Royal Agricultural College Access Agreement 2013 -14

Introduction

This document sets out the proposed arrangements for Access in 2013 – 14. In considering these arrangements the College constantly strives to retain its high quality provision for all students whilst seeking to provide specific and additional support and guidance to those groups falling within the Access remit.

The small and specialist nature of the college, together with its rural location and land based curriculum continue to provide the College with some specific challenges regarding many outreach activities, however the College continues to work hard to overcome these challenges in order to retain a diverse and engaged student body across the full spectrum of student groups.

1 Fees

Charges for 2013-14

The College proposes to continue to charge the maximum additional tuition fee of £9,000 for all full time undergraduate courses taught on campus. The College also validates RAC awards at Foundation Degree and Top-up Degree level through Further Education partners.

Part time students will continue to pay per module (typically there are 8 modules per academic year) plus 10%. This equates to a maximum of £4950 per annum.

We anticipate approximately 605 full-time undergraduate students (Including foundation) will be at the College under the new fee regime by 2013. We also expect approximately 4 new regime part time students.

Planned rises in fees for 2014 -15

The College will seek to apply annual increases to fees in line with the amount set by the Government.

2 Expenditure

Estimated Spending for 2012

Estimated spending will be in the region of approximately £689,000 in 2012. This sum is divided between old scheme and new scheme students, bursaries, fee and accommodation

waivers. It also includes the NSP allocation of £39,000. Approximately £230,000 of the total will be spent on outreach activities and £50,000 on retention activities.

In 2012 approximately 33% of the additional fee income will continue to be spent on financial support, outreach and retention. The College aims to maintain this proportion at approximately 30% in future years.

Assessment of our Access and Retention record

The College continues to provide a range of outreach activities across a changing landscape of provision and resource. We continue to perform well against our HESA milestones and targets however this is not always reflected in the statistics due to the small numbers and specialist nature of the College.

Our percentage of recruitment from state schools increased from 46% in 2009-10 to 51% in 2010-11 and we anticipate another small increase in the statistics for 2011 – 12. Our post-Aim Higher outreach activities have focussed on building up new contacts and forming good working relationships with our target schools and colleges within our locality. An area where we traditionally recruit well from is further education colleges as evidenced by the fact that over 40% of our new entrants each year are accepted with vocational qualifications.

There is a small decrease in our student numbers from socio-economic classes 4 – 7 dropping from 33.1 in 2009-10 to 31.5 which was disappointing. We continue to work hard to recruit from low participation neighbourhoods but this remains an area where progress is slow due to our remote location and land based subjects. The HESA data shows a small percentage decrease in numbers in this category also however in both cases the very low numbers of students means that a very small shift of one or two students in either direction can appear to be a much larger shift in percentage terms in the HESA tables. A comparison of discretionary bursaries paid out in the academic year 2011-12 compared to the academic year 2010-11 actually shows an increase in students receiving bursaries from 246 to 289 indicating that more of our students are now coming from lower income families.

96% of our graduates in 2010 – 11 were in employment or full time study 6 months after graduating making the RAC the 6th highest in the employability rankings in the country for this year

Although we presently maintain a good rate of retention, the College continues to provide on going student support and advice and guidance and financial assistance where needed. We have dedicated members of staff to provide general student and disability support as well as access to a professional counselling service if required. We also offer a range of rural skills courses for the students to obtain practical skills and a careers team to help and advise with work placements and job applications.

The split between WP, fair access and retention.

The intended balance of expenditure is 27% on Widening Participation and Fair Access and 4% on Retention activities.

The impact of expenditure in each activity area is not necessarily restricted to that particular area. Where possible, the College will apply expenditure which we believe will yield the highest return across all activity areas. Evaluation and monitoring of our provision, performance indicators and external factors will inform us of such expenditure returns. We therefore believe that flexibility in expenditure across areas is crucial and allows us to be responsive.

3 Additional Access measures

Outreach Provision

A local focus for outreach provision will be maintained which recognises research data illustrating that students from areas with low percentage progression to HE are 25 % more likely to study at a local university (HEFCE, 2005). The College is continuing to play a role in the local and regional community, as well as maintaining a national scope under access, as our student base is rich in its local, national and international representation. The College recognises that its specialist provision offers a limited set of opportunities to local students, but that it has a definite role in providing outreach for higher education in its widest context. Therefore in conjunction with local provision, a proportion of funding will be directed to establishing a wider reach for our Access provision. The College recognises national activity as being equally significant as local programmes in improving our performance indicators and returning direct results to the College.

A limited range of activities were undertaken by the Outreach department in 2010 -11 due to reduced staffing levels however they nonetheless included: parents evenings, road shows, careers fairs, community shows, school visits, Harry Potter days, celebrity chef days, HE experience days and summer schools. For the academic year 2011 – 12 we have widened this list of activities which now also include a range of workshops and guidance sessions with the aim of targeting a greater number of current students as well as pre college participants, parents and carers. This year we are also putting on three summer schools which will particularly target looked after children, boys and low participation schools.

We anticipate being able to further expand the range of activities undertaken during the coming year due to an additional member of staff due to be employed within our Outreach Centre. We believe the addition of another person will create opportunities for a broader range of contacts to be reached and also for more diverse events to be planned and undertaken.

Collaboration

The College is committed to increasing our collaborative practices. As such, we have strengthened our existing networks and partnerships (including, where possible, continuing the legacy from Aimhigher and the LLN) and will continue to seek new partnerships and collaboration for mutual benefit.

In particular, we have conducted specific outreach work in collaboration with the University of Gloucestershire. Whilst the College is a nationally-recruiting institution, the University of Gloucestershire largely recruits from the regional population base and offers a wider range of academic areas.

Under our collaborative arrangements with the University of Gloucestershire, the College is a partner in the Compact Partnership Scheme (already established and effective in its achievement of access targets at the University of Gloucestershire). The scope of the compact partnership will be widened, to include up to a maximum of 70 partners and a reach to neighbouring postcode areas outside the current GL remit. These new compact partners will be recruited from wards classified as 1 or 2 under the POLAR2 methodology.

The College is a member of the Western Vocational Progression Consortium (WVPC) of 7 HEIs in the northern sub-region of the South West and their FEC partners. The WVPC is the successor to the Western Vocational Lifelong Learning Network (WVLLN).

The work of the consortium focuses on the progression of vocational and non-traditional learners into and through higher education.

The consortium is jointly responsible for the following online resources that contribute to widening access:

- The Lifepilot website (www.life-pilot.co.uk) offers information, advice and guidance to adult, part-time and work-based learners about progression routes to higher level study.
- The Careerpilot website (www.careerpilot.org.uk) helps 14-19 year olds plan they progression to study and work by showing the pathway choices at key decision points and the multiple routes to higher level study.

The college will also be participating within the University South West consortium. This group are committed to continuing and strengthening their collaborative widening participation partnerships to ensure that young people and adults across the region have access to activities that promote successful progression to higher education. The work of this group will include:

- Sharing and building upon best practice in WP;

- Joint planning of provision in the region and identification of future areas for collaboration;
- Coordination of regional networks and events specialising in key areas e.g. disabled learners; care leavers and the progression of Access to HE Diploma learners;
- Developing coherence and consistency in data collection and data protocols to facilitate monitoring and evaluation;
- Identification and promotion of future opportunities for promoting further collaborative delivery mechanisms.

Admissions information

The College typically has applications from a broad range of backgrounds and abilities, and in the case of most courses, is a recruiting rather than a selecting institution. We aim to make all applicants standard offers where possible but we do pay particular attention to work experience and other factors detailed in personal statements and each applicant is evaluated on its own merits. Any potential concession for widening participation reasons will typically be decided at confirmation time when the full range of results are known and any mitigating information is received.

Additionally next year we will complete the implementation of a new student and admissions system which will enable us to produce better applicant monitoring data that will help us to target our outreach activities more accurately. The new system will also provide an electronic portal for applicants to use. This will help us to ensure the most up to date information about fees, bursaries, scholarships and support will be available to all applicants at the press of a button.

Student retention and success

We are aware from previous years that our ability to offer financial support has often meant the retention of students who, without help, would have postponed or discontinued their studies. The College therefore recognises the value of continuing with some kind of financial support but is moving towards the use of more flexible fee and accommodation waivers in addition to bursaries. The College wishes to retain some bursary offer as an alternative for those from low income backgrounds and for those in the 'squeezed middle'. The College's enhanced bursaries and waivers package is being developed to ensure appropriate levels of support across the board in order to retain our excellent levels of retention and employability.

Aside from financial assistance we shall be continuing to provide information advice and guidance to our student population via a number of activities including careers guidance, study and revision skills, student welfare and support and a dedicated disability officer. Additionally, this year we are implementing a student portal which will be utilised by the college to increase the amount of information and support offered to students. Ensuring applicants and new students are well informed and fully integrated into College life is seen as an important step to ensuring retention. Therefore additional to all paper and

web-based information routinely sent out, all applicants have the chance to attend one of our College Open days, and those who apply before the 15th January UCAS deadline who are made an offer are also invited to an Experience Day, which is a more focussed day with applicants attending mock lectures, and doing lab and farm visits. The feedback from Experience Day surveys indicates that meeting other students is seen as one of the most valuable activities on the day for the students themselves. However, the day also gives their parents and supporters a further chance to collect finance, accommodation and course information and ask any questions they may have. All applicants are provided with a USB wristband containing course and college information.

In recognition of the needs and concerns of new students, a 'pre-induction day' is also being planned this year. This day will be held to give them an additional opportunity to receive information and ask questions about College life and study. Furthermore, it will provide a valuable opportunity for students to meet fellow classmates and get to know one another through a variety of teambuilding activities. The students will be introduced to members of the Student Union, and will be given an opportunity to meet and ask questions of a panel of key personnel such as the Admissions team, Student liaison officer, the Accommodation officer and Academic staff.

Also new for this year is the implementation of a range of 'Week 0' induction activities. It is hoped that by spending more time with new students on academic as well as social events and by giving them an enhanced and less complex registration process that students will be more settled right from the start of term.

Financial Support for students

Bursary schemes, scholarships and fee and Accommodation waivers planned for 2013 are as follows:

Bursary/waiver	Amount p/a per student	Description & Target group(s)
National Scholarship Programme – Fee Waiver	Minimum of £3000 per year	Disadvantaged students with household income <£25kp/and who also have high academic achievement. See * below.
Disadvantage Fee / Accom Waiver	£1000 - £3,000 per year	Disadvantaged students with household income <£25kp/a, who do not meet academic criteria for NSP but do fulfil at least 2 of the given 5 targeting criteria. See ** below
Support Fee / Accom Waiver	£1,500 for first year	Student not in receipt of other support; household income £25,001-£42,600; able to demonstrate financial need
Skills bursaries	Minimum £250.00 p/a in 1st and 2nd yrs only	Bursary to enhance personal and professional skills, development and employability; complementary to academic teaching and learning or work placement. Available to all students; priority to disadvantaged students where additional bursaries are available

Employability Projects (Internships)	Paid to student at salary of £10-12k pro-rata	4 available per annum. Salary for project work that significantly enhances students' employability, experience and professional development. Available by application, in first instance to students from Access target groups who have relevant academic credentials. Unfilled positions rolled out to whole student population.
Student-led project Bursaries	Up to £1000 per project	10 Bursary money for student-created and led projects that enhance students' employability and personal /professional skills. Available by application, in first instance to students from Access target groups who have idea for project(s) that relate to the community, outreach, business ventures, peer mentoring or other.

* Academic Criteria

A-Level grades**:** A*A*A*, A*A*A, A*AA, AAA, AAB
BTEC National Diploma Grades**:** D*D*D*, D*D*D, D*DD, DDD
International Baccalaureate**:** 31, 30, 29, 28, 27
Other qualifications will be considered individually as will applications from mature students

** Criteria:
1) First generation higher education
2) Disadvantaged postcode (urban or rural)
3) Specified school or college
4) Member of a minority ethnic group
5) Mature

Additional to the bursaries mentioned above there will also be a number of Academic Excellence Scholarships available to students who meet the academic criteria above and who select the Royal Agricultural College as their firm choice with UCAS.

4 Targets and Milestones

The College continues to be committed to widening participation and wider access to all under-represented groups however the small and specialist nature of the institution together with its rural location does place limits on what can be achieved.
The College aims to continue to increase the number of students from state schools by 5%, low participation neighbourhoods by 5%, low income backgrounds by 6%, minority ethnic backgrounds as well as mature local and part time students by up by 5%.

5 Monitoring and Evaluation

Type	Level	Description
Pre- and post- event Q'aires / feedback (Quizdom)	Operational	Feedback (questionnaire / verbal / groups) is collected pre- and post- outreach events
Student ambassador & delivery staff ratings	Operational	Feedback (questionnaire / verbal / groups) is collected post-outreach events
Event Reports	Operational	Individual outreach event reports are collated to draw out participant, visiting staff and RAC staff / ambassador evaluations and to inform future practice
Student Feedback	Operational	RAC Student feedback from committees and groups, including course representatives, members of Inclusivity, Equality and Diversity, the student union and student feedback forums
National Student Survey (NSS)	Management	Data from the NSS is used to inform practice and development
Student Performance Report	Management	Annual report detailing student academic performance
Collaborations Report	Management	A full annual report detailing provision, co-ordination and delivery on collaborative activity. Recommendations for further collaborations, development of existing collaborative practice and future investment are made
WP Annual Report	Management	Annual report to Governing Council and SMG detailing all provision over year and offering recommendations for future activity
Student Registration system reporting	Management	Student data system has reporting mechanisms; identification of under-represented students, applicants and entrant data, students accessing financial and non-financial support measures
WPSA monitoring return	Management	Annual report on WPSA targets
Access Agreement return	Management	Annual report on Access Agreement milestones and targets
Review and Impact Assessment	Strategic	Bi-annual review of services and provision, including impact assessment in context of wider institutional objectives

The people responsible for delivery

The Senior Management Team together with the Academic Registrar will be responsible for ensuring the goals of the Access Agreement are upheld. The Registrar (Admissions and Records) will be responsible for the on-going delivery of the initiatives and the monitoring of results. School Deans will additionally be responsible for academic staff engagement within their Schools.

Aside from staff, the student body via the Student Union and the Student Ambassadors are also encouraged to participate in many of the activities undertaken.

6 Provision of info to prospective students

Information advice and guidance will be made available to applicants and students via a variety of methods, including websites, leaflets, posters and the College intranet 'Gateway' system. Additionally student and applicant portals are being developed this year which will also be used to provide up to date information about funding and scholarship opportunities as well as a range of induction and student activities.

7 Consulting with Students

The College works closely with its student body, typically via the Student Union and the Student Ambassadors. Students are represented on all major College committees including the Inclusion, Equality and Diversity Committee, Academic Quality and Standards and Academic Board. There is also student representation at Governing Council and each program year has its own representative at the Student Management Committee, chaired by the Principal.

We see our student ambassador population (at present 47) as being particularly valuable to the College as they undertake many of the widening participation and outreach activities. They are also a key source of information, advice and guidance not only to young participants of outreach activities but also to new students during enrolment and induction week.

Aside from our student body directly we also actively seek the views of the younger 'potential' student body by closely monitoring our outreach activities and evaluating events using the 'Quizdom' package, feedback forms and questionnaires. This means we can constantly improve our outreach activities to ensure we give the participants the best possible experience of the College and HE generally.

8 Equality and Diversity

The Admissions policy states that the College welcomes applications from everybody irrespective of gender, race, ethnicity, religious or political beliefs, age, disability, nationality, marital status, and sexual orientation. All applicants will be considered equally on their individual merit. The College aims to recruit students from a wide range of backgrounds who have the potential to complete their programmes successfully and make a valuable contribution to College life.

At student level equality and diversity activities are closely monitored by the Inclusion, Equality and Diversity Committee (IED) which is chaired by a College Governor. IED has two sub groups reporting to it, each chaired by senior support staff. These are the WP & Outreach Action Group and the Social Inclusion group. The membership of these groups are from all areas of the college and include students, academic and support staff and governors. Their remit is to ensure that WP and Outreach is linked firmly to the equalities agenda and embedded across the whole institution to allow for responsive development of strategy and delivery.

OFFA Access Agreement 2013/14 - Annexes B & C

Institution name: Royal Agricultural College

Institution UKPRN: 10005545

Table 6 - Milestones and targets

Validation checks:
10. A reason for changing any prefilled data must be recorded in column L for both tables 6a and 6b.
Validation check passed.

Notes:

These tables have been pre-populated using the information you provided to us in your 2012-13 access agreement.

You will, however, need to consider whether you wish to amend or add targets to reflect:
• the inclusion of part-time and/or ITT courses within your access agreement
• any significant changes to the nature and size of your cohort, for example in response to changing student number controls
• more joint targets around collaborative outreach work
• targets to improve equality and diversity in your access agreement

Table 6a - Statistical milestones and targets relating to your applicants, entrants or student body (e.g. HESA, UCAS or internal targets)

Please select milestone/target type from the drop down menu	Description (500 characters maximum)	Is this a collaborative target?	Baseline year	Baseline data	Yearly milestones/targets (numeric where possible, however you may use text)					Commentary on your milestones/targets or textual description where numerical description is not appropriate (500 characters maximum)	If you have made any changes to the prefilled data around your milestones/targets, or included additional milestones/targets, please indicate why here.
					2012-13	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17		
State School (HESA Table T1a)			2009	46%	50%	51%	52%	53%	55%		
LPN (HESA Table T1a)	Both Urban and Rural		2009	3.4%	4%	5%	6%	7%	8%		
Non continuation: All (HESA Table T3a)			2009	96.5%	97%	97%	97%	97%	97%		
Low-income backgrounds			2009	34%	36%	37%	38%	39%	40%		
Mature	New Entrants		2009	12%	14%	15%	16%	17%	18%		
	Local		2009	10%	11%	12%	13%	14%	15%		

Table 6b - Other milestones and targets

Alongside applicant and entrant targets, we encourage you to provide targets around your outreach work (including collaborative outreach work where appropriate) or other initiatives to illustrate your progress towards increasing access. These should be measurable outcomes based targets and should focus on the number of pupils reached by a particular activity/programme, or number of schools worked with, and what the outcomes were, rather than simply recording the nature/number of activities.

Please select milestone/target type from the drop down menu	Description (500 characters maximum)	Is this a collaborqative target?	Baseline year	Baseline data	Yearly milestones/targets (numeric where possible, however you may use text)					Commentary on your milestones/targets or textual description where numerical description is not appropriate (500 characters maximium)	If you have made any changes to the prefilled data around your milestones/targets, or included additional milestones/targets, please indicate why here.
					2012-13	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17		
Outreach / WP activity (collaborative - please give details in the next column)	Finalise collaborative arrangements with University of Gloucestershire and develop targets to measure future effectiveness		2012	Unknown							
Management targets	To further develop baseline performance monitoring mechanism		2011							The additional resourcing will provide the person power to fully develop an extended range of KPI's and SLA's in order to deliver effective monitoring.	
Outreach / WP activity (summer schools)			2011	2	3	4	4	4	4	Future potential for increasing number of participants.	
Other (please give details in the next column)	Delivery to primary schools		2011	5	10	12	14	16	18		
Other (please give details in the next column)	National delivery		2011	5	10	12	14	16	18		
Student support services	Completion of One Stop Shop provision for Student Services									Having a single point of contact for student support will enable us to monitor and measure the number and nature of enquiries from students.	
Other (please give details in the next column)	Developing further innovative communication mediums such as podcasts									Effectiveness will be evidenced using appropriate methods depending on media used.	