

# Royal Agricultural College Access Agreement 2012-13

## Executive Summary

- The Royal Agricultural College proposes to charge a tuition fee of £9,000 for all full time undergraduate courses taught on campus. In charging the full amount permitted, the College will be able, and is keen, to invest further in and enhance provision for widening access and participation.
- The full range of measures offering students direct financial support is outlined in detail in the main body of the report. These include a move from general bursaries to a range of fee waivers for those meeting specific criteria, as well as vouchers for skills training, books, bicycles or computers which will be available to all students. Alongside these financial packages the college will also be offering the opportunity for students to apply for a range of projects and internships which will attract financial support or modest remuneration, and support the already very strong employability of the College's graduates.
- In addition to making available financial packages for students, the College will undertake a wider range of outreach activities with the objective of encouraging applications from our target applicant groups. Many, but not all, of those activities were formally conducted as part of Aim Higher including, amongst others, a programme of enrichment and uni-experience days, campus visits and summer schools.
- The College will build on collaborative arrangement with the University of Gloucestershire. We will work with them, sharing resources and expertise to deliver aspiration and awareness raising activities in order to attract into higher education more under represented learners both locally and nationally. The full range of collaborative activities the College expects to undertake is outlined in the attached document. The College will continue to develop its work with further education partners through validation of RAC awards delivered locally and at a significantly lower fee.
- In order to deliver and monitor the overall effectiveness of all the outreach measures the College will be investing in the student support and outreach team. The one-stop-shop style Student Services Centre will help to maintain and improve the Colleges already excellent retention rates, while the additional outreach staff will be expected to deliver a greater number of activities both on and off campus. The larger team will put in place a system of reports and performance measures in order to evaluate and review the effectiveness of the activities undertaken. In this way the College will be better placed to respond to opportunities as they arise, and to implement good practice across the full range of its widening access and participation activities.

## Royal Agricultural College Access Agreement 2012-13

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## Royal Agricultural College Access Agreement 2012-13

The College is a small (1000 students) specialist institution set in rural Cotswolds, giving direct and immediate access to the sector we serve. The College joined the Publicly Funded Sector in 2001 and has since then become a more diverse and inclusive institution, with a strong awareness of and commitment to the role we play in local and wider communities and in provision of education and training for the land-based sector. The College is conscious of the context in which it is working: the need for a sustainable food supply and the societal requirements for expertise in agriculture, food and land management require the recruitment and education of a workforce that will of necessity come from a range of backgrounds, including non-traditional. The College is committed to widening the accessibility to the education it provides.

Over the past four years, the College has made significant progress in Access and in widening participation opportunities for students from target backgrounds. Student numbers have increased, despite cross-sector numbers falling. 46% per cent of the student body is from state schools, including 34% per cent in receipt of support for tuition fees and 25% per cent on full support. This Access Agreement and new fees structure sets out to further develop this provision, acknowledging the distance yet to travel in terms of: access and widening participation at the College; an institutionally-embedded vision for enhancement of provision, and; a strong institutional commitment to Access, equality, inclusion and diversity. The following points provide examples of the activity the College will fund and the justifications for doing so.

### **1. Fee Limits and fee income above £6,000**

#### **1.1 Tuition fee charge 2012-13**

The College proposes to charge the maximum additional tuition fee of £9,000 for all full time undergraduate courses taught on campus in order to provide the necessary resourcing for widening access and outreach, whilst maintaining and ensuring equality of access to quality teaching and learning and the full student experience.

In charging the full fee amount, the College recognises the need to further invest in and enhance provision under Access. The College validates RAC awards at Foundation Degree and Top-up Degree level through Further Education partners, some of which are student numbers assigned to the Royal Agricultural College. These courses will be delivered at a fee of £6000 or less.

## **1.2 Number of entrants at various fee levels**

230 new undergraduate students per year at £9000, 15 – 20 students per year taught off campus at £6,000

## **1.3 Permitted real terms fee rises**

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

## **2. Expenditure on additional access and retention measures**

### **2.1 Expenditure on additional access and retention measures**

The total additional fee income allocated to Access from 2012-13 represents an allocation of over 30 per cent of additional fee income.

### **2.2 The balance of expenditure between widening participation, 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.

### **2.3 Balance between non-financial measures and financial support**

Having recognised the research findings on the impact of old bursary schemes and their relatively small significance in increasing access opportunities for disadvantaged students over the past five years, the College intends to maintain expenditure on financial support in the form of fee and support waivers whilst increasing expenditure on outreach and retention activities.

## **2.4 Financial support as it relates to Retention**

Our ability to offer financial support has, in many cases, meant the retention of students who, without access to this financial aid, would have postponed or discontinued studies. The College recognises the value of continuing with some kind of financial support but is moving towards the use of fee waivers rather than bursaries. The College potentially wishes to retain some bursary offer for those from low income backgrounds and for those in the “squeezed middle”. The College’s bursaries and waivers package reflects the need to support some students financially in order to maintain our excellent level of retention.

### **2.4.1 Access to professional and practical skills and knowledge**

A major consideration for the College, and a part of our current offer, is the availability of skills bursaries to all students in their first and second year of study. This is currently valued at £250.00 per student, per year and can be used to gain training in sector specific areas (through for example the College’s Rural Skills Centre) in transferable skills.

Recent consultation with the Student Union on the skills bursaries scheme found sound endorsement from students. The effectiveness and relevance of skills bursaries is also echoed in academic staff appraisal, as complementary to learning and a vital source of professional knowledge and skills, particularly for those students from non-traditional backgrounds. We therefore wish to expand and develop skills bursaries provision, which will remain part of the Access bursary and waivers offer and will contribute to financial support for students.

### **2.4.2 The new financial landscape**

The College wishes to change the balance of expenditure, and will skew additional spend in favour of our outreach provision (non-financial support) in a gradual manner. Table 3d illustrates this intention, providing a five-year forecast, which is subject to annual review and monitoring.

The impact of the move from the provision of bursaries to fee waivers will be reviewed and monitored by the College.

## **3. Additional Access Measures: Investment in outreach and retention**

### **3.1 Student profile**

The College currently has 25 per cent under-represented student population, which is not representative across the various target groups. The majority are students with disabilities (predominantly dyslexia) and those from low income families. Our success in providing access to these groups and enabling their retention has been good. Our experience in outreach to date, however, suggests an additional focus is needed for other under-represented groups, such as

students from low SEG, students with no parental experience of HE, ethnic minority students, and looked-after students.

Outreach in relation to mature and part-time students also requires consideration and development under this new Agreement. Although the College has a good record of recruitment of mature learners, currently at approximately 12 per cent, the majority of current mature students are those who choose to study full-time after a period of relevant employment experience (usually two to three years), or who have decided on a career change to the land-based industries.

The RAC is committed to attracting additional mature student numbers from these groups, as well as providing more opportunities for potential students who wish to remain in employment whilst studying. This may be through either full courses at all levels, specific units, and/or professional awards. We envisage that such opportunities will be developed with employers and other key stakeholders to match training requirements as well as fulfilling employee professional development needs, and will build on our experience of employer engagement through schemes such as REEDNET, the Rural Employer Engagement Development .

The proposed outreach measures to attract mature learners are closely linked, therefore, to the College's progression to a more accessible teaching and learning offer, which has been developed in response to the need to increase our provision for work-based, part-time and distance learning (see Section 3.1.10).

This intent to attract provide more opportunities for mature students is increasingly pertinent in light of the cessation of formal funding for Lifelong Learning Networks (LLNs) at the end of the 2010-2011 academic year (the RAC was a member of two LLNs). The RAC is committed to maintaining the good practice, provision and relationships established through these partnerships as fully as possible. Whilst the Western Vocational Lifelong Learning Network (WVLLN) will cease to exist as from July 2011, the collaborating HE partners within the WVLLN have confirmed their willingness to maintain their partnership activities and have established the Western Vocational Progression Consortium (WVPC).

The work of the consortium focuses on the progression of vocational and non-traditional learners into and through higher education, and the development and support of higher education in further education. The consortium is jointly responsible for the Lifepilot website ([www.life-pilot.co.uk](http://www.life-pilot.co.uk)) which offers information, advice and guidance to adult, part-time and work-based learners and through its blog, glimpses of student experiences which include the experiences of RAC students.

The new progressive teaching and learning offer also allows the College to further develop part-time and distance outreach provision. Having not previously offered distance learning, and offered limited part-time learning only on individual bases (not formally marketed or actively recruited to), the new Agreement will support distance and part-time learners through targeted outreach provision and access to our range of financial support (bursaries and waivers).

The College therefore envisages a more representative student population, which is monitored and reviewed annually. Funding allocation is responsive to identified need (low recruitment areas in particular) via the ability to make transfers of funding allocation for outreach provision between each target group.

### 3.1.1 Local Outreach Activity

A local focus for outreach provision will be maintained under the new Agreement, which recognises research data illustrating that students from areas with low percentage progression to HE are 25 per cent more likely to study at a local university (HEFCE, 2005). It is anticipated that larger numbers of students will study higher education in their local vicinities in order to reduce debt by living at home. The College therefore wishes to ensure that we 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. In its local recruitment activity, the College has worked in partnership in particular with Aimhigher SW, the LLN, Lackham (Wiltshire) College, Cirencester College, Kingston Maurwood, Witney College, Gloucestershire County Council, the Wiltshire Able, Gifted and Talented Consortium, the Regional Foundation Degree Consortium and local schools and colleges spanning Gloucestershire, Swindon, Bristol and Wiltshire. These partnerships have been very successful in offering outreach opportunities to young people; increasing effectiveness and efficiency of provision through collaborative working; establishing shared good practice; and, in achieving excellent feedback from young people, staff and key workers in schools, colleges and other key support institutions.

The following factors also have significant bearing on the College's commitment to local provision:

- a) The cessation Aimhigher in July 2011. The College recognises the significant value of Aimhigher activities, which have become integral to our Access offer over the last four years of delivery. Our offer under the new Access Agreement thus sustains Aimhigher type activities and good practice developed for students in local schools and colleges. In particular, the following are retained:
  - Targeting contexts for schools, colleges and students
  - Promotion of Awareness, Aspiration and Achievement in continuing education
  - Activities delivery: uni-experience days, enrichment classes, campus visits, subject tasters (at minimum 30 events per annum), the 4-day summer school (these will be absorbed into the College's outreach programme)
  
- b) The Schools White Paper. The College recognises the contribution it may make in light of these developments, with particular interest in, and commitment to, establishing partnerships in which College contributes and offers input to:
  - Reformation of GCSE and A-Levels to better meet needs of HEIs.
  - Reformation of vocational education to better support progression to further education, higher education and employment.



- Supporting and providing Access opportunities that will benefit recipients of the Pupil Premium, consequently targeting and delivering to the most deprived children to progress attainment of this target group.
  - Supporting transition to raising of the compulsory age for education, to 17 by 2013 and 18 by 2015
  - Development of the schools comprehensive IAG service, in particular in relation to higher education choices and career aspirations.
- c) Funding cuts to Gloucester County Council (£108million, 2011-15). A major result of these cuts will mean increasing autonomy for schools. In particular, the College notes the cessation of the council's "Outdoor and Environmental Education" programme for schools and our unique contribution that may be made in this regard, with an added focus on progression to FE, HE and careers in outdoor and environmental education. As OFSTED and the curriculum emphasise the value of non-classroom based education, it is envisaged that we may go some way in filling this gap, collaborating with schools in a required element of teaching and learning.

### 3.1.2 National Outreach provision

In conjunction with local provision, a proportion of funding will be directed to establishing a wider reach for our Access provision. Due to the restrictions of travel time and distance some of these activities will be different to the local offer; however the College regards this activity as significant as local outreach programmes in improving our performance indicators and returning direct results to the College. As a specialist institution the College will continue to recruit nationally and internationally.

We will therefore seek to collaborate with national schools and colleges to provide "roadshow" style interventions and engagements based around aspiration and achievement raising. In particular, this provision will be primarily focused on large city areas with lower percentage progression rates to higher education, as the College seeks to attract under-represented learners and those with no family background in agriculture. In addition, the College will seek schools and colleges in these cities recruiting pupils for wards 1 and 2 under the POLAR2 methodology.

Collaboration on outreach activity in these schools will be flexible depending on school needs. Typically, the College will provide in-school sessions with student ambassadors and lecturers, and will seek to work with schools staff to support aspiration raising and IAG relating to higher education and employability in and around the land-based sector. Also particularly relevant to national schools and colleges, we will actively promote involvement in our new summer school programme and e-mentoring projects (see items 3.1.5 Summer Schools Programme, and 3.1.6 Mentoring).

### 3.1.3 Collaborative outreach provision

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

In particular, we will conduct 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. This diversity of provision and student mix is a positive foundation upon which, collaboratively, we will seek to deliver aspiration and awareness-raising activities that promote engagement with a more diverse range of potential entrants to higher education from the region.

### 3.1.4 Compact Partnership Scheme

Under new collaborative arrangements with the University of Gloucestershire, the College will become 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.

### 3.1.5 Summer Schools Programme

The effectiveness of summer school programmes in positively impacting and influencing the university choices of young people has been soundly supported by research developed by the Aimhigher Uni-Taster programme as well as the College's own internal reports. The College will therefore increase the number and range of summer schools available to target students, based around the following phased model:

Summer school	Target group and number of places	Description
RuralYouth 4 nights  (new for 2012-13 onwards)	16-18 yrs, disadvantaged, national, upto 28 places	New Taster course for disadvantaged students from non-agricultural backgrounds. Practical experience of the land-based industries, learning on university campus and IAG on progression routes into land-based sector. Engagement with student ambassadors who deliver and help run the programme.

<p>UNI-que Taster! 4 nights (2012-13 onwards)</p>	<p>Year 10, disadvantaged, local, upto 28 places</p>	<p><i>As per old Aimhigher Summer School</i> Experience of university life, awareness, aspiration and achievement raising through campus living, tours, subject tasters to complement GCSE final year &amp; uni-life sessions. Engagement with student ambassadors who deliver and help run the programme. Assist in transition to Y11 and post-16 education &amp; inspiration to continue FE/HE.</p>
<p>Your Uni 3-4 nights (new for 2013-14 onwards)</p>	<p>Students from Compact schools (in partnership with University of Gloucestershire [UOG])  Details TBC with UOG Upto 100 places?</p>	<p>Experience of university life, awareness, aspiration and achievement raising through campus living, tours, subject tasters and lectures, IAG sessions, HE finance, application, progression, study modes &amp; uni-life sessions. Engagement with student ambassadors who deliver and help run the programme. Assist in transition processes from GCSE to FE and/or FE to HE</p>
<p>UNI-que Taster! 4 nights (new for 2013-14 onwards)</p>	<p>Year 12, disadvantaged, National, upto 28 places</p>	<p>Taster for students wishing to apply to university. Experience of university life, awareness, aspiration and achievement raising through campus living, tours, subject tasters and lectures, IAG sessions, HE finance, application, progression, study modes &amp; uni-life sessions. Engagement with student ambassadors who deliver and help run the programme. Assist in transition FE to HE and application process.</p>
<p>UNI-que Now! 1 night (new for 2013-14 onwards)</p>	<p>Mature people with interest in entering HE, national, upto 28 places</p>	<p>Experience of university life and awareness-raising through campus living, tours, subject tasters and lectures, IAG sessions, HE finance, application, progression, study modes &amp; uni-life sessions. Personalised IAG sessions dealing with issues that may particularly affect mature students. Engagement with mature student ambassadors.</p>
<p>Your Higher Education: Awards 1 night (new for 2014-15 onwards)</p>	<p>School, college, youth support agency, etc. staff Upto 100 places</p>	<p>Networking and information-sharing summer school for staff working with young people in the local area. Exploring current issues in HE and opportunities at local HEIs, with visiting speakers. Opportunities for new collaborations and development, sharing good practice and celebrating young peoples' achievements (awards)</p>

<b>TOTALS per annum:</b>	<b>212 places / 17 nights for students 100 places / 1 night for staff</b>
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This model is not intended to be prescriptive and may alter depending on collaborative developments, external factors and developments in the College's provision. However the spirit of commitment exemplified by the model will be continued in any revisions.

### 3.1.6 Mentoring

The College recognises the significant value that student ambassador mentoring brings to outreach intervention. The College has established a team of up to 30 student ambassadors over the past three years. Data contained in the College's annual report on widening participation highlights the importance of student ambassador input at all outreach events, and we are therefore keen to develop the type and amount of work that our ambassadors are involved in. The College will seek to develop mentoring projects, both in-school and e-mentoring. Mentoring will be offered to schools under partnership arrangements, at local and national levels. As we have new collaboration arrangements with the University of Gloucestershire, we are keen to work complementary to their provision. Attaching a national focus to our mentoring provision ensures effective use of resources and avoids repetition of their local provision, as well as adding a different dimension to mentoring.

### 3.1.7 Outreach to mature learners

The following illustrates the breadth and depth of outreach activity designed to attract and support mature learners.

- The RAC has worked in partnership with *Lifepilot* and has a link to the *Lifepilot* online services on the RAC website. We will continue to work to provide student and staff input to the *Lifepilot* initiative, assisting where possible in the development of resources available for mature learners prior to, during and post-study.
- There is institutional commitment to maintenance and development of the network of local business and community partners, working closely with industry to ensure training and professional development needs are met through provision of flexible and timely full qualifications and/or professional awards.
- Maintaining the delivery of a 2-day "Introduction to Farming" programme for Graduate Diploma (Agriculture) students. This course supports student transition into learning in HE, providing founding knowledge in preparation for the commencement of study. The programme is committed to enhancing employability and is linked fully and closely with industry. It is run through the Business Development Centre.
- The Outreach and Marketing Departments continue to work in partnership to ensure the effective dissemination of promotional information and guidance, online and written. In 2012-13, the release of a tailored brochure targeting mature students will enhance this provision. In addition, the Marketing Department has a commitment to attract sector-based

press coverage, which enhances the recruitment drive, particularly amongst potential mature students in employment.

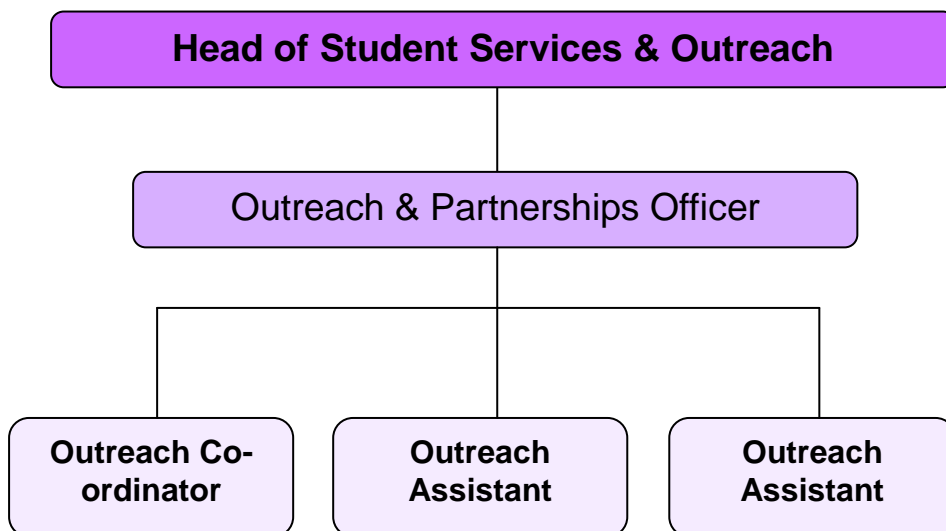
- Enhancing the provision of work-based learning (WBL) and sandwich placement opportunities (see Item 3.1.10).

### 3.1.8 Investment in staff resource

The College has employed a Widening Participation (formally Access) Officer since 2006/07. This role has assisted the College in attracting and retaining students from more disadvantaged backgrounds, as per the initial Access Agreement. The College will review the current staffing arrangements for delivery on access and retention, including student support. This review will inform the College's expansion of staff resource

Additional fee income will be directed to development of a Student Services and Outreach division, with direct reporting mechanism to senior management group (SMG) via the Head role. The College regards this as the most appropriate way forward, positively impacting as it will upon outreach development and student support and retention.

The new structure will bring together the various student support mechanisms in College, and include support and opportunities for pre- and post-university students via the Outreach and Careers (employability) elements. It provides a "one-stop-shop" model for student issues, and raises the visibility of student support (retention) and outreach on campus.



### 3.1.9 Contextual data in admissions processes

The College recognises the potential in employing contextual data when selecting participants from target backgrounds. The College will therefore, over a two year period, consider research,

practice and developments made by SPA (Supporting Professionalism in Admissions), who are working with UCAS to make contextual information available.

### **3.1.10 Courses and modes of study**

The RAC is committed to diversifying provision to meet consumer need and provide accessible programmes for all student groups.

In order to increase access, the College acknowledges the work to be done in developing provision of a more diverse range of units, courses and study modes.

Specifically, as part of its Teaching and Learning Strategy the College is undertaking the following measures:

- Explore opportunities to develop more flexible provision in order to maintain and expand student numbers undertaking campus-based programmes, including, *inter-alia*; 18-month foundation degrees; 2-year Honours degrees; Integrated 4-year Masters degrees;
- Through collaborative activities, develop blended and distance learning opportunities for the delivery of RAC awards;
- Identify opportunities to provide more flexible awards and award pathways, providing increased student choice of modules and thus widening the appeal of RAC provision. In particular, explore opportunities for greater part-time provision and bespoke/combined studies award frameworks to meet individual student expectations.
- Expand partnership working, concentrating on favoured partner institutions where provision may be expanded with confidence, and from where suitable progression routes to higher awards can be developed;
- Explore opportunities for the delivery of provision outside the normal academic day, week and year and thus make existing provision more widely available to non-traditional students;

In addition, the teaching and learning strategy provides students with additional credit and/or bursary opportunities for the completion of study skills sessions and projects. This includes recognition of the exceptional achievements of those students in Student Ambassador, Student Union and Volunteering roles. Accreditation, as shown on transcript and Achievement Awards for particular services to the College, may be awarded at Graduation. We hope that this will build on our already excellent graduate employment record; the availability of such enhanced accreditation adds an extra dimension in terms of employability and thus in terms of enhancing student services provision.

### **3.1.11 Graduate employability and Information, Advice and Guidance**

The College has an excellent record of graduate employment, at 96.4% within the first six months of graduation and ranking 8th in UK university league tables (Ref: Destination of Leavers from Higher Education : HESA). However, the College recognises the significance of our student

support, student services (supporting work placements, industry exposure) and careers service in achieving and maintaining this record. We will therefore continue good practice in support and careers; the current careers service will be assessed as part of the Access and Retention review detailed in Item 8.

The College is committed to developing and expanding its links to industry, improving employability and developing entrepreneurship in its students. As part of both our retention and outreach activity we will develop further relationships with businesses and employers and professions, to identify needs, develop matching schemes. In particular developing internship opportunities for areas where social mobility is low. Raising aspirations beyond undergraduate study through a range of activities including skills bursaries, employability projects, introduction to postgraduate study, and funding for student-led projects both before and during their undergraduate studies, these will be specifically designed to target and engage low participation groups.

Alongside this are considerations around our student population, where we envisage a greater need for careers and employability support. In particular, we will seek to support students who may need additional exposure to the professions we serve, or additional skill, information, advice and guidance (IAG) or qualifications to enter these professions. The detail of this support will be explored prior to 2012-13 and a development project will be put into place.

### **3.1.12 Sharing good practice**

Where possible, the College wishes to contribute to the development of good practice regionally and nationally. Similarly, we will seek to enhance our own provision through research and benchmarking with other outreach initiatives and gathering information on effective working.

## **3.2 Student retention and success**

The College welcomes the fact that the new arrangements recognise the necessary support under the access agreement for retention activities. Although we presently have a relatively good rate of retention, the College acknowledges the potential for increasing need as the student population alters (towards increased students from disadvantaged, non-traditional, and under-represented groups). The College also recognises that the range of provision will need to change as a result of new modes of study coming on line.

The RAC provides academic and pastoral support for all students and particularly for those from under-represented groups. Under the new Access Agreement, retention support will focus on development of employability and academic success, and includes:

- Personal Development & Progression (personal tutor) allocations for all undergraduate students (as per previous years), but with development of a more robust system, including initial assessment with each student, progression planning and key skills work.

- Strengthening PDP: portfolio of work developed (key skills, project, personal assessment, reflection) to be completed by students and tutors; accredited on transcript under personal / professional development modules to increase employability.
- Increased range of key study skills sessions. These will now be accredited and appear on students' transcript, achieving targets under increasing success and employability.
- Development of a "One-Stop-Shop" online housing map of key support services, IAG, useful contacts and student self-directed assessment and learning related to progression. This comprehensive virtual help zone will offer a different means of support and will be accessible to all students. The College will re configure its intranet provision to provide this enhanced service.
- The College, in conjunction with the Business Development Centre, will also explore the development of various initiatives and projects, including the allocation of scholarships and bursaries (Item 3.4.2), to support students in accessing a range of employability projects. This will not only increase potential employability of under-represented groups, but will make entry to our courses more attractive due to the positive graduate outcomes and opportunities attached.

The College is also aware of the range of physical access measures that will positively impact on both access and retention targets. As such, we propose the following developments to our student services:

- Assessment and development of existing shuttle buses to and from RAC, not only for support for existing students but as a positive feature of recruitment, particularly concentrating on local target areas (Swindon, Gloucester). Collaboration with public transport services will be investigated.
- £100 voucher for each student towards the cost of a bicycle is continued under the new Access Agreement
- Availability of an increased range of programmes and mode of study (Item 3.1.10), and in particular collaborative delivery, e-learning and distance learning.

### 3.3 Financial support for students

The College's investment in terms of financial support for students is changed under this new Access Agreement. Significant aspects of these changes are:

- The College's subscription to the National Scholarships Programme (NSP)
- The introduction of fee waivers and changes to bursary levels, and new eligibility criteria for new financial awards, these will include, first generation higher education, disadvantaged postcode (urban or rural), specified school or college, member of a minority ethnic group, mature

#### 3.3.1 The National Scholarships Programme (NSP)

The College's allocation under the new NSP is £39k, which the College commits to match fund from additional fee income.



The College intends to make the NSP available to the maximum number of eligible students and thus will aim to offer £3K per student but reserve the option to award more should the number of eligible students be less than 26. The criteria attached to these awards will identify disadvantaged student groups by economics, postcode taking into account our compact arrangements full details will be finalised after further consultation with our collaborative partner.

### 3.3.2 Fee waivers, bursaries and scholarships

Bursary commitments to pre-2012 students must be honoured and are included in this Access Agreement. New targeted bursary schemes, scholarships and fee waivers 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, household income <£25kp/a; eligible for finance under NSP
Disadvantage Fee Waiver	£1000 - £3,000 per year	Disadvantaged students, household income <£25kp/a; eligible for finance under NSP; plus fulfilment of at least 3 of the given 5 targeting criteria for disadvantage
Support disadvantage waiver	£1,000 - £3,000 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 1 <sup>st</sup> and 2 <sup>nd</sup> 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.

Entitlement vouchers: Books, bicycle or computer	£100 voucher 1 <sup>st</sup> yr only	Vouchers towards costs of study / access to HE. Students choose between books, bicycle and computer voucher. Available to all students upon arrival into 1 <sup>st</sup> year at college; College will count 25% of this expenditure under Access (based on under-represented per cent of total student population)
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As per Item 3.1.13 Expenses incurred 2011-12, the proposed packages for financial support will be explored and further developed in conjunction with our student union and student course representatives. The wider student body will also be given opportunities to engage in consultation and discussion.

In addition, and as per Section 5 on Monitoring and Evaluation Arrangements, the effectiveness of these new financial support packages will be monitored from the outset. We are keen to remain responsive to evaluation and therefore annual review of this Access Agreement will consider seriously the impact of the new finance arrangements and, in particular, reductions in bursary support.

The College support will sit alongside other student bursaries and scholarships such as the Emrys Jones Scholarships which are available (total ca £50K per annum) to support students from Wales who would otherwise not be able to study at the RAC.

## 4. Targets and Milestones

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 to 10%.

## 5. Monitoring and Evaluation Arrangements

### 5.1 Institutional monitoring and evaluation arrangements

Type	Level	Description
Pre- and post- event Q'aires / feedback	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
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

Under new staff structures, (progress towards and delivery of targets and milestones under the Access Agreement will be the responsibility of the new Student Services and Outreach division manager, who will be at senior management level. This lead will have support from the Director of Finance and Administration, Academic Registrar, Head of Marketing and the Outreach team in monitoring progress. In addition, the Widening Participation Action Group (part of Inclusivity, Equality and Diversity Committee) has responsibility for monitoring and evaluation, and will therefore inform the Student Services and Outreach manager. This group comprises representatives from all key departments and Schools institution-wide, including representatives from student ambassadors and/or the wider student body.

New initiatives will be evaluated individually and from the outset.

## 6. Provision of information to prospective students

### 6.1 Commitment to provide information

The College is committed to publishing clear, accessible and timely information regarding fee levels and financial support for applicants and students. This information will be broken down

year-on-year. This, and other relevant information (including unit and course details, student support guidance and industry / employability information), will be published on-line and in our prospectus. The information will be made available as soon as possible each year.

Requested information will also be provided to UCAS and the SLC in a timely fashion, so that they may populate applicant-facing web services.

## **6.2 Student input on information provision**

The College will continue to conduct consultation events with the student union and wider student body (see Item 3.1.14), a major focus of which will be to seek input in the development of information for potential students, but will also embrace issues of support for current students and recent graduates.

In addition, we recognise the value of student and applicant feedback in testing the clarity and detail of the information we provide. The College will therefore host an on-line monitoring survey, optional for potential students using the site. This survey will contain questions relating to: ease of website navigation, clarity of information, level of detail, ease of understanding, and recommendations for development.

## **6.3 Information, advice and guidance (IAG)**

The College recognises the importance of on-going IAG pre-, during and post- university. In addition to the commitment to outreach (pre) and retention (during), therefore, the College will also offer progression support. Such support is particularly important to under-represented groups, and post-graduation IAG is thus offered and will be delivered as per Item 3.1.11.



