

Access and Participation Plan Summary 2020-21 to 2024-25

This document highlights the work Heart of Worcestershire College does to increase the number of people who enter higher education and their support to successfully achieve. We have three broad aims;

- more students receive guidance on and then access Higher education,
- students from any starting point at the College are able to achieve equally as compared against their peers,
- learners are supported to progress into high-earning potential positions or higher study.

1. Assessing Our Performance

Annually we review the achievements of our HE students. This Office for Students, OfS, (the Government body that monitors higher education in the United Kingdom), asked all providers to re-visit, make changes to their existing Access and Participation Plans based on the most up-to-date information. Details of this analysis, can be found in our full Access and Participation Plan report, available on the website.

2. HE Course Fees and Financial Support

We are maintaining our fees for our higher education courses. This is £8,000 for our Higher National Diplomas and Foundation Degrees and £8650 for our BA (Hons) Social Work course, our part-time courses have a maximum fee of £4,000. See HE Fees Section on the College website.

Financial Support

The College has created a “BOOST” financial bursary scheme, to raise participation and to impact upon student support. 89% of students who receive financial support continue in their studies, which indicates a positive beneficial outcome of the “BOOST” scheme. Qualitative feedback shows that students value the support and the termly payments.

New and existing students will be offered financial support with maximum awards of up to £1500. The College’s eligibility criteria for a Boost award are as follows:

- Normally resident in England
- Studying on a Heart of Worcestershire College validated Higher Education course
- Have a household income of less than £25,000
- In receipt of Student Finance England Funding

The College also maintains a hardship fund available to assist students suffering severe hardship. The award is dependent on support requested and individual circumstances. Please contact Student Finance via the College website or ask your tutor if you want to know more.

3. Personal Support for Students

Holistic Personal Study Support

The College employs a Higher Education Engagement Officer that works full-time solely supporting Higher Education students. This post supports students with mental health and resilience, those with declared disabilities, help with study skills, and the broader issues of student engagement and

representation. This post identifies students at risk early and then offers support tailored to that need at key points in the academic year. Some students meet weekly, others like to wait until they need them on a particular subject; like planning an assessment or referencing techniques.

4. Setting New Targets

As well as maintaining the above financial and personal support, which we know through examining the success of students who take up these services are impactful we will broaden and direct our work, in increasing participation in higher education and evaluate the impact of those activities that support students to achieve and progress.

Our analysis, and that shown in the OfS datasets, shows that we have very few “Performance Gaps” between different learner groups. This means that students who declare a disability, people from a variety of backgrounds, and all walks of life, perform relatively equally. We are very proud of this. We know that some of this success comes from the impactful support we have mentioned above and the work of our lecturers and tutors. But by examining further, these differences, between groups at college and these groups nationally, provided by OfS, we have identified three new targets.

1 - Access – To encourage more 18 - 21yr old Worcestershire students, to progress to a higher education programme.

We will be trialling work in, and in conjunction with, local schools, to improve GCSE attainment as a part of a secure end to their school and college-based studies and a platform for progression to Higher Education. This will include activities to boost performance and aspiration towards higher education as a pathway to a career, as well as espousing the benefit of local higher education offers.

2 - Success –To continue the work in improving continuation rates for our part-time students.

We have already made some significant impact in increasing the number of our online part-time FD Payroll Management and Pensions Administration students who stay in learning and move closer towards completing their qualification after their first year, some of these students who are mostly employed, choose to take a break in learning for example. We have already made improvement, in this rate over the last three years, so that all gaps are now reduced to lower levels

3 - Progression – To further improve the progression to higher positions for part-time learners into increased salaried positions and career advancement generally.

We will increase the amount of careers input, advice and guidance all our HE students receive, but will also focus on this part-time learner group.

5. Strategic Approach – 2022 - 2025

The Office for Students have raised other strategic themes they wish all HE providers to respond to. These fall into three main strands;

- **Modularisation** – This is about creating smaller chunks of learning that students can do over more prolonged periods. We will begin creating these modules, some will be online, some face-

to-face and some mixed delivery. We will work with our University and other partners, like employers, in developing this for the sector as well as ourselves.

- **Degree Apprenticeships** – The College has a good apprenticeship offer and portfolio now, but it is recognised that the array of Degree apprenticeships routes is limited, so we will seek to expand these options over the next three years.
- **Increasing School Attainment** – The OfS has placed a lot of importance on the level of GCSE performance at school being a key indicator of performance at Higher Education. Whilst we have seen the research that underpins this judgement, we may differ in the view on the best place to focus activity. The OfS have asked all providers to focus on improving attainment at Schools, thus we will work with local partners; schools universities, employers, etc, in increasing this work. However, we also know the importance of this work with our own Post 16 students in both raising GCSE performance and their appreciation of the benefit of HE, so we will focus work on this them in college too.

6. Monitoring Progress

The College's Higher Education Vision and the role of our APP in it, is monitored and reviewed regularly to ensure we continually work with professional, academic, business, staff and student partners to create relevant, inspiring and empowering higher education outcomes.

7. Student Consultation

Students have been directly consulted about the ethos of and planned activities within the College's Access and Participation Plan, in relation to FEEs and financial support for example. 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. HE programmes have course representatives who ensure that students' views are shared with managers, for actioning.

8. Evaluation

- We will work with other HE providers, both locally and nationally to monitor and evaluate the work we do in Access and Participation. We will use these networks to share and learn from other practice in Access and Participation Work.
- We will develop key measurements, like progression rates to Higher education, improved mathematical or English skills and competency and raised aspiration in our work with schools and other groups in the community.
- In relation to the success and impact of our financial support, we will use the Office for Students datasets, to see if our work is having an impact on improving the continuation and overall success rates of our learners.
- We will develop our own process, to work alongside that of the Higher Education Statistics Agency to monitor the progression to employment outcomes for our learners.
- Most importantly of all we will discuss, evaluate and plan in association with our students.

9. Contact

Contact If you would like to know more or discuss our Access and Participation plans, please contact Peter Robinson, Vice Principal – Curriculum and Standards - probinson@howcollege.ac.uk