

Nelson and Colne College

2019-20 access and participation plan

Assessment of current performance

Nelson and Colne College is based within the Borough of Pendle. It is the only provider of tertiary education in the Borough and almost all its Higher Education students are drawn from the Borough and neighbouring areas in Pennine Lancashire.

Pendle Borough and the wider Pennine Lancashire region are areas of economic and social deprivation. Both are areas of comparatively low participation in higher education. 9.7% of postcodes in the Borough of Pendle are in Polar4 quintile 1, and 45.6% are in quintiles 1 and 2.

The Pendle Profile (Borough of Pendle, 2015) states that 22.3% of Pendle residents are from ethnic minority backgrounds, which compares to 9.7% for Lancashire and 12.0% for North West England.

Student populations

The total number of College students engaged in higher education is only 8.6% of the number studying at level 3. While many successful level 3 students choose to leave the area for their higher education, this proportion suggests that there is room for increases in internal progression rates into higher education.

Currently, 52% of the College's higher education students study full-time and 48% part-time.

Student Profiles

As the only tertiary education provider in Pendle, the College's further education student mix closely matches that of school leavers in its catchment area. It is therefore significant that its student profile at level 3 is different from that of its higher education students

	Level 3	HE	Difference
Polar 4 Quintile 1 & 2	39.1%	45.6%	+6.5%
Polar 4 Quintile 1 only	13.6%	15.0%	+1.4%
Young*	72.2%	40.6%	-31.5%
Ethnic Minorities	34.3%	21.9%	-12.4%
Female	56.0%	38.1%	-17.9%
Disability	7.8%	3.8%	-4.1%

* for level 3 students the 'Young' figure is the percentage of learners studying at level 3 who are aged 19 or under. For higher education, 'Young' refers to students aged 21 or under.

From this information, the College concludes that it is currently performing well in terms of engaging students from low participation postcodes and from ethnic minorities. Unusually, the College's performance in recruiting mature students is very good, and needs to be balanced by efforts to increase young participation. The College concludes that there is scope to increase ethnic minority participation further and that there are other areas where improvements could be made.

In particular, the College aims to:

- Increase proportion of young entrants to higher education
- Increase the proportion progressing from its own level 3 programmes.
- Increase the proportion of higher education students from ethnic minority backgrounds
- Increase female participation in higher education
- Support access to higher education for disabled students
- Promote progression through the levels of higher education.

Evidence

The College currently has the best performance:

- in England for A Levels, based on progress scores
- in its sub-region for vocational studies, based on progress scores
- in England for 16-18 learner achievement at all levels
- in England for overall Apprenticeship achievement at all ages and levels

and is confident in its ability to evaluate its own performance.

It should be noted, however, that there are some areas of interest where the College has insufficient data to be able reflect reliably. These include:

- Participation by:
 - carers
 - people estranged from their families
 - people from Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities
 - refugees
 - people with mental health problems, specific learning difficulties and/or who are on the autism spectrum
 - children from military families.
- Success rates in higher education
- Progression through the levels of higher education

This is the College's first Access and Participation Plan and it did not previously have an Access Agreement with the Office for Fair Access. Until recently it offered only two small higher education programmes both in very specialist areas and its expansion into more general higher education dates only from 2017.

This expansion has been very successful but, while the College can accurately reflect on current participation in its Higher Education provision, the volume of evidence needed to underpin valid judgements on its performance on progression

and success is not yet available. Equally, there is insufficient historic evidence to inform decisions on what actions might have the greatest impact on access and participation.

The strategies and actions set out in this plan are based on the limited evidence available and the College's judgement of what is likely to be effective.

The College also has too little historic data from which to set internal targets for non-continuation or success. In order to have baseline targets for non-continuation, the College has used as a reference point the HESA non-continuation benchmarks of the universities with the most similar intakes to that of the College. These have first-year, full-time, undergraduate non-continuation benchmarks of approximately 10%, and part-time benchmarks in excess of 20%.

The data needed to provide these insights is being collected year-on-year and as the available evidence base develops the College will evaluate the effectiveness of the measures in this plan as part of its monitoring and evaluation. It may review its targets in the light of experience.

Ambition and strategy

Ambitions

Widening participation underpins all College activity and is core to the College's vision. It is determined to ensure that students from under-represented groups and those from disadvantaged backgrounds have fair access to higher education. A key aspect of this is to build aspiration and achievement through a continuing focus on access, participation, student success and progression. The College has a proactive approach to supporting students to maximise their achievements.

The College's ambition is broadly to increase the volume of its higher education and halve the disparities between its level 3 and higher education profiles over a period of five years from the introduction of this Plan.

Annual milestones will be set on the expectation that progress towards these targets will be approximately equal in each year of the plan.

Strategies

Access

The College's access strategy has several strands:

- 1) To provide means by which adult returners to education can access vocationally relevant higher education.

This is to address a significant shortage of skills at level 4 and above in the local workforce. (Only 23.9% of the working age population have a qualification at level 4 or higher, compared to 30.9% for the North West and 36.0% in Great Britain as a whole.) This is addressed in part by provision of

flexible programmes for those academically ready for higher study, and in part by appropriate preparation courses at level 3.

- 2) To remain vocationally relevant by maximal engagement with local and regional employers.

The College has a wide range of partner employers who are engaged in providing advice on curriculum development and content, providing live briefs for assessments and project work and who participate in programme review and evaluation processes.

- 3) Engagement with level 3 learners

The College is the only tertiary provider in Pendle, so all of the Borough's level 3 learners are students at the College. The College seeks actively to engage all its level 3 learners in informed consideration of progression to higher education, whether at the College or elsewhere.

- 4) Engagement with Schools

The College works with all the high schools in Pendle and many in the surrounding boroughs. Schools liaison staff engage with learners in years 9 to 11 to raise awareness of, and participation in, both further and higher education.

Success

The College's experience of its higher education is that the overwhelming majority of students who remain engaged with their studies to the end of their programmes are successful, and that their results generally reflect their abilities.

However, ensuring that students remain engaged and reach the end of their programme is a key priority. Given the impact on both the public purse and students' own finances, it is important to minimise the number of students who enter higher education and are unsuccessful.

Experience suggests that the vast majority of those who drop out of the College's higher education programmes do so for non-academic reasons. There is no evidence to date to suggest that any course-related changes would have a significant impact on non-continuation rates. The College, therefore, aims to support continuation by doing what it can to address the non-academic reasons for withdrawals. While some reasons for withdrawals are intensely personal (e.g. ill health or employment changes) for which the College can offer little mitigation, the largest preventable reason for non-continuation is financial stress. We have a significant number of students who have no access to funding beyond student loans and struggle to afford to continue with their studies.

The College has therefore concluded that the greatest single contribution it could make to student retention and success is to provide a flexible means to address financial stress.

The second element of the College's success strategy is to provide wrap-around support services to complement students' academic studies. These will be targeted at supporting students to achieve the best possible results at the end of their studies.

Progression

The College aims to promote progression through higher education to level 6 and beyond, and to promote progression to graduate or professional employment on an equal-esteem basis. This will be achieved through its internal processes in tutorials, etc. and through close collaboration with its partner employers and universities. The ambition in these processes is to raise students' aspirations to progress as far as possible in education and/or employment both for their own sakes and for the benefit of the local economy.

Collaboration

The College has academic partnerships with the University of Cumbria and the University of Huddersfield. The University of Huddersfield partnership relates only to programmes in education. For these programmes, the University provides opportunities for staff and students across its partnerships to meet at the University to take part in joint activities. The College values these and always takes up opportunities to work with the University in this way.

The collaboration with the University of Cumbria is wider and deeper. This partnership provides College students with opportunities to join higher education programmes at the College, to join programmes at the university and to take part in other academic activities. These include opportunities for university staff to visit and advise students on level 3 programmes, support for students on College higher education programmes and access to University departments and research activities. The College is keen to develop these types of collaboration for the benefit of all.

Monitoring and Evaluation

The implementation and operation of this plan will be monitored and evaluated by a committee of staff and students made up of:

- The College's Director of Higher Education
- Representatives of the staff team administering the plan.
- The student representatives from all higher education programmes.

If these student representatives do not reflect the range of backgrounds of the wider student body, additional members will be appointed by the Director of Higher Education to ensure that student representation on the committee does reflect the wider student body.

The committee will meet once in each semester and will produce an annual evaluative report to the College's Senior Leadership team.

The terms of reference of this committee will ensure that its deliberations are focused on impact in terms of:

- improved access

- continuation
- attainment
- progression to postgraduate study and graduate employment
- expenditure from hardship funds

They will also require an annual Equality Impact Assessment to be produced.

Progress towards the targets of this plan will be measured annually by analysis of College student data and comparison, where relevant, with published data for other institutions.

All personal data provided to the committee will be anonymised.

This analysis will make use of the tools previously provided by the Office for Fair Access, and of any replacements issues by the Office for Students in the assessment of the impact of the measures taken under this plan.

Following this analysis, an evaluative report will be provided to the College's Senior Leadership Team that considers progress against milestones, identifies as far as is possible which actions are producing positive results and which are not, and makes recommendations of actions necessary to address any underachievement. This report will also consider wider College practice and make recommendations about the evolution of targets and practice, and on potential updating of this plan.

Student Views

The College does not currently have a Students' Union, so this Plan was drawn up in consultation with a focus group of current higher education students. Student representation in monitoring and review processes is provided for under 'Monitoring and Evaluation' above.

Equality and Diversity

The College has long established and successful equality and diversity practices that are embedded throughout College activities, especially within its admissions and student support processes. It is committed to discharging all its duties under the Equality Act 2010 and related legislation.

The College's performance on equality and diversity is monitored by an Equality and Diversity Working Group that is responsible for driving the equality and diversity strategy for the College, updating and monitoring its Equality Action Plan, completing equality impact assessments and monitoring progress.

Details of College policy in this area are published on the College's website along with statistical data showing its current level of performance.

The Equality and Diversity impact of this plan will be the subject of an Equality Impact Assessment produced as part of Monitoring and Evaluation above. This assessment will be passed to the working group to inform the College's wider deliberations on this matter.

Access, student success and progression measures

Access

The College offers an Access to Higher Education programme which enables students to undertake pre-entry qualifications allowing progression to higher education. This is currently offered only in selected subjects but will be expanded over the life of this Plan to provide progression routes, particularly for adult returners to education, into all of the College's higher education provision.

Employer engagement is key to the College's plans. Outreach activities under this plan will help ensure that its higher education remains relevant and up to date, and will underpin activities to ensure that our higher education leavers are employment-ready.

As a Further Education College, student progression is core to the College's approach. Students at level 3 are provided with timely information, advice and guidance on access to higher education. This is done through tutorials, through special events at which higher education providers visit the College to speak to students, and through the College's higher education partnerships.

Other planned access activities include:

- student workshops for level 3 learners encouraging research into higher education opportunities, the advantages of studying locally and the College higher education offer
- higher education representation at year 9, 10 and 11 options and parents evenings to offer advice and guidance to post-entry students and parents
- link activities with local schools, particularly through the College's sponsorship of the Pendle Education Trust, to promote an understanding of higher education in students studying at key stage 4.
- support for staff who tutor level 3 groups within the College in understanding the opportunities for their students to progress to higher education and the requirements for progression
- participation of higher education teaching staff in level 3 tutorial programmes to raise aspiration, ambition and achievement to support the transition to higher education
- attendance at a range of local and regional higher education events
- open events that involve community engagement from local employers, impartial careers information, advice and guidance offered through a specialist team
- assistance with UCAS applications, personal statements and financial support

Success

In the light of recent research, the College does not believe that the creation of a formula-based bursary scheme would have a significant impact on student access, retention or success, and therefore does not propose to introduce one. However, it does encounter students who are at risk of dropping out of their studies for financial reasons.

To address these needs, it will create a Higher Education Student Support fund accessible to all higher education students who find themselves under financial stress or who are in need of resources or support that are beyond their means.

Criteria for the approval of grants and/or loans from the fund will be set and published annually. These criteria will not limit the scope of potential applications, but will prioritise areas such as:

- Support for disabled students in matters not covered by funding from the Disabled Students Allowance
- Meeting specific course and living costs which are not already met from other sources
- Supporting dependents whilst studying
- Supporting students who may be estranged from their families
- Providing emergency payments for unexpected financial crises
- Identifying help for students who may be considering giving up their course because of financial problems.

In addition to these financial measures, the College will provide:

- curriculum tutorials to support retention, success and progression
- access to VLE systems to support student retention, success and progression
- study skill sessions
- health and wellbeing support
- advice and guidance on financial support, including access to the Student Support Fund

Progression

In order to support progression into higher education, through the levels of higher education and into employment, the College will provide:

- student workshops for higher education students to explore progression opportunities to honours level and beyond
- joint activities with higher education partners
- group and one to one support for students on progression routes into employment, support and advice on CVs, interviews and how to be competitive in the job market
- employer and industry based talks and industrial visits

The College has very close relationships with a wide range of local and regional employers. These links will be maintained and strengthened to ensure that students benefit from relevant employment advice.

Investment

Fees

The College will set fees annually on a course-by-course basis as part of its fee policy review process.

The full-time fee charged in 2019/20 will not exceed £9,000.

Part-time fees will be charged pro rata for the volume of study undertaken.

Fees will be increased annually in line with the RPI-X index, subject to any applicable statutory caps.

The fees individual students are charged will not rise for any other reason during their studies on that programme, even if the fee charged to new starters on the same programme is raised as part of the annual review.

The level of fees to be charged for particular courses in each year will be set out clearly in marketing materials, detailed on the College website, stated in offer letters and explicit in enrolment paperwork so that students know the fees they will be charged prior to accepting a place.

This information will include an estimate of future inflation-linked fee rises, based on Bank of England forecasts for RPI-X. This information will also appear in the College's fee policy.

Access and Participation Fund

The additional revenue generated under this plan will be calculated as the difference between the fee income actually received in an academic year and the maximum that could have been charged had this plan not been in place. 25% of this additional revenue will be allocated to an Access and Participation Fund to support the College's work in supporting the aims of this plan.

Investment

The value of the Access and Participation fund in any year will depend on the precise numbers of students enrolled on programmes in each of the fee bands.

Consequently, it is not possible to give exact figures for how this money will be invested. However, it is possible to list activities to be supported and the target proportions of the fund to be allocated to each.

The fund will be used approximately as follows:

Activity	Subcategory	% of spending	2019/20 estimate*
Supporting access	N/A	50	£51,750

Supporting retention and success	Hardship funding	25	£25,875
	Other Activities	10	£10,350
Supporting progression	N/A	15	£15,525

* The exact value of these funds will depend on the level of recruitment and on course-by-course fee decisions.

Provision of information to students

Prospective students will be informed of the fees for all years of their courses:

- On the course information pages of the College website
- On course leaflets and in college brochures
- In letters / emails confirming offers of places
- At the time of enrolment

The information on the College website and contained in brochures will include details of the college policy relating to inflationary increases and all/any support available to students.

Details of the Higher Education Student Support Fund availability, the criteria to be used to determine grants / loans from the fund, and application forms for grants will be available to students online from the College website and/or Virtual Learning Environment.

The approved Access and Participation Plan will be published on the College website.

Current students will have access to all of this information via the College website and through the College's Virtual Learning Environment. Details of where this information can be found will be signposted in course handbooks and in tutorials.

* course type not listed.

Full-time and part-time course fee levels for 2019-20 entrants.

Please enter inflationary statement in the free text box below.

Subject to any statutory limits, fees will rise annually in line with the RPI-X

Full-time course type:	Additional information:	Course fee:
First degree	All	£9,000
Foundation degree	All	£9,000
Foundation year / Year 0	All	
HNC / HND	All	£9,000
CertHE / DipHE	All	£9,000
Postgraduate ITT	All	£9,000
Accelerated degree	All	£10,800
Sandwich year	All	£1,800
Erasmus and overseas study years	All	£1,350
Other		*
Franchise full-time course type:	Additional information:	Course fee:
First degree		*
Foundation degree		*
Foundation year / Year 0		*
HNC / HND		*
CertHE / DipHE		*
Postgraduate ITT		*
Accelerated degree		*
Sandwich year		*
Erasmus and overseas study years		*
Other		*
Part-time course type:	Additional information:	Course fee:
First degree	- All	£6,750
Foundation degree	- All	£6,750
Foundation year / Year 0	- All	£6,750
HNC / HND	- All	£6,750
CertHE / DipHE	- All	£6,750
Postgraduate ITT	- All	£6,750
Accelerated degree		*
Sandwich year		*
Erasmus and overseas study years		*
Other		*

Table 8a - Statistical targets and milestones relating to your applicants, entrants or student body

Reference number	Stage of the lifecycle (drop-down menu)	Main target type (drop-down menu)	Target type (drop-down menu)	Description (500 characters maximum)	Is this a collaborative target? (drop-down menu)	Baseline year (drop-down menu)	Baseline data	Yearly milestones (numeric where possible, however you may use text)					Commentary on your milestones/targets or textual description where numerical description is not appropriate (500 characters maximum)
								2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23	
T16a_01	Access	Mature	Other statistic - Mature (please give details in the next column)	To increase the proportion of young entrants to 55% of the HE intake while increasing mature entrant numbers. The targets and baseline numbers given are for young entrants. This data will be gathered from internal records.	No	2017-18	40.60%	43.50%	48.00%	52.20%	54.40%	55.00%	
T16a_02	Access	Ethnicity	Other statistic - Other (please give details in the next column)	To increase the proportion of ethnic minority entrants to HE to 28%. This data will be gathered from internal records.	No	2017-18	21.90%	23.10%	25.10%	26.80%	27.70%	28.00%	
T16a_03	Access	Gender	Other statistic - Other (please give details in the next column)	To increase the proportion of female entrants to HE to 47%. This data will be gathered from internal records.	No	2017-18	38.10%	39.90%	42.70%	45.30%	46.60%	47.00%	
T16a_04	Success	State school	Other statistic - Other (please give details in the next column)	At least one third of students successfully completing a qualification at level 4 or level 5 should progress to study at the next highest level. This data will be gathered from internal records.	No	2017-18	<10%	10%	15%	20%	25%	33%	
T16a_05	Access	State school	Other statistic - Mature (please give details in the next column)	In conjunction with university partners, employers and other agencies, as appropriate, maintain sustained outreach to potential mature students living in disadvantaged areas. This will be by means of targeted outreach activities, open events, workshops, taster events, etc.	Yes	2017-18	73	83	95	108	120	130	Increase in the absolute number of entrants from disadvantaged postcodes (Polar quintiles 1 & 2).

Table 8b - Other milestones and targets.

Reference Number	Select stage of the lifecycle	Main target type (drop-down menu)	Target type (drop-down menu)	Description (500 characters maximum)	Is this a collaborative target?	Baseline year	Baseline data	Yearly milestones (numeric where possible, however you may use text)					Commentary on your milestones/targets or textual description where numerical description is not appropriate (500 characters maximum)
								2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23	

Optional commentary on milestones.

This box is character-limited to 1000 characters; however, we are happy for you to upload additional 'supporting information' as a separate Word/pdf document.