

## **WRITTEN MINISTERIAL STATEMENT**

### **RT HON DAVID WILLETTS, MINISTER OF STATE FOR UNIVERSITIES AND SCIENCE, DEPARTMENT FOR BUSINESS, INNOVATION AND SKILLS**

**10 FEBRUARY 2010**

#### **FAIR ACCESS TO HIGHER EDUCATION - LETTER TO THE DIRECTOR OF FAIR ACCESS, AND THE NATIONAL SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAMME**

My Rt Hon Friend the Secretary of State and I have today written to the Director of Fair Access setting our expectations about how he should approach the approval and monitoring of new Access Agreements for higher education institutions. This updates a draft guidance letter that was published on 7 December. A copy of today's letter is in the Libraries of both Houses.

The guidance to the Director sets out significantly increased expectations for the priority that institutions should be giving to fair access and widening participation, focusing more sharply on the outcomes of outreach and other activities, and less on the inputs and processes. In particular the government believes that progress over the last few years in securing fair access to the most selective universities has been inadequate, and that much more determined action now needs to be taken.

From September 2012, no institution will be able to levy a graduate contribution above £6,000 without an approved access agreement. Institutions will make their own proposals for the measures they will take and the ambitions they will set for themselves. The Director will take his own, independent decisions about each institution's application.

The Deputy Prime Minister has also announced today further details about the National Scholarship Programme. This is being published today on the Higher Education Funding Council for England's website, and I am placing copies in the Libraries of both Houses.

The National Scholarship Programme will provide financial assistance to students from disadvantaged backgrounds. Each eligible student will receive a benefit of not less than £3,000. All universities charging over £6,000 graduate contribution will be required to participate in the National Scholarship Programme and will commit more of their own resources towards helping to improve fair access. The government will contribute £50 million in financial year 2012-13; £100 million in 2013-14; and £150 million from 2014-15.