from 2006. It has been prepared in accordance with the guidance set out in OFFA's 'Producing Access Agreements' and after extensive consideration by a range of University and College Committees. The submission has been approved by the University Council and the senior intercollegiate body (the Colleges' Committee).

The key features of the Agreement are:

- The higher rate of University Composition Fee (according to the maximum rate announced by the Government annually) to be charged, irrespective of course, to UK and EU undergraduates admitted from October 2006 onwards;
- A straightforward and needs-based Bursary Scheme. see www.newtontrust.cam.ac.uk/cam/bursaries2006/;
- A wide range of outreach activities appropriate to currently under-represented groups;
- Challenging milestones, aimed at increasing the proportion of our UK undergraduate intake from particular groups but without compromising Cambridge's admissions procedures and entry standards.

2. Undergraduate Composition Fee levels with effect from 2006-07

The University will charge all UK and other EU undergraduates and those registered for the Postgraduate Certificate in Education irrespective of course, a standard rate of University Composition Fee set at the amount determined by the Secretary of State as the higher amount under Part III of the Higher Education Act 2004. The rate will increase annually in accordance with rates announced by the Secretary of State.

3. Cambridge will seek, within an admissions context summarised below, to increase the proportion of suitably qualified students from currently under-represented groups through a needs-based and straightforward bursary scheme and by sustaining and selectively extending our considerable range of outreach activities, paying attention to the effectiveness of each activity.

4. Undergraduate admissions to Cambridge

4.1 This agreement is concerned with the admission of UK students. It remains the University's policy to admit UK students of the highest academic calibre and potential irrespective of financial or other non-academic considerations. However, as a leading international university, Cambridge attracts high quality applicants from the rest of the EU and further afield. In particular, the enlarged EU and the funding opportunities available to its residents are likely to continue to generate buoyant and well-qualified demand from this quarter.

4.2 Entry to Cambridge typically requires a minimum of three grade As in appropriate GCE A Level subjects (or their equivalent). There is a large pool of qualified applicants and competition is rigorous: in 2005, only 26% of c.11,000 U.K. applicants could be accepted. Other than in Architecture, Medicine and Veterinary Medicine, there is no quota system and competition is open across all subjects. Because, in part, of the full-time, residential nature of Cambridge's undergraduate courses, it is unlikely that the University's undergraduate intake will significantly increase over the next 5 years. A wider pool of qualified applicants will accordingly make admission to Cambridge all the more competitive. We are also mindful of the implications of the difficulties being

experienced by the state sector in student take up and teaching provision in a number of subjects which are critical for entry into many of our courses, including modern languages, mathematics and physical science subjects.

4.3 We have in place selection processes (including interviewing c.98% of UK and EU applicants and tests for particular courses) to identify, as precisely as possible, the best amongst the pool of applicants who are capable of meeting our entry requirements and the demands of our intensive undergraduate programmes. Our ability to identify students likely to succeed is demonstrated by high retention rates (currently c.98%) and by the proportion (over 70%) gaining at least Upper Second Class Honours. Whilst we will continue to monitor examination performance across different groups, past analyses show no differences in performance between those coming from the maintained and independent sectors.

5. The Bursary Scheme (OFFA guidance, paras 40-53)

5.1 The University has an enhanced version of the Bursary Scheme currently administered through the Newton Trust. The rates cited in §5.2-5.4 below applied when this enhanced scheme was introduced. Details of current rates can be found at www.newtontrust.cam.ac.uk/cam/bursaries2006/.

5.2 Those students admitted before 2006 (or, after a gap year, having been offered admission before August 2005) will continue to be supported under the present scheme. That scheme, which has been in place since 1990, provides bursaries of (currently) £1,000 p.a. to UK students who qualify for the full student loan, are not required to pay any of the current fee, after Local Authority assessment, and who apply for assistance. It presently benefits approximately 2000 students at a total cost of c.£1.5M p.a.

5.3 The new scheme will (as does the current scheme) apply to all eligible UK[1] undergraduate students and eligible UK PGCE students who apply for a bursary. It will be needs-based, simple and transparent in its eligibility criteria and application procedures. It will apply irrespective of subject or other academic considerations and will provide cash awards. The scheme will, so far as those on full state support are concerned, be considerably more generous than the minimum commitment sought by Government. Eligibility and bursary levels for English students will be based on finalised Local Authority assessment of the maintenance grant. Bursaries will operate, so far as applicants are concerned, as a single Cambridge scheme. The arrangements will be as follows:

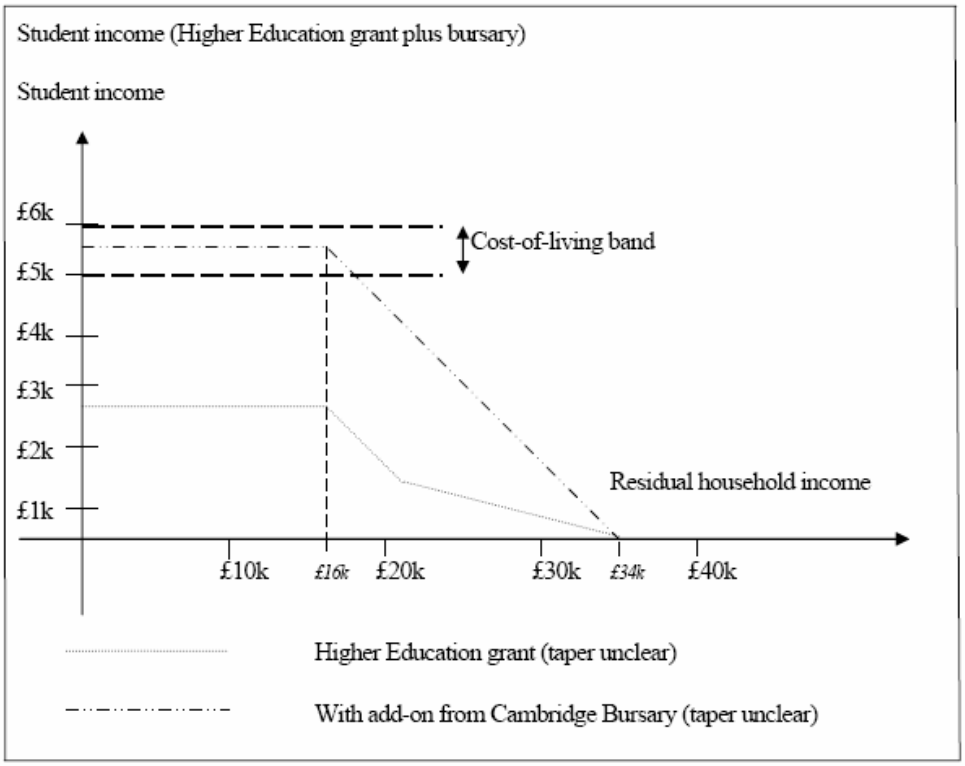
(a) Students who qualify for a full maintenance grant (presently £2.7k p.a.) will be qualified on application for a bursary of £3k p.a. This will provide a total annual income of £5.7k p.a., sufficient, according to our estimates, to meet full living costs without need for a maintenance loan. We expect that any student whose residual household income is less than approximately £16k p.a. will fall into this category.

(b) Students who qualify for a partial maintenance grant will be eligible for a reduced bursary. We anticipate that students whose residual household income falls in the range £16k-£34k p.a. will be eligible for such a bursary on a tapering basis. At a residual household income of £20k p.a. the amount awarded will be approximately £2.3k p.a.; at £25k p.a. approximately £1.5k p.a.; and at £30k p.a. about £0.7k p.a.

[1] Operational variations in detail are likely to be necessary for students from Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland, depending on public support arrangements in place for these countries. If Local Authority assessments are not available from some areas, bursary applicants from those areas will be informed of the documentation required in support of the application.

(c) As in the current scheme, bursary amounts may be reduced in cases where students have significant income from other sponsors but will take no account of income from family sources or vacation employment.

(d) The following graph plots student income (i.e. maintenance grant plus bursary) against residual household income. It is necessarily indicative, pending details of the 2006 maintenance grant arrangement.



(e) Mature students (aged 21 or over at the start of their course) who qualify for a full maintenance grant and who are ordinarily resident in Cambridge throughout the year will be offered an enhanced bursary of £5k p.a. Such students are at present a priority group for support from the Access to Learning Fund. The provision of an enhanced bursary scheme for them will enable additional support from this Fund to be made available to students with disabilities, students with dependent children, and other eligible groups.

5.4 Assuming full take up by those eligible, it is estimated that the scheme will, in steady state, reached in 2010-11, cost some £7M p.a.[2]. This represents some 30% of the additional fee income.

We estimate that the Bursary Scheme will (subject to patterns of demand and changes in the composition of the intake) provide full bursaries for approximately 955 students (equivalent to c.10% of our 2004-05 full-fee paying UK undergraduates) and partial bursaries for a further 2050 students (22%).

[2] This estimate is based on the composition of the University's undergraduate population in 2003-04 and assumes a 2.5% p.a. inflationary increase in fee and bursary levels. Unknown factors include (a) DfES definitions of household income, (b) adjustments to student support systems, and (c) changes in the social composition of the undergraduate student body in Cambridge.

5.5 The incentives and levels of support offered through the scheme will be reviewed as the admission patterns for different income groups change. Support levels will be appropriately index-linked.

6. Publicity (OFFA guidance, paras 54-57)

We will provide full and accessible details of tuition costs (including illustrations of total net costs of study), the Bursary Scheme and other forms of support via the University's web-site (with easy access from our homepage) and a hard copy publication. This will include a targetted publicity campaign, aimed at currently under-represented groups and their advisors and integrated with our outreach activities**.**

The Undergraduate Prospectus and our web-site contain full details of fee levels, tuition costs and Bursary Scheme criteria and application arrangements.

Current students will continue to receive, through their Colleges, individual guidance on sources of financial support. It will remain Cambridge's policy that financial hardship should not be a cause for non-completion.

7. Outreach activities

7.1 Cambridge already provides an extensive range of outreach activities. Our work falls into three categories: activity designed to encourage applications to Cambridge from groups presently under-represented; collaborative work with other partners; and general aspiration raising activity on behalf of the sector.

7.2 Cambridge intends to maintain its high levels of outreach activity and expenditure. We envisage a total spend of £5.75M (some £1.15M p.a.) over the 5-year period covered by this Agreement. We anticipate that c.£425k p.a. of our annual expenditure will come from HEFCE and Aimhigher funds, with the remainder coming from internal sources and external sponsorship. We will consider use of the additional fee income for outreach in the event that funding from other sources proves insufficient. Our activities and priorities will be reviewed annually and may change over this period, depending on the funding available and the effectiveness of particular activities.

7.3 The following tables summarise our current main outreach activities:

Table 1: Cambridge-specific

Cambridge-specific events are offered by the Cambridge Colleges through the College-Area Links Scheme, by the Widening Participation Team in the Cambridge Admissions Office and the Students' Union (CUSU). Many of these events and activities, even when not organised by a Cambridge College, are hosted at no charge or at a subsidised rate by a College and supported by staff and students from the Colleges. We have made no attempt, at this stage, to place a value on these substantial contributions in kind.

All the activities listed are targeted at those students and/or their advisors who:

- will be the first generation in their families to attend university; and/or
- attend schools/colleges with low overall or below national average GCSE A-C and A Level performance measures; and/or
- attend schools/colleges with little or no history of recently sending students to Cambridge.

Activities	Target Groups	Reach
Visits to Cambridge Visits from Cambridge Masterclasses, workshops, study days CUSU 'Shadowing scheme' and Target campaign	Years 10-13 students Ethnic minority students Mature students FE College students	5000 participants from over 750 schools and colleges and 100 **Local Authorities** Visits to 700 schools and colleges
Residential Easter/Summer schools	Years 11/12 students Ethnic minority students Mature students FE College students Maths offer holders	750 places
Information days/events	Teachers / Tutors Parents	300 places 750 places

Our operational budget for spending on these activities is c. £748.5k p.a..

Table 2: Collaborative

The University and the Colleges work collaboratively with other HE providers, offering a full programme of events to raise aspirations and encourage both young and adult learners to participate in Further and Higher Education. The majority of these events are targeted at the state maintained sector.

Target group	Partners	Activities	Reach
Year 12 students FE College students	University of Oxford	Conferences School/college visits Regional information days	9000 students 1000 teachers 25 visits
Eastern Region Students aged 19+ Years 10-13 students	Aimhigher, Eastern Region HEIs, schools and colleges	Study days Aimhigher days Easter school	80 places 200 places 56 places
		ALFHE scheme YPHE scheme	All schools and colleges in the Eastern Region
'Gifted and Talented' students aged 14-19	Aimhigher, National Academy for Gifted and Talented Youth (NAGTY)	Lectures Day events Online study groups Short residentials	Day events/lectures- 1650 places On-line/short residentails – 100 places

Our operational budget for spending on these activities is estimated to be £204.2k p.a., of which c.75% is directly related to Widening Participation.

Table 3: General Aspiration/Attainment Raising and Educational Enrichment

The University and its Departments and Faculties offer a wide range of subject-focussed events and web-based resources designed to support learning, stimulate interest in subjects and raise students' aspirations.

Activities	Subjects	Reach
On-line resources	Biology, Botanical Science, Brain Teasers and Puzzles, Classics, English, History, Maths, Modern Languages, Physics, Zoology	World-wide
Events / Visits / Roadshows	Archaeology, Engineering, Materials Science, Maths, Physics	More than 5000 participants
Easter / Summer Schools	Engineering Law Natural Sciences	36 places 250 places 36 places

Our operational budget for spending on these activities exceeds £1M p.a., of which c.25% is directly related to Widening Participation on Cambridge's behalf.

8. Milestones (OFFA guidance paras 63-70)

8.1 Cambridge will continue to strive to encourage applications from qualified applicants from groups currently under-represented and to admit a greater proportion of them within the context of our admissions policies and without compromising entry standards. Experience has, however, demonstrated that outreach activity takes time to alter the composition of the student population. For example, the activities of our Group to Encourage Ethnic Minority Applications (GEEMA) have taken a decade to increase the proportion of our undergraduate ethnic minority intake from 10.8% to 15.5%. HEFCE's Report 'Young participation in higher education' (January 2005) confirms the challenges in altering participation rates.

8.2 For the time being, our objectives are set against certain Performance Indicator Benchmarks (excluding 2002-03) employed by HEFCE/HESA. These have, however, severe limitations in a Cambridge context, in that they take insufficient account of the University's entry requirements, both in terms of subject combinations and of levels of qualification. We hope in due course to develop our own internally derived milestones or, alternatively, consider the applicability of any milestones which OFFA might develop. The milestones may also need refinement in the event of changes in 14-19 examinations, e.g. the introduction of finer distinctions in A Level grades. They would, in any event, need to be reconsidered in light of any amendments by HEFCE/HESA in its methodology for calculating Benchmarks.

8.3 Proportion of UK undergraduates from State schools or colleges.

Our principal milestone is to increase the proportion of our UK undergraduate intake from the state sector. We note, however, that our ratio of applications from the state and independent sectors is, notwithstanding our outreach activities, subject to factors outwith our control. We draw attention again to the time it takes, notwithstanding our extensive outreach activity and the current Bursary Scheme, significantly to alter the composition of the student body. As measured by the relevant HEFCE/HESA Performance Indicator, the proportion of young full-time first degree entrants admitted to Cambridge from state schools or colleges has increased from 51.7% for 1997-98 entrants to 56.8% for 2004-05 entrants.

The University's 2001-02 HEFCE/HESA location adjusted benchmark for participation from the state sector was 65%. We aim to increase the proportion of suitably qualified UK national students from the state sector admitted over the 5-year period to a figure somewhere in the range between 60 and 63 percent.

8.4 The proportion of students admitted whose parental occupations fall within particular social classes

We will endeavour to increase the proportion of students whose parental occupations are categorised within Social Classes 4-7**.**

We note, however, that data in this category are derived from applicants' self-assessments on their UCAS forms and are, as HEFCE acknowledges, neither auditable nor verifiable. We note also that changes, introduced in 2002-03, in classification methodology make comparisons with earlier data difficult.

Our HEFCE/HESA 2001-02 location adjusted benchmark for this category was 13%. We will endeavour, over the five-year period, to increase the proportions of

our intake with parental occupations categorised within Social Classes 4-7 to a range between 13% and 14%.

8.5 Proportion of students from 'low participation neighbourhoods'

We aspire to increase the proportion admitted who are categorised, according to the algorithm used by HEFCE/HESA, as coming from 'low participation neighbourhoods'. Certain of our outreach activities, for example our College-Local Area linked access initiatives, will continue to assist in attracting such students; and HEFCE's 'POLAR young participation maps' will help to inform these activities. We note, however, that we are presently reliant on HEFCE/HESA calculations and do not have access to the means whereby particular post-codes are categorised.

Our 2001-02 HEFCE/HESA location adjusted benchmark in this category was 7%. We hope to increase the proportion of such students to approximately 8-9% over the five-year period.

9. Means of review (OFFA guidance, paras 71-72)

9.1 The University will continue its policy of making admissions statistics publicly available, through *Reporter* and its web-site. Those statistics include data on application: acceptance ratios by school type, region and socio-economic classification**.**

9.2 The University's adherence to this agreement and its progress in reaching the objectives indicated above will be monitored through the University's Undergraduate Admissions Committee, chaired by the Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Education), reporting to the principal University and Collegiate bodies. That committee will annually review application, offer and admission trends, particularly in respect of currently under-represented groups. It will also keep under review, and amend as necessary, admissions and recruitment processes which have a bearing on securing a wide and diverse pool of well-qualified applicants. Scrutiny of outreach activities will be undertaken by the Outreach Steering Group (reporting to the Undergraduate Admissions Committee) which will co-ordinate and prioritise those activities and review their effectiveness. The success of outreach activities (aside from those which are web-based or of a general aspiration-raising nature) will be monitored through analyses of feedback questionnaires.

9.3 An ongoing evaluation of the current Bursary Scheme is already in place. It will continue to examine the importance of bursaries in influencing choices among prospective applicants and their effects on students in residence. Research being undertaken in Cambridge on the influence of schoolteachers in their students' decision making will also inform our review of both the bursary scheme and outreach activities.

9.4 A database will capture all forms of outreach activity covering UK schools and colleges. This will facilitate a co-ordinated approach to interaction with those institutions and assessment of the effectiveness of outreach activities through long term data on each institution's UCAS applications, offers and admissions in both a Cambridge and a national context. The University has recently implemented a new student record system – CamSIS. This will enable us to monitor with much greater reliability the impact on application and admission rates of outreach activities and to perform more sophisticated analyses to identify predictors of subsequent success at Cambridge and thus to continue to enhance our rigorous selection procedures.

9.5 Post-entry reviews will be undertaken by continued analyses of retention rates and examination performances of the relevant groups in comparison with those of the overall cohorts.

9.6 We will continue to monitor the ease with which students make the transition from school to university on a subject-by-subject basis, making adjustments to first year

programmes where desirable. The personal attention paid to the needs of students through the Colleges will continue to enable prompt resolution of any individual difficulties.

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