



HIGHER EDUCATION ACCESS AGREEMENT 2017/18

1. Introduction

1.1 The Heart of Worcestershire College is a large general Further Education College based on campuses in Worcester, Bromsgrove, Redditch and Malvern with further delivery taking place at community venues and in the workplace. The College's major catchment areas are Worcester, Redditch and Bromsgrove with a small minority of learners travelling from Birmingham. The Bromsgrove Campus includes the Artrix Community Theatre and the Harley-Davidson Motor Cycle Centre.

1.2 The College provides courses in a wide range of subject areas, with substantial Level 3 provision in arts, computing, engineering, childcare, health and social care, sport, public services, hairdressing and beauty, business studies and the Access to Higher Education programme. In addition, the College has employment-based training in several areas including health, care, motor vehicle and engineering. Most of the College's work is government-funded.

The College offers a wide range of higher education programmes, including Degree programmes in Law, Social Work and Management; Foundation Degree or HND/C programmes in early years, arts, media, engineering, computing, sport coaching, public services, law and business studies. Professional courses are offered in areas such as management and marketing.

1.3 The Heart of Worcestershire College has well established links with Staffordshire University, University of Wolverhampton, Birmingham City University and the University of Worcester. The College also has extensive collaboration to inform HE planning and curriculum from its work with third sector groups, Employers, Councils and other local/regional stakeholders.

- 1.4 Worcestershire has a population of around 600,000 and is largely a rural county, although nearly three-quarters of its population live in towns or Worcester city. The social and economic environment is generally favourable; however, areas of deprivation exist, including Redditch. Overall Worcestershire is ranked 116 out of 151 Primary Care Trusts in England according to the Index of Multiple Deprivation 2010 (1 = most deprived). However, there are thirteen LSOA areas which fall within the top 10% most deprived nationally: 6 in Worcester City, 2 in Wyre Forest, 4 in Redditch and 1 in Malvern Hills.
- 1.5 Unemployment in Worcestershire is below regional and national levels. However, the Redditch district has a higher level of unemployment than in the county and nationally. The percentage of the local population from minority ethnic groups is around 7% but is slightly higher in the Redditch district.
- 1.6 In Worcestershire, the percentage of pupils leaving school with more than five GCSE grades at A* to C, including English and Mathematics, is at 63%, around the national average. There are large fluctuations around this average on a school by school basis.
- 1.7 Much of the College's higher education (HE) provision is delivered at the St Wulstans building in Worcester and Osprey House in Redditch. These buildings are dedicated to HE, Access and Professional courses and both provide a high quality "university" environment. Delivery of higher education vocational provision, such as arts, media, computing and engineering takes place in the College's high quality specialist facilities in Redditch, Bromsgrove and Worcester.
- 1.8 In September 2015, the college enrolled 175 new entrants on full-time provision and 421 on part-time courses, across a range of directly and indirectly funded provision. Learner demographics for new entrants in 2015 are;
 - **Gender** - Full-time - 45% female, 55% male.
Part-time – 63% Female, 27% Male
 - **Ethnicity** - Black and other minority ethnic groups account for 20% of the FT population at the college and 8% of the PT student cohort, well above local regional demographics. This is well above the colleges target set in previous agreements of 10% from ethnic minorities.
 - **LDD/Disability** - Students with a listed disabilities and/or learning difficulty make up 17% of the full-time cohort and 16% of part-time learners. This compares favourably with national profiles for this cohort.
 - **Age** – 72% of Full-time students are under 25 and make –up 35% of part-time learners.

1.9 Due to the merger of the two institutions, (Worcester College of Technology and North East Worcestershire College), in August 2014 to form Heart of Worcestershire College, it was not possible to make comparison of cohorts against previous years due to the new mix of programmes. A new quality framework for all Higher Education provision at the college has now been established and will be adopted and adhered to for all future annual evaluations. This will include evaluations of participation, success and progression by the characteristics listed above. Evaluation of success at a whole institution level shows college provision performs well against sector benchmarks for success, satisfaction and participation as is evidenced above.

2. The College's commitment to fair access to higher education

2.1 The College is committed to ensuring that its course fees are fair, represent value for money and are reviewed annually. The College also commits to continuing its outreach support, particularly in Redditch where there is a history of low aspiration and low progression to HE. There are four census wards in Redditch and 3 in Worcester where participation is in POLAR 3 Quintile 1. The College also supports fair access to HE by providing potential learners with clear information about its fees and scholarships. The College is also looking to increase HE demand for part-time and mature students.

2.2 This document sets out the College's higher education course fees for the academic year 2016/17 and indicative information for subsequent years. In preparing this document, care has been taken to ensure that information from the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE) has been given due consideration.

2.3 This agreement applies to: Foundation Degree courses (FT and PT), HND/C Courses (FT and PT), the Degree course (FT and PT) and part-time students.

This agreement does not apply to:

- Non prescribed HE (HE funded by the Skills Funding Agency such as professional business courses)

2.4 Although students have not been directly consulted about this Access agreement, the College collects and acts on student views at all stages of their learning, including accessibility of publicity materials, standards of teaching, academic support, accommodation and teaching resources. All HE programmes have Student Ambassadors who ensure that students' views are shared with managers and actions followed up. Student Ambassadors are also members of key College management committees such as the HE Academic Board and the Equality and Diversity Committee.

2.5 The College also undertakes local market research to ensure that its HE programmes are competitively priced in the local market place, as part of this we will work closely with the Worcestershire LEP as well as the Greater Birmingham and Solihull LEP. The Principal sits on the Worcestershire and Greater Birmingham and Solihull LEP boards, which informs Higher Education planning.

2.6 Fees will rise where applicable in line with College and Government policy each year.

- 2.7 However, once students are enrolled on higher education courses at the College, they will have protection regarding fee changes when moving from one year of their programme to the next. In these cases, fee changes will be limited to increases due to inflation.
- 2.8 All UK and EU students are liable for the fees stated in this document. At the present time, the College has no overseas students and does not anticipate recruiting from overseas in the foreseeable future. However, overseas fees are given for each year in case this position changes.
- 2.9 The College anticipates that in 2017/18 it will spend 20% of the fee income above £6,000, around £52,000, on outreach, widening participation and improving success activity. Further institutional service costs from offering student support, equipment, enabling software, accessibility, monitoring and tracking of progression, will also support this initiative. The College continues to work with local schools pre-sixteen to build higher education ambitions which in turn will build future capacity and grow the applicant pool, in the 2016/17 academic year these will be targeted in areas with lower participation rates.

3. Fee limits for new students in 2017

- 3.1 In the 2017/18 academic year, the College will charge new entrant, full time undergraduate students (other than the Social Work Degree Course) a fee of approximately £6,760 per annum for all eligible courses.

From 2015/16, a new approach to part-time student fee rates was introduced so that fees are based on a pro-rata credit value basis.

- 3.2 The Degree in Social Work will be charged at £8,320 in 2017/18. This provision requires a higher level of validation, moderation and resource level, therefore leading to a higher cost base than the College's other undergraduate provision.

In general, Social Work students receive significant support from employers post qualification.

- 3.3 In 2017/18, overseas students will be charged a fee of £9,000 for a full-time course or £45 per taught hour for a part-time course. The college currently has no plans to enrol International Students.

4 Fees for continuing students in 2017/18

- 4.1 In 2017/18, all full time and part time students who commenced their studies in **September 2016** will be subject to the 2016/17 scheme plus inflation and will pay the fee of:

- Full time Foundation Degree and HND £6500
- Social Work Degree 2nd year £8000
- Part time £3,250
- Social Work Degree 3rd year students will pay £6,600
- BA/business Management top-up £6000

5 Fees for new students in future years

- 5.1 The College anticipates that students starting their HE studies at the College in 2018/19 onwards will pay fees that are in line with national trends and inflationary pressures.

6. Access measures

Analysis of performance in relation to student success and progression is at an early stage for the new organisation, Heart of Worcestershire College. Continuation and achievement rates are high and the positive impact of the work is recognised by its university partners and the students themselves through NSS results. The college has therefore placed an emphasis on outreach and methods to raise participation amongst in own L3 cohort and those in organisations locally to improve the levels of participation in certain districts as indicated by the POLAR data, mentioned in 2.1.

The college has a relatively high percentage of students with LDD or a disability in its annual cohort. These students are often the most disadvantaged for a variety of reasons. These students along with other targeted “vulnerable” groups are ones that the college is placing the greatest emphasis for support on programme to raise success and importantly improve progression outcomes. Whilst at the time of publication no specific results for progression for these learners can be drawn from the DLHE, college will seek to establish these metrics from September 2016/17 in order to identify effective and appropriate intervention measures going forward.

6.1 Outreach

Whilst it has become increasingly difficult for the college to talk directly to school audiences in the local area, due to a change in the way careers advice is provided in schools and a more restrictive environment for “competitor colleges”, the College will continue its current information and targeted recruitment activities for potential higher education students. This will include marketing and promotional activities for current students and local people (in particular young people, particularly those pre-sixteen) to raise aspirations and awareness of the benefits of participating in higher education.

Analysis indicates that college part-time provision continues to grow and meet the needs of employers and the employed in furthering their ambitions for attainment at higher education levels. Full-time numbers have levelled off around 170. College wishes to raise the aspiration of its own learners on Level 3 courses to continue in HE. The college has examined its portfolio to ensure there are progression pathways from L3 to HE. Analysis of progression data suggests that around 30-30% of L3 learners progress to Higher Education.

Examples of the type of outreach activities that the College expects to fund:

Continuation of existing measures

- The College continues to work with local schools pre-sixteen to build higher education ambitions which in turn will build future capacity and grow the applicant pool.

- An annual taster event takes place at the College which involves all local schools being brought to the College to participate in activities related to future FE and HE ambition. From 2016/17 a new “HE Taster Event” will also be added to this menu for internal and external students.
- Target marketing and other engagement activities to under represented groups including part-time and mature students.
- Supporting Level 3 students at the College to attend the annual Worcestershire Careers Fair; the College funds travel for around 300 Level 3 students a year to attend this event.
- Supporting Level 3 students to attend other events at local universities to raise their aspirations to HE.
- Providing advice and guidance evenings for Level 3 students and their parents to de-mystify the application process for HE and explain how students can access loans and scholarships to support them in their studies.
- Each year, in conjunction with local councillors and employers, the College provides an “Inspired to Work” event for over 300 year 5 and year 8 students from local schools. This event targets young people in local areas of highest need and raises aspirations to work and study.

New measures from September 2017

- A new focus on raising aspiration towards Higher Education for children in primary and secondary schools will be trialled.
- Increased promotion of pre-access and access to HE programmes has led to increased learner demand of these programmes at the College, which in turn will lead to an increased HE population through progression. In particular the college will seek to ameliorate any impact of the removal of bursary funding for those students undertaking health and social programmes, including Nursing. The college will also add new “Access to ...” routes for Law, Business and Teaching to encourage new applicants who will study at HE level here or elsewhere.
- Work is being undertaken with the University of Worcester to identify opportunities to work in partnership and collaboration in information, advice and guidance for the betterment of local communities. This may form part of a new network of collaborative outreach.
- The College is extending its outreach by providing an information event on Higher Education for school teachers and career advisers from local schools and colleges. This event raises awareness of higher education opportunities amongst school staff and recognises their role in influencing young people at an early age.

- College will examine models for new Higher and Degree Apprenticeships pathways, some in collaboration with existing University partners and others routes through HND/FD pathways. It is anticipated that this will increase the percentage of adult and part-time learners. Adult learners currently make up around 20% of college FT populations.
- A family–orientated Festival of Learning will seek to raise interest, knowledge and aspiration across generations in families. This outside event, will focus on de-mystifying and reducing any fears arising from low levels of awareness and knowledge of the current HE funding arrangements and the variety of study options available.
- It is anticipated that around £20,000 will be spent on this targeted outreach work in 2017/18

The activities with our Level 3 students have been shown to be successful in previous years, with increasing numbers of these students applying to and going to university each year. The college's UCAS application acceptance rate at 83%, is above the national average.

Events for pupils in middle schools and their teachers are designed to raise awareness of higher education and raise aspirations. Activities and discussions are intended to have high impact and be memorable, thereby encouraging further discussion and reinforcement of key messages back at school.

In all our outreach activities we ensure equality and diversity is promoted.

6.2 Student retention and success

The admission of students onto HE programmes at the College is outlined in the HE Admissions policy which is underpinned by the principles outlined in the QAA Quality Code (Part B, Chapter 2). Where relevant programmes also adhere to subject specific guidance e.g. in Social Work the Health and Care Professions Council's Standards of Education and Training and the College of Social Work's requirements.

Retention and achievement is monitored by course teams through tutorial schemes and in course committee meetings vulnerable students are identified and actions identified to support them. Exam Boards provide an opportunity for independent scrutiny through external examiners who question any areas of concern regarding achievement. This information is captured through annual monitoring reports and considered at College level through the Academic Board.

Where appropriate programmes have worked with HEIs to develop progression where students wish to obtain top up to degree status and have developed links with organisations to promote employability. Tracking students who have completed courses is a challenging task and new approaches are being trialled to improve our data on destinations of students, e.g. in some areas Facebook is being used to try and keep in touch with students more effectively to improve our understanding of progress longer term.

The college employs the Careers Group to capture Destinations of students. Due to a college merger in August 2014, results from Heart of Worcestershire leaving cohorts are not yet available.

Student success is celebrated at the end of each year by the much publicised and well attended HE Graduation ceremonies.

From 2016/17 a new HE Support Officer post will be funded from income raised by fees over £6,000 and other college funds to support learners from disadvantaged and vulnerable groups, including Looked After and Care Leavers, students with disabilities and those from targeted postcodes. In 17/18 this post will target support, either on-programme support, help with transition and help with progression based on upon the evaluation of the above cohort performance in 2015/16 and 2016/17. It is anticipated that this will costs around £30,000 to support this post and service.

6.3 Financial support for students

The College fully recognises the challenges faced by potential students and has a strong record of attracting local people into further and higher education from widening participation backgrounds.

Many HE students at the College have progressed internally from FE courses and have built up confidence in the College and its staff, enabling them to overcome barriers to progression to HE such as, low confidence and low aspirations whilst avoiding the costs of living away from home that would be incurred if they studied elsewhere.

The College recognises that the national increase in higher education fees from 2012/13 onwards is having a significant impact on local people who are considering higher education, particularly those in Redditch where there is a history of low participation in higher education. The college also recognises the outcomes of research from HEFCE and OFFA about the weak correlations between financial support and success or participation. In 2016/17 the college will run a financial bursary scheme, that will be for specific targeted groups; Looked After/Care Leavers, Carers, financially disadvantaged and those from low participation neighbourhoods. These will act as both a draw for participation and a measure to support those who struggle with the financial realities of living independently often for the first time.

6.4 For new and existing students starting in September 2016, the College will offer bursary support; maximum allocations of £2,500 for upto 50 students. This cohort will be monitored and measured for differences in success and continuation, against other control groups.

6.5 Students will be asked to demonstrate their level of need against set criteria. A panel of senior staff from the College will evaluate the applications and allocate the scholarships according to need. It will be made clear to students that this is a one-off payment and there is no guarantee that a student who receives a scholarship in 2015/16 will be allocated a scholarship in future years.

6.6 The College's eligibility criteria for a scholarship are:

- Normally resident in England
- Have a household income of less than £25,000 (assessed via the student finance application)
- Self funding, not sponsored by an employer, or the NHS or the Training and Development Agency for Schools.
- Looked After/Care Leaver
- Applicants with disabilities
- Applications from other target groups, ie, mature learners
- Resident of low HE participation neighbourhood, based on POLAR 3 data.
<http://www.hefce.ac.uk/analysis/yp/POLAR/Map.of.young.participation.areas/>

6.7 The scholarships will be advertised as an integral part of the application and admissions process; information for potential students will be available on the College's website and through induction.

6.9 The College also has financial assistance schemes for all students to assist in cases of severe hardship.

7 Targets and milestones

7.1 The College will aim to maintain the current completion rate and increase participation in higher education by underrepresented groups. These ambitions will cut across all of our provision both directly and indirectly funded, future evaluation of the success of these measures will both evaluate the impact across the whole of the HE portfolio as well as that for directly funded provision in isolation.

7.2 The current mix, (2015 Entrants), of students reflects the local community and national trends. College will continue to maintain this rich and diverse student population, which is in part, a result of the breadth of its portfolio and study patterns.

- **Mode of Study**
 - The college will seek to continue to increase the number of proportion of part-time students studying at the college, by a further 20 learners on 2015/16 entrants;
- **Gender**
 - Seek to increase male participation in part-time programmes, by 3% on 2016/17 enrolments
- **Ethnicity**
 - Black and other minority ethnic groups account for 20% of the FT population at the college and 8% of the PT student cohort, well above local regional demographics. This is well above the

colleges target set in previous agreements of 10% from ethnic minorities.

- The college will continue to target these groups through school activities in low participation neighbourhoods, although the impact of this action may not be realised in the next three years, or even directly by college itself, as they will be around raising aspiration not just studying at the College. It is anticipated that work with employers around apprenticeship programmes will also increase ethnic minority cohorts.
- **Disability**
 - Students with a listed disabilities and/or learning difficulty make up 17% of the full-time cohort and 16% of part-time learners. This compares favourably with national profiles for this cohort. College strategies around student support will seek to ensure that success rates for these learners in 2017/18 match or exceed those for students with disabilities.

8 Institutional monitoring and evaluation arrangements

- 8.1 Through the process of the merger and creation of the Heart of Worcestershire College a new structure and framework has been established for the evaluation, management and development of the Colleges' HE provision. Arrangements are in place to monitor and evaluate the impact of this agreement and HE provision across the institution through the College's Academic board (chaired by the Vice Principal (Curriculum), the Senior Leadership Team and the College's Corporation.

A whole institution level self-evaluation document is produced annually, which is built upon evaluations at course and subject area level. Existing College monitoring systems ensuring full equality and diversity of provision will continue under the guidance of the College's Equality and Diversity Committee.

- 8.2 This policy is subject to a yearly report on effectiveness and monitoring to OFFA.
- 8.3 In December each year, the College reviews the impact of its HE fee policy on the recruitment of HE students and reports its findings to HEFCE.

9 Information for prospective students

- 9.1 Clear and accessible admissions information is provided on the College web site. On application a letter will be sent to each student explaining the level of fees, how payments are made, payment systems, the level of fees to be paid each year and financial assistance schemes.
- 9.2 All FT students will attend a joint induction day for HE programmes and fee issues and support will be explained further on this day.
- 9.3 A higher education prospectus is published annually and distributed to feeder schools and throughout the locality/region and target areas.

- 9.4 We have specific HE open evenings and events to encourage and promote HE take up.
- 9.5 All prospective HE students are given support, guidance and advice in choosing their HE institution and completion of the UCAS application
- 9.6 The College is committed to sharing timely information with UCAS and the SLC regarding fees and financial support.

10 Equality and Diversity statement

- 10.1 The College has considered the impact of this Access Statement in line with the requirements of the Equality Act 2010 and has concluded that there is no adverse impact on any group of people who share a protected characteristic (as defined by the Act). The College will continue to monitor the impact of this Access Statement.
- 10.2 The evaluation of the success of the above measures will be examined by the college's Equality Group, and included in the Equality Action Plan. These matters are reported to and monitored by college senior staff and Governors.

11 Student Consultation

- 11.1 Student representatives are met termly at a whole institution level as well as separately at course level. Student representative are also present at the HE Academic Board, where Offa Agreements and other aspects of the HE quality improvement framework are discussed and approved.
- 11.2 Students will be consulted about the further implementation of the above agreement and included in analysis of the evaluations of in year success measures so that they can contribute to the further development of the scheme in 2017/18 and beyond.

Kelvin Nash
Vice Principal - Curriculum and Quality
16th April 2016

Summary of Higher Education Fees 2016/17 to 2018/19

	2017/18	2018/19 (indicative)	2019/20 (indicative)
BA Social Work 1st year	£8320	£8650	£8800
BA Social Work 2nd year	£8000	£8320	£8650
BA Social Work 3rd year	£8000	£8000	£8320
Foundation degree Full Time 1st year	£6760	£8000	£8000
Foundation degree Full Time 2nd year	£6500	£6760	£8000
HND 1st year	£6760	£8000	£8000
HND 2nd year	£6500	£6760	£8000
Part-time (new start)	£3380	£4000	£4000
Part-time continuing	£3250	£3380	£4000
Re-sits: Study and Assessment		Registration fee set by awarding organisation; plus study charged at part-time pro-rata rate per credit.	Registration fee set by awarding organisation; plus study charged at part-time pro-rata rate per credit.
Re-sits: Assessment Only		Registration fee set by awarding organisation; plus administration fee of £20 per assessment	Registration fee set by awarding organisation; plus administration fee of £20 per assessment
Overseas	£7280	£9000	£9500

Notes:

- 1) All UK and EU students are liable for the fees stated in this document. At the present time, the College has no overseas students and does not anticipate recruiting from overseas in the foreseeable future. However, overseas fees are given for each year in case this position changes.
- 2) The College does not have students undertaking sandwich placements or study years abroad.