

# REASEHEATH COLLEGE

## ACCESS AGREEMENT 2015/16

### Overview

Reaseheath College (RHC) is a specialist Land Based Further Education College. Higher education at RHC was (up until 2012) indirectly funded via two higher education institution (HEI) partners: the University of Chester (UoC) and Harper Adams University (HAU), making a higher education student population at Reaseheath of approx. 700FTE's; the funding for these places was secured via both partner institutions.

However, from September 2012/13, the partnership with HAU matured and, through consultation with HEFCE (Higher Education Funding Council for England), RHC became directly funded, culminating in all future HAU affiliated student numbers transferring to RHC. It is the intention of Reaseheath and Harper Adams that Harper Adams will continue to validate the programmes for 2015/16 entrants. The continuing commitment to validating this provision, constitutes a desire to support the access plans of selected, specialist land-based Further Education Colleges, which provide an access route to those who would otherwise be deterred from higher education. The UoC has submitted an OFFA agreement that includes students studying at RHC in 2014/15, but they remain UoC numbers, franchised to RHC. There is no intention to move away from the partnership with the UoC, so this arrangement will continue.

In framing this access agreement, RHC has given due care and consideration to the impact of these proposals on prospective students with protected requirements/attributes, including those of disability, minority ethnicity, age, gender, and to those from disadvantaged/low income backgrounds. This access agreement will further aim to provide a clear rationale of how the college's approach will help to improve access and student success for under-represented groups, providing evidence where appropriate. The agreement will also evaluate programmes in place to capture how the financial support is helping the college achieve its aims.

### 1 Fees, student numbers, fee income and fee rises in subsequent years

#### Programmes at Reaseheath College

RHC has agreed the following annual tuition fee rates for UK and EU new entrants joining full time, part time and sandwich undergraduate programmes in 2015/16. :

	Full time	Part time
BSc programmes	£9,000	£4,500 (6 years)
Foundation Degree programmes	£7,650	£5,098 (3 years) £3,825 (4 years)
FdSc Countryside Conservation and Recreation Management		£3,570
BSc Top up programmes	£7,500	
One year full-time sandwich placement year	£510	

#### What part time students will pay

RHC recognises that there are three different durations across its part time offer each attracting a different fee. The following tables represent the maximum a part time student would expect to pay on each year of study on each course:

**Part time BSc/BSc (Hons) programmes, year by year:**

Y1	Y2	Y3	Y4	Y5	Y6	TOTAL
£4,500	£4,500	£4,500	£4,500	£4,500	£4,500	£27,000

**Part time FdSc programmes – 4 year model, year by year:**

Y1	Y2	Y3	Y4	TOTAL
£3,825	£3,825	£3,825	£3,825	£15,300

**Part time FdSc programmes – 3 year model, year by year:**

Y1	Y2	Y3	TOTAL
£5,098	£5,098	£5,098	£15,294

Students on three year part time foundation degrees will study five modules in the first and second year and six in the third year. Charging students for six modules would take the fee over the maximum fee we can charged for part time students. Therefore, we have subsumed the sixth module cost of £956 into year one and two which has resulted in the total figure of £15,294.

These fee levels will not apply:

- to continuing students who commenced their studies before 1 September 2012;
- to those pre-2012 continuing students who transfer studies to other full time/sandwich awards; or to students who progress to approved end-on-courses in 2014/15, such as a top-up from a Foundation Degree to an Honours Degree programme.

These changes are being made to the part time fee structure in light of a new suite of part time programmes being validated for September 2015 entry.

The College consulted with the Student Association and Student Representatives when considering these changes to the 2015/16 access agreement and they were happy that the methodology concerning the three year part time fee.

We anticipate that up to 265 new full-time students will join the first year of first degree, Foundation Degree and extended Foundation Degree programmes at Reaseheath College in 2015/16. We anticipate that 70 (35 FTE) will be enrolled on fee-regulated part-time courses at Reaseheath College, including those who are part-sponsored by employers.

Students who commence a foundation degree programme in 2015/16, which includes a one year sandwich placement, will normally undertake the sandwich placement in 2016/17. Students studying during their sandwich year through RHC will be subject to a fee of £510 which is significantly below both the basic fee of £4,500 and the maximum fee of £6,750. Students enrolled on a first degree BSc programme at RHC in 2014/15 will pay a fee of £7,500 for the three years of the duration of their academic careers, with no inflationary increase in fees in subsequent years over this time. Conversely, students who commenced a foundation degree in 2012/13 and wish to to-up to a BSc in 2014/15 will be charged the same annual course fee (£7,500) as the first year of entry to their academic studies with us in 2012/13.

This access agreement will be renewed annually. However, it is possible that tuition fee levels for 2015/16 entrants may be uplifted each year in line with inflationary increases

announced by the government (in line with the Office for Budget Responsibility forecast for RPI-X (currently at 3.34%).

This access agreement will be renewed annually. Conducive to this statement and due to changes in partnership arrangements, it is also a possibility that fees will be further reviewed by RHC in the future.

The associated documentation prepared in line with the approved template indicates:

- the estimated numbers of full-time students at each fee level, including fees at £6,000 and below;
- the estimated number of regulated part-time students for whom we anticipate the fee will exceed £4,500 in an academic year;

Our estimated fee income above the basic level for full-time means that the part-time fee levels indicated above are the maximum that a student would pay (i.e. up to 75% of a full-time study load), although many would typically pay a lower fee, dependent on their study load. RHC will not charge any part-time student more than £6,750 in an academic year, in accordance with the fees regulations, as outlined by OFFA and the Government's stipulated tuition fee limits.

## **2 Expenditure on Additional Access and Retention Measures**

At RHC, there is an intention to continue and enhance new initiatives designed to support students progressing from further education into higher education and to continue to provide additional support to first year students on foundation degree programmes in order to further improve progression rates into the second year of study. These initiatives include new initiatives for the delivery of Learner Support and in further supporting the delivery of the curriculum.

Additionally, further education staff have been involved in examining how best to support students through the transition from FE to HE. These initiatives will support our dual aims aim of increasing the number of mature students admitted each year and improving the retention rates of those students.

In 2015/16, RHC estimates that it will spend a total of approximately 29% of projected additional fee income generated from fees above £6,000 on widening participation initiatives. It is envisaged that these will include existing bursary commitments and new measures to widen access and improve retention of students from disadvantaged backgrounds. This expenditure accounts for posts for outreach work, events and activities; information, advice and guidance about higher education and financial arrangements; and to support targeting, monitoring and evaluation of outreach and other WP-related activity, including collaborative working. The investment also supports administration of the National Scholarship Programme. All expenditure included in this agreement complies fully with guidance from OFFA on eligibility.

### **A Assessment of Access and Retention Record**

RHC has a good record in widening access, and has consistently performed well against institutional and historic benchmarks. Progress has been made in 6 of the 7 milestones (86%), with only our monitoring of participation rates of 14-16 year old recruitment onto vocational level programmes being less than predicted. Further inferential evidence is required to analyse why this is the case, but factors such as schools not relinquishing learners and economic concerns may be catalysts. Irrespective of this however, in 2012/13 the college worked with 30 schools in the Cheshire and Warrington as part of its Pre-16 learning initiative. 356 students from 30 schools benefited from this programme, an increase of 18.6% on the previous year.

Overall, the College increased its total Access Agreement expenditure by 10% against predicted figures, demonstrating a concerted financial effort to allow the college to further strengthen its own outreach network and ensure on-going delivery of targeted awareness- and aspiration-raising activities. A considerable element of the outreach investment in 2013-14 has been evident in maintaining the resources, staffing and other costs to support the direct targeting and delivery of inclusive and engaging programmes of study, demonstrating continued enhancement.

Taking each of the targets set out in the accompanying annex in turn, we have made progress with some targets, but not with all. The rate of progress on each has been considered when determining our planned expenditure on, and related activities for, outreach, retention and financial support arrangements within this agreement. In summary:

- In academic year 2013/14, 90.2% of the enrolled HE students identified themselves as White British with one student identifying themselves as being white from another background and one student identifying themselves as 'other ethnic group' but did not give any other detail. 55.5% of the enrolled students were under 21 years of age, 39.9% were aged between 21-30, 10.0% were aged between 30-39. 7.14% of students were aged between 40 and 45. 61.64% of the enrolled HE students were female, 38.36% were male.
- During Academic Year 2012/13, the Marketing team piloted applicant visit days for Equine courses, so applicants holding an offer or considering an offer from us could come to the campus and experience life here as a student prior to commencement of their study. This has been identified as good practice within those areas and have remained in place for this year. The Equine team are now planning one visit day per month to ensure maximum participation. Additional applicant days have also now been introduced in four other curriculum areas (Adventure Sports, Agriculture, Rural Events Management and Food) for 2013/14.
- The Aim Higher Co-ordinator, now referred to as the Widening Participation officer, is at the forefront of preparing our FE learners for Higher Education. The development of a new role within the college has seen the development of a new programme to widen participation, not only at an institutional level but within the local community too. The Equine department have run summer schools for students which prepare FE learners for the demands of HE learning. There are several introductory activities run across college in 2013 that were open to the general public. For example, the Horticulture department ran a 'designing space' workshop for the wider community, which included elements of the Foundation Degree Course.
- The College has continued consistently to maintain or improve its performance over recent years. The College has a diverse student body which includes both young and mature full-time students from under-represented backgrounds. The college upholds the belief that the investment outlined above will enable the college to sustain this progress and to continue to attract a diverse range of students.
- The Higher Education provision has increased in size and with it has the need to accommodate those students who learn differently. The past twelve months has seen a significant increase in the number of student declaring learning difficulties prior to enrolment. To cope with that demand, the Higher Education Support team have expanded to include two new full time members of staff and, furthermore,

secured funding to become a member of the National Network of Assessment Centres.

- This academic year has seen an increase in the uptake of DSA funded students receiving learning support within the college, with a total of 92 students now receiving one-to-one support via the Learning Support team. Indeed, For 2013/14, the college has built on its learning support function and delivery by increasing its full-time permanent staff quote from one to four, including employing a HE-specific dyslexia tutor, highlighting the college's commitment to inclusivity and maximising learner potential during their studies.
- Our learning support service currently offers note takers, readers, invigilation, prompters and scribes for examination support. They also offer one to one support, mentoring, study buddying, in class note takers and support when applying for Disabled Student's Allowance. Our welfare team have a representative responsible for each curriculum area. They are introduced at induction and maintain consistent contact with the student body throughout the year. The welfare team run several events throughout the year which students are encouraged to attend.
- Retention is an improving picture across all HE programmes. Agriculture and Engineering report 100% retention from September to April. Both the College's validating institutions are retaining more students across the board and while every HE course is above college benchmark expectation, we are working to further improve the overall picture.
- Reaseheath College has witnessed a dramatic increase in the number of classified "non-white learners" within HE provision at the college, with 13 students evident in 2012/13 and 25 now registered to study with us in 2013/14.
- The college currently works with over 20 schools in Cheshire and Warrington providing vocational programmes for 14-16 year olds, where pupils attend college one day per week over the academic year. In 2013/14, over 270 young people took part. The college encourages young people to think about progression routes.

Overall, therefore, in both absolute and relative terms, we believe that we have made a significant contribution to both fair access and widening participation. Moreover, our performance in terms of student retention underlines the measures we have put in place to support students who may be at risk of academic failure. The college continues to develop its curriculum, particularly the development of HNCs, with industry to enhance delivery and widen participation to those learners who seek a more vocational/kinaesthetic learning experience. The college holds taster days to allow prospective students to opportunity to sample curriculum areas and the diverse provisions they provide.

For students that are moving from FE to HE the college has bridging modules and holds bridging events and summer camps, the intention being to assist student with the move from further education to higher education. There are cultural differences and often students need to support to successfully navigate this change. The college provides additional learning support and counselling services for students.

Where ever possible the delivery of the programmes/ timetabling is managed with the needs of industry or/ and students. For example on programmes where there is a large number of mature students delivery will where possible accommodate child care responsibilities. Where a specific industry has a need for employee and this meets the college's requirements for work experience placements we will accommodate this within timetabling to be able to release student's at the most advantageous time.

The college has various protocols in place as part of the wider quality assurance and compliance to raise student success rates and retention. The college retains an *Aim Higher co-ordinator* who supports individuals preparing for higher education both internally and externally:

- Monitor new students from less privileged backgrounds to ensure that they can be financially supported throughout their academic careers with us. The key avenues for assessing financial need of our prospective students derived from MIS Polar scoring (via UCAS application information) and via the individual's student finance application (of which only 3% failed to share their information with us). This information is collated by our finance department and then shared with both our student records/registry departments and the HE Office to ensure that the correct information and support can be disseminated.
- In 2013/14, 7 students were offered National Scholarship Programme funding and an additional 74 college bursaries paid out to students across levels 4, 5 and 6 of their undergraduate careers to aid support them in their studies with us.
- Reaseheath College's Access to HE programme has a high performing transition to HE level provision, achieving above national benchmarks in the last three consecutive years. The achievement rate of learners enrolled for 2012/13 was 94%, with 80% of completers progressing onto a HE level programme thereafter. This success rate equates to a 40% increase on the national benchmark for Access to HE provision (currently set at 54%). In terms of bridging our Level 3 learners into undergraduates the evidence is extremely strong: in 2013 - 48 total applicants from Reaseheath (RHC): 10 to HAUC, of which 8 became students, 38 to RHC of which 31 became students; in 2014 - 41 total applicants from RHC. 13 to HAUC, of which 10 are expected to become students, 15 to RHC, of which 12 are expected to become students.
- Our newly appointed HE Learning Support co-ordinator will then conduct initial assessments on those learners to see if a scheduled learning support programme (contextualised via an individual learning plan) would benefit the individual during their academic careers. At the outset, an established and robust student targeting, monitoring and consequently, evaluation strategy, ensuring the college is uniquely placed to impact assess the success of HE student support provision. Our number of self-referrals from students seeking learning support increased by 21% during 2013/14, demonstrating the level of both academic and pastoral support available to our learners, who feel comfortable in approaching the HE learning Support Office.

Notwithstanding our achievements to date, we recognise that there is still scope, albeit modest, for improvement in terms of the proportion of our students drawn from state schools and colleges and from low participation neighbourhoods.

A considerable element of the outreach investment in 2013-14 will be in maintaining the resources, staffing and other costs to support the direct targeting and delivery of inclusive and engaging programmes of study, demonstrating continued enhancement in the following areas:

- Administration and marketing of the National Scholarship Programme and College Bursaries Scheme
- HE awareness- and aspiration/attainment-raising events with targeted schools and colleges
- Information and advice on HE (including student finance) for targeted schools, colleges and individuals

- Data analysis, monitoring and evaluation of impact of outreach activity
- Improving academic success and employability
- RHC will consider how it might better work collaboratively with charities, social enterprises and the not-for-profit sector
- Incorporate approaches to evidence-based curriculum development to support widening participation and student success
- Consider new approaches that would enhance the evaluation and monitoring of outreach or student success schemes
- Develop new WP initiatives for part-time students to ensure recruitment and retention

### **3 Measures to Attract and Support Mature and Part-Time Students**

A new addition to our HE programme provision for 2015/16 is the inclusion of HNC programmes. These have been introduced within the college to help to combat the concerning reduction in part-time applications and enrolment at the College – which mirrors a national trend in higher education. Unlike many degrees, these courses are vocationally focussed and therefore relevant to employment. Moreover, the College envisages that these course will provide a great stepping stone to a higher qualification, potentially to convert it to a bachelor's degree.

A new strategy for attracting and recruiting part time students is embedded within our HE strategy for the coming academic year. Part-time students have very different requirements and needs compared to our full time counterparts. Most of our part time learners are mature, have dependants and are employed. The report *The Power of Part time: Review of part time and mature higher education* (Universities UK, October 2013), identifies the contribution to the economy part-time HE has to the local economy. Intrinsic in this plan is a new pricing structure that reflects the needs and affordability of a different market.

A separate marketing plan and strategy for our prospective part-time students will be devised, along with supporting plans that detail how p/art-time students will be supported and incorporated into college life. This will also incorporate greater clarification and transparency around the information on part-time course and the financial support available to part-time students. As part of the exercise to re-establish a part-time local market for HE, the college will explore developments with other awarding bodies such as Pearsons/BTEC and Open University/OCN. This review will also include Professional Bodies with an interest in accreditation above level 3, providing more flexible learning approaches and employer focused provision.

### **4 Additional Access Measures**

#### **A Student Retention & Success**

It is the intention of Reaseheath College to sustain and enhance a range of learning and teaching, pastoral and welfare, and employability services, to support the retention and success of its students throughout their academic careers at the college, and to continue to monitor the relative performance of those from disadvantaged groups. Recent data released by HEFCE for 2012/13 indicates that RHC is bucking recent recruitment trends for HE; compared to many of RHC competitors (land-based colleges) recruitment looks healthy, with an increase in application to enrolment conversion rates for 2012/13 of 15% on the previous academic year . Higher Education student numbers continue to grow and the quality of the provision is also improving with increased retention and improved student satisfaction. However, the college is mindful that this improving picture requires vigilant management and leadership to maintain and grow a quality product. The two partner Universities have continued to offer support and guidance.

Students need to be properly supported to stay and achieve successful academic careers. The college has an on-going programme to increase the quality of its HE provision and in the first term (semester 2012/13) this would seem to be producing favourable results, with over all improved student satisfaction and improved retention. This academic year's internal induction survey saw the highest response rate recorded for HE learners (92%). Within that survey, conducted in November 2012, satisfaction with enrolment and induction is very high, with no negative responses over 3%, and only one question, the organisation of enrolment, having a positive response below 90%. Satisfaction with enrolment and induction was also very high, with no negative responses over 3%. This would suggest our strategies and provisions of both mentoring and support were accurately targeted and are having a successful impact.

Quality assurance practices are monitored and maintained the HE curriculum. Standardisation across all academic departments delivering HE has allowed for an enhanced student experience through transparent course documentation, enabling staff to meet student expectations and generating increased student satisfaction through promoting a HE culture/ethos.

As the cost for higher education is shifted to individual students rather than taxpayers it is important not just to improve student retention, but to **enhance the student experience and maximise the success of all students**. Through consultation with students and employer engagement networks over the past 12 months, it is apparent that RHC offers the following commendable features for our HE student body:

- Traditional closeness (family connections to institution and geographic location)
- Local and access orientation (local marketing and open events, including school visits)
- Strengths in flexible delivery, pastoral care, student support and guidance and skills provision
- Basis for progression (prepare students for progression to HE and employment)

However, there are still some areas for improvement and avenues which we, as a college and team, need to pursue and develop to ensure that this trend in retention is maintained and built upon. Principally, these centre around:

- Strengthening a HE culture within the college to enhance and impact upon HE delivery
- Practices which sustain student motivation
- Opportunities to develop employability skills
- Focus on career education, information and guidance
- Developing knowledge, confidence and identity as successful HE learners
- A HE experience relevant to students' interests and future goals

RHC will be looking to strengthen the institutional data available to senior management and course managers, to enable identification of departments, programmes and modules with higher rates of withdrawal, non-progression and non-completion. In conjunction with this, course managers will monitor student behaviour, with particular emphasis on participation and performance, to identify students at risk of withdrawing, rather than only relying on entry qualifications or other student entry characteristics. The learner voice sector (course committee and student reps meetings) has also provided a platform where staff can gain a student perspective on reviewing data and experience about student belonging, retention and success. The college has invested in technological advances and this has aided communication and management of its HE provision, culminating in enhanced student engagement across the curriculum areas.

## **B Outreach**

RHC's widening participation strategy is underpinned by a belief that anyone with the necessary ability should feel that they can aspire to higher education regardless of their background. As a further education college with higher education provision we see widening participation as an integral part of our mission and vision, indeed we have been carrying out WP initiatives for some considerable time. These initiatives include our internal further education (FE) students, ensuring they are well informed and assisted in the transition to Higher education (HE); if they chose this as an outcome of their studies. Progression will inevitably involve applications to universities and HE provision other than our own, although we also enjoy a healthy internal progression rate that we would want to maintain. Since Reaseheath College is essentially a specialist vocational institution, we have a particular interest in insuring our graduates are vocationally competent and employable.

Additional avenues in which we are now building on established outreach activity in these areas include using social media, in particular Facebook and Twitter, to engage young people pro-actively and develop a two-way dialogue. In particular, we are looking to actively participate in Q&A sessions around particular subjects which young people are most likely engaged with. The college is also looking to develop its student ambassador training from 2014/15 to increase their awareness of the need to widen participation and to help them develop the skills needed to advise and guide those from diverse backgrounds and with different initial interests.

Consequently, RHC subsidises the cost of relevant secondary learning goals across the various curriculum areas, which lead to increased employability opportunities and career development. A considerable element of the outreach investment in 2014-15 will be in maintaining the resources, staffing and other costs to support the direct targeting and delivery of inclusive and engaging programmes of study, demonstrating continued enhancement in the following areas:

- Students on low incomes
- Students from deprived geographic locations
- Non-traditional HE learners (e.g. people whose families have no experience of HE including looked after children)
- Schools collaboration (targeted links with schools with a low progression rate to HE)
- Students with physical/learning disabilities
- Under-presented ethnic groups

Please refer to RHC's separate interim widening participation strategy for 2013/14 onwards, which identifies the college's guiding principles and how the college intends on committing to monitor and improve its own strategies and measurable targets in supporting outreach investment, across targeted internal and external initiatives.

## **C Financial Support for Students**

In order to assist students from less advantaged backgrounds, RHC will invest in a wide range of targeted measures offering financial support. The Government's decision to end the National Scholarship Programme and the Access to Learning Fund (ALF) for undergraduate entrants after 2014/15 gives us the flexibility to refocus some of our previous investment in financial support from 2015/16 towards infrastructure and activity to support access, and student progression activities/programmes. As many of our deemed 'disadvantaged students' (those learners from low income backgrounds) have the lowest expected rates of

continuation, we have modelled our financial expenditure to accommodate supporting student access, student success and progression on an equal footing, with expenditure on both of these areas amassing approximately 31% of the total expenditure (as % higher fee income).

### **Reaseheath College Bursaries**

In 2015/16, Reaseheath College will award an annual non-repayable scholarship of £1,000 to those new entrants with a household income of £0 - £25,000. Scholarships will be paid to students, by cheque or BACS, in two equal instalments. The first payment will be made in January and the second payment in May.

Students who receive a scholarship, in the first year of study will continue to receive a £1,000 scholarship for the remaining years of study at the college, provided that they remain registered on a full time course and continue to meet the criteria for the award of a scholarship. Students will not normally be eligible for a scholarship during the sandwich placement year.

Selection criteria for bursary awards:

- Student should have ticked the 'share' box on the SLC application
- Combined household income should be less than £25,000 per year
- Attendance should not drop below 90% (this will be audited in December by the finance office) prior to the first instalment of monies in January)

For 2015/16, the college will consult the student association about the financial support available to HE students, along with other consultation activities such as focus groups with those students awarded financial support this academic year and HE course representatives. In discussion with students during curriculum forums in the first semester of 2013/14, there was a distinct view that cash bursaries provided students with more of an incentive than fee waivers in their capacity to impact upon access, retention and achievement.

### **The Reaseheath Trust**

From 2014/15, Reaseheath College will offer an additional monetary support mechanism to students with a household income of less than £25,000, with supporting evidence of dire financial need. In addition, particular groups will be targeted for support, such as:

- Looked after children entering HE
- Mature students with dependents

As well as making grant payments, the fund will also be used to provide short-term interest-free loans to students, to cover unforeseen circumstances at the discretion of the college, e.g. delay in receivership of student loan. At the time of producing this agreement, further information is not available to consider exact amounts awarded and the timing of the award payment being made by the college.

As our fee income has increased as a result of the changes to fee setting for 2015/16, we are also proposing the following financial assistance be put in place as a result of this change in income. This support will be targeted to those students who are most in need.

#### *1. Internal progression bursary*

As part of the College's widening participation initiative, Level 3 learners progressing into higher education internally, will receive a £1,000 bursary, paid in two instalments of

£500 (January and May). Based on the targets set by the College's Senior Management Team and Dean of Higher Education, the College would project a total expenditure of £45,000.

## 2. *Study tour support bursary*

This bursary is designed to support students who might struggle to meet the costs of study tours. This would be made available to those who are from households with income under £25,000 and whose study tour contributes to academic credit. Based on the targets set by the College's Senior Management Team and Dean of Higher Education, the College would project a total expenditure of £6,000.

## 5 College Targets and Milestones

- Maintain and improve baseline proportion of students from low participation groups or wards. In 2011/12, this was 17.67%. We have set a target for improvement to 19% by 2015/16.
- Monitor the percentage of students receiving bursaries. In the AY 2012/13, this was 52, but it is envisaged that this figure will increase progressively by 2% each year, targeting an 10% increase to 58 by 2014/15. Monitoring will be provisioned on an individual basis, but will be regularly discussed at academic board meetings.
- Improve the baseline of students with physical and or learning difficulties. In 2011/12, this figure was 12.9%. The college are working towards achieving a target of 13.7% by 2014/15, ascending to 14% by 2015/16. Learning support requirements will be closely monitored (and measured) through diagnostic/formative assessments; individual learning plans, DSA collaboration and enhanced tutorial provision via course managers.
- Monitor participation rates of 14-16 yr olds recruited onto collaborative vocational programmes, providing identified (signposted) progression pathways onto higher education. RHC will continue to develop and promote the benefits of higher education, by continuing and growing our outreach network. RHC are intending on achieving a 10% increase on this figure for 2015/16 to 330 students enrolling onto these programmes. The college will monitor the intake of 14 - 16 yrs old recruited onto our specialist vocational programmes on an annual basis, via MIS, Marketing and curriculum area reports.
- Monitor the participation of students identified as requiring additional support in prerequisite knowledge bases (e.g. science/practical skills). Departments such as Equine, provide students with low science attainment at their point of entry with additional support in the shape of summer schools, prior to the commencement of their programmes of study. RHC's commitment to monitor this provision will be provided by curriculum areas having identified students requiring additional learning support prior to the commencement to their programme of study. The college intends on increasing its student uptake in this activity over the next few years by up to 25%, assuming this support is identified and needed.
- Monitor progression for key groups such as Access to Higher Education programme, 2011/12 33 students from disadvantaged wards progressed to higher education.

RHC will look to enhance progression figures by an additional 12% to 37 in 2015/16. Progression will be monitored through the use of annual course reports, module evaluations, curriculum group meetings (FE-progression and HE -retention) and course committee meetings.

- Continue to improve retention of students on higher education programmes. 2010/11 base line for student withdrawals was 17.3%. It is envisaged this will be reduced to 16% by 2015/16 through initiatives such as: enhanced course management support and tuition (HE Curriculum Area Manager role); tutorial and course file audits; learner voice provision in the form of student liaison meetings and course committee meetings; building on student survey responses and feedback; engagement with the VLE will also be enhanced, as well as meeting student expectations through increased monitoring of marketing materials, online prospectuses and course documentation.
- Improve the proportion of traditional 'non-white' students 2011/12 (1.86%) by 2016/17 to a target of 2.05% through widen HE provision to other catchment areas (geographically) as well as enhancing its brand name and reputation further afield (internationally) via increased marketing and student satisfaction.
- To increase the proportion of all mature undergraduate entrants with no prior HE experience. The college currently has 242 students enrolled on HE programmes, deemed as 'mature learners' (over the age of 21 years old). It is hoped this figure will improve by 3% in 2015/16 to 250 students. Reaseheath College will monitor this target through information extraction from our Marketing and MIS teams, reviewing recruitment, HE enquiry/conversion rate statistics and qualifications on entry. The college appreciates that studying in HE as a mature student can be a very different experience from arriving direct from school or college. Therefore, to enable mature learners to gain support from peers in similar circumstances to each other, the college aims to:
  - hold a question-and-answer session for mature students in induction week;
  - run a part time and mature students' forum to provide on-going peer-to-peer support, plus you will have access to an online version of the forum for advice and networking

## **6 Monitoring and Evaluation Arrangements**

The Assistant Principal/Dean of Higher Education, The Director of Quality and the Director of Finance will be responsible for the delivery of this agreement and the college is committed to monitor compliance and progress against the milestones. Progress will be measured throughout the year regarding key milestones, as part of the college's normal quality compliance/ assurance processes. The major targets /milestones relate to data collection and analysis. Progress being measured against targets set will be reported in an annual report to the colleges Higher Education academic board. The report will include:

- Financial data summarising recruitment, awards made to students via bursaries and awards.
- Outreach activities that have been undertaken during the year
- Progress made against institutional milestones and objectives relating to student success, progression and widening participation
- The College's Single Equality Scheme aims to proactively embed equality in the culture and systems of our organisation by ensuring that policy making, service delivery and employment practice are all equality orientated. A proactive and

systematic approach to undertaking Equality Impact Assessments (EIA) is in place for existing and new policies.

### **Consulting with students**

A preliminary draft of this agreement was shared with members of the Student Association at RHC through a routine meeting with the senior staff. Particular attention was given to the balance of available expenditure committed to supporting student success and financial support, and to the basis upon which financial support might best be organised. Subsequent input will come through student representative involvement in the Academic Board meetings at where this agreement is formally considered, approved and monitored.

## **7 Provision of Information to Students and Prospective Students**

Information for students regarding financial information will be published by the college and provided to students. This information will also appear on the college web site. Illustrations of the net costs of study at RHC will be included, including examples of living on site in halls of residence and the cost of living off campus. This information also appears in the college KIS.

Information is also included regarding support both academic and pastoral available at the college. For existing students the college has a dedicated student finance officer and proactive student services team that are housed in a bespoke building providing dedicated advice and guidance to existing students.

For prospective students, the college holds open days, taster courses, bridging courses and attends education fairs, schools and college career days and other events relevant to recruitment. At all these events printed information is available regarding the colleges position on tuition fees, the Reaseheath Trust Fund and other forms of financial support.

Information regarding tuition fees and financial support available will be sent to all applicants receiving an offer of a place.

Perspective students seeking admission to courses are normally interviewed. During the applicants interview visit to RHC there is an opportunity to discuss financial support and what this is likely to be available from the institution.

All staff involved in recruitment and admissions will receive on going updates and training regarding tuition fees and scholarships. Information will also be made available via UCAS.

The college provides IAG, Information, advice and guidance to perspective and existing students and is the holder of full MATRIX accreditation.

In summary, RHC is committed to removing barriers to Higher Education, whether they are physical, social, cultural or financial. We continue to work with and the community, as well as providing support to internal students wishing to progress to higher education, we are committed to monitoring our progress.