

Access and Participation Plan Summary 2025 to 2028-29

This document explains the targeted activity Heart of Worcestershire College supports to increase the number of people who enter higher education and successfully achieve. We have three broad aims;

- more students receive guidance on and then access Higher education,
- students are able to achieve equitably as compared to their peers,
- learners are supported to progress into high-earning positions or higher study.

1. Assessing Learner Performance

Annually we review the achievements of our HE students. The Office for Students, OfS, (the Government body that monitors higher education in the United Kingdom), asks all providers to re-visit, and adapt existing Access and Participation Plans based on the review of progress and most up-to-date information. Details of the analysis undertaken 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 £8,500 for our Higher National Diplomas and Foundation Degrees; our part-time courses have a maximum fee of £4,250. See HE Fees Section on the College website for more details.

Financial Support

The College has created a “BOOST” financial bursary scheme, to raise participation and to impact upon student support. Annually, our analysis shows there is a positive impact of the “BOOST” scheme on student success and participation. 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 £2000. 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 to solely support Higher Education students. This post supports students on mental well-being and resilience, those with declared disabilities, study skills, and barriers to participation and representation. This post identifies students at risk early, as well as direct requests from students and then provides tailored packages across the academic year. Some students meet weekly, others based upon need, such as for

a particular module, or planning an assessment or referencing techniques.

4. Setting New Targets

As well as maintaining the above impactful financial and personal support, we will broaden and target our work, to further increase participation and success in higher education for targeted groups and evaluate the impact of those activities to inform future planning.

Our analysis, and that shown in the OfS datasets, shows that the College is highly effective in supporting learners that have lower levels of achievement nationally. This includes those with disabilities, those from lower socio-economic backgrounds and minority ethnic groups that are under-represented in higher education. We are very proud of this. This results in our rates being above other national rates for these groups of learners. We know, from student feedback, that this success also comes from the guidance and support offered by our lecturers and tutors. The College wishes to continue and expand upon this work for this current Access and Participation Plan and as such has developed new priority areas and targets. These are shown below under the main aspects they aim to improve.

1 - Access – To encourage more 18 - 21yr old and Adult learners, to study on a higher education programme.

We will work in partnerships with our local universities to run activities both in schools and on-campus to highlight the benefit of higher education in entering a high-earning career. We will focus on geographical areas of low participation and groups that face significant barriers like those with a care background or those that receive Free School Meals. We will increase access to careers advice for Adults both in person and online.

2 - Success –To build on good practice in high continuation rates to further improve completion rates for all learners.

Our Higher Education Engagement Officer will target groups of learners who sometimes face additional barriers during their studies to help them overcome and progress to success.

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 female students from across all subjects to enhance their interview preparation and applications.

5. Strategic Approach – 2025 - 2029

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 and Higher Apprenticeships** – The College has a good apprenticeship offer, but it is recognised that the array of Degree and Higher apprenticeship routes is more 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 Mission and Strategy, and the role of our APP in it, is monitored and reviewed regularly by the College's EDI strategy group. Through this the College's resources and staff are coordinated and planned performance monitored. This group will also examine ways to improve the evaluation approaches we take to judge the impact of our work and spread good practice.

7. Student Consultation

Students have been directly consulted about the ethos of and planned activities within the College's Access and Participation Plan. 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. This work is overseen by the Higher Education Engagement Officer

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 and College internal datasets, to examine the 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 – Higher Education, Adult and Curriculum Development - probinson@howcollege.ac.uk