

Annex A - 2020-21 access and participation plan provider template

**Bishop Auckland College
2020-21 access and participation plan**

Assessment of current performance

Bishop Auckland College is committed to the continuous improvement of all its areas of operation. We are particularly focussed on widening participation and addressing any gaps or under-representation of students in any particular category.

Context

Bishop Auckland College is located in south west Durham in a semi rural location. Qualification levels across County Durham as a whole are below those both regionally and nationally with 30.2% of adults qualified to NVQ4 or above, north east 31.7% and nationally 38.6%. Earnings are 90% of that elsewhere in the UK and job density at 0.59 is well below the national rate of 0.84, consequently unemployment is higher than the regional and national levels. (NOMIS 2017) Despite the most recent English Indices of Multiple Deprivation 2015 Statistical Release indicating that the north east is in the seventh decile in terms of deprivation, when considered at ward level the College is at the heart of an area with deprivation in the top 10% nationally. This correlates with the findings of the National Collaborative Outreach project which has highlighted the College as being in a cold spot for progression to higher education of young people from disadvantaged wards.

Bishop Auckland College

Set within this context, the College has developed its higher education offer to offer an articulated progression route in each of its curriculum areas. The semi-rural nature of the area means that public transport arrangements can present a barrier to students wishing to access higher education on a non-residential basis at one of the area's city based universities. The College provides a local solution to this issue and support with transport costs.

Students from areas of low higher education participation

The College has an excellent track record of providing accessible higher education for all students. Using POLAR data; 32% full time and 33% part-time students are from Quintile 1 neighbourhoods (32% overall); 42% full time and 29% part time students are from Quintile 2 neighbourhoods (38% overall); 10% full time and 14% part-time students are from Quintile 3 neighbourhoods (12% overall). This reflects the 'local' nature of the student cohort and the demographic of this particular area in County Durham. The data shown below is extracted from the October 2018 TEF metrics and highlights an increase in recruitment of 11% from 2017 with the total proportion of students from POLAR 1 and 2 remaining constant. The College is located in a POLAR 1 area with the norm being 21.4% of young people progressing to higher education; the College is performing well in this context.

IMD data for the whole student cohort again highlights a greater proportion of students from areas of high deprivation and low higher education participation with 75% of students coming from the two highest areas of deprivation on the IMD.

		Full-time	% of total	Part-time	% of total	Total
Overall	Headcount	65	33%	135	67%	200
	FTE	65	39%	103	61%	168

	Full-time	Part-time	Total
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		Headcount	%	Headcount	%	Headcount	%
Level of study	PG-UG boundary	0	0%	25	19%	25	13%
	First degree	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%
	Other UG	65	100%	110	81%	175	87%
Age	Under 21	30	47%	20	15%	50	26%
	21 to 30	25	36%	50	38%	75	38%
	Over 30	10	17%	65	47%	75	37%
Ethnicity	White	65	100%	130	97%	195	98%
	Black	0	0%	0	1%	0	1%
	Asian	0	0%	0	1%	0	1%
	Other	0	0%	0	1%	0	1%
	Unknown	0	0%	0	1%	0	1%
Sex	Male	35	57%	25	20%	65	32%
	Female	30	43%	105	81%	135	68%
	Other	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%
Disability	Yes	10	12%	10	9%	20	10%
	No	60	88%	120	91%	180	90%
Entry qualifications	HE-level	5	11%	40	31%	50	25%
	High tariff	5	6%	5	2%	5	4%
	Medium tariff	10	15%	15	11%	25	12%
	Low tariff	35	53%	30	24%	65	34%
	Non tariff	10	15%	45	32%	50	26%
	Non-UK students	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%
Domicile	UK	65	100%	135	100%	200	100%
	Other EU	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%
	Non-EU	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%
Local students	Yes	60	92%	110	84%	170	86%
	No	5	8%	20	17%	25	14%
POLAR	1	10	32%	5	33%	15	32%
	2	15	42%	5	29%	20	38%
	3	5	10%	5	14%	5	12%
	4	5	10%	5	14%	5	12%
	5	0	7%	0	10%	5	6%
National IMD (English, Scottish, Welsh or Northern Ireland Index of Multiple Deprivation)	1	25	39%	45	33%	70	35%
	2	20	28%	40	31%	60	30%
	3	10	14%	20	16%	30	16%
	4	10	17%	20	16%	30	16%
	5	0	3%	5	5%	10	4%

Students from BME communities

The proportion of students from BME communities has increased to 2% from 0% in 2017; this is representative of the demographic make-up of the area; County Durham residents are predominantly mono cultural with 97% identifying as white British. The College actively promotes equality of opportunity which is reflected in the College's Single Equality Scheme Action Plan 2019/20 which includes;

- Analysis of destination data for BME students following focussed individual support from guidance staff to improve positive destination outcomes.
- Representation at all focus groups from protected characteristic learners

The achievement rate for BME students was 100% and exceeds that of non BME students.

Gender

Although the College promotes equality of opportunity in all aspects of its activities, the proportion of male to female higher education enrolments does not match the general college population, (32% male, 68% female). The balance more generally across the College is; 16-18 student ratio male to female of 49:51 and adult enrolment of 30:70. The gender imbalance in higher education enrolments directly reflects the traditional gender bias within the employment sectors for which students are studying. 98% of engineering students are male and 85% of Business students are female. The gender balance of full time higher education students is more even at 57% male and 43% female. The higher proportion (81%) of part time higher education learners are mature females returning to education after a break. Prior to the addition of engineering to the programmes on offer the gender bias was very much female; improvements have been made since its introduction in September 2016.

Age

Despite the decline in mature students nationally the College continues to see an increase year on year in recruitment of students over the age of 21. Programmes are designed to develop students and support them in their career progression with clear links to employment sectors. They are equally accessible and appropriate to younger students, however many are adults returning to education following a break in learning.

Disability

The proportion of students with a disability has increased from 8% in 2017 to 10% in 2018 and are equally represented on both full time and part time programmes. Achievement rates for students declaring a disability were equal to those with no disability in 2017/18.

The College holds the Equality Gold Standard and won the Equality North East Award for Education and Training Organisations and also the Outstanding Practice Award for Equality and Diversity in 2017. The Equality and Diversity Committee monitors performance in all aspects of access, achievement and progression. A performance gap analysis is carried out annually by curriculum area and an action plan devised to address any gaps in performance. This is reviewed at Corporate Board level. Performance is analysed by protected characteristic but in total across 15 groups. There are no significant gaps in performance; anything above 3 percentage points is considered significant.

- 100% of staff hold a level 2 qualification in Equality and Diversity
- 70 staff hold the Certificate Understanding Specific Learning Difficulties
- The College provides a counselling service for students
- Study support is available through the Learning Resource Library and Study Support staff on demand

Care Leavers

There were no care leavers studying higher education programmes in 2017/18; the proportion of students in the College as a whole who are in care is low at 2.5%. Students are targeted through the College's NECOP project to increase the proportion of students from cold spot areas progressing to higher education. This is proving a successful initiative although to date has not resulted in care leavers progressing internally.

The College Higher Education Strategy is designed to support and promote progression to higher education courses, both from participants within the College, as well as the wider area. All applicants that meet stated entry criteria receive a guaranteed offer of a place on higher education courses at the College. This information is stated in public information relating to the portfolio.

Using a combination of labour market intelligence and provider analysis, the College reviews and refreshes its portfolio on an annual basis to ensure that it meets the needs of local, regional and national employers. This outcome of this analysis is shared with prospective students to help inform choice and give them confidence in course selection.

The College approach to outreach work - to encourage progression to higher education - is part of a wider strategy aimed at promoting and supporting positive progression from FE to HE. The range of activity this work encompasses is summarised in Table 1 (below). Each outreach activity is reviewed annually to ensure actions retain their effectiveness and are mapped to regional and national priorities.

The College is the lead college for the North East Ambition-Careers Hub; this is as a result of the very positive involvement the College had in developing the Gatsby benchmarks. The College has been held in high regard in the region for its careers guidance work for many years. The College has achieved seven of the eight Gatsby Benchmarks for Good Career Guidance and is well on the way towards the achievement of the personal guidance benchmark. A Careers Hub is being established in the College funded through the NECOP project; this will be a physical space accessible by all students.

Progression to further study / employment

	Denominator	Indicator (a) %	Benchmark (b) %	Difference (a)-(b)	Z-score
Full-time headcount: 65 (33%)					
The teaching on my course	66	85.2	84.2	1.1	0.3
Assessment and feedback	66	78.3	79.8	-1.5	-0.3
Academic support	66	81.8	84.1	-2.3	-0.5
Continuation	99	74.7	82.1	-7.4	-2.2
Employment or further study	61	95.1	95.0	0.0	0.0
Highly skilled employment or further study	61	65.6	74.1	-8.5	-1.6
Part-time headcount: 135 (67%)					
The teaching on my course	88	96.0	86.7	9.4	3.1
Assessment and feedback	88	87.9	82.3	5.6	1.5

Academic support	88	90.0	*	80.9	9.1	2.4
Continuation	N/A	N/A		N/A	N/A	N/A
Employment or further study	119	94.1		97.5	-3.4	-1.9
Highly skilled employment or further study	119	63.0	!	72.4	-9.4	-2.4

Progression of students to further study or employment was very close to the benchmark for full time students, as reported in the TEF metrics in 2018. The full time progression rate had reduced when compared with the previous year but is still strong. The progression of part time students to employment or further study was less positive but was an improvement of 0.4 points from the 2017 metrics. Progression to highly skilled employment is less positive for both full and part time learners and the College is strengthening the link between careers guidance and HE students to improve this outcome in both progression to higher level study and employment. All students will have the opportunity to take part in work placement as an element of their programme.

BME

With the low proportion of students from BME backgrounds there was insufficient data to be able to draw meaningful conclusions. Actions to increase the proportion of students from BME backgrounds will enable analysis of progression data in the future.

Gender

Progression of female students to employment or further study is significantly higher than that of males for both full and part time students. The picture when considering highly skilled employment as a progression is reversed substantially for part time students, with the results for full time students both male and female much closer. The part time results are associated primarily with engineering students who achieve higher earning potential through higher education; engineering students are predominantly male. The gender gap at the access stage for male dominated subjects is addressed through positive marketing however this has not yet achieved substantial closing of the gap. The outcomes of the destination survey will be used to demonstrate the value of high value technical subjects. A greater proportion of females study part time, however, generally the employment sectors associated with the programmes offered tend to be in less well paid occupations.

Age

Older students, both full and part time, achieved more positive progression results than younger students. Younger students have low progression to highly skilled employment and more focussed involvement of CEIAG staff with students throughout their programmes will help develop clear progression routes and support with career planning.

Disability

Part time disabled students progressed particularly well in terms of highly skilled employment and further study. Support will continue to be provided. Part time disabled students progressed better than able bodies students in this measure.

POLAR

The majority of students fall within the POLAR 1 and 2 categories. Progression to employment or further study is positive however progression to highly skilled employment and further study is much less so.

Table 1: Activities to support and encourage participation rates

Focus	Indicative activities
<p>Outreach work to support post 16 continuation rates in education and raise aspirations to consider higher education as a progression route.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • School Liaison Team visits to 20 schools, supported by teaching staff. • Have a Go Days provided to 2500 school children to visit the College and experience the range of opportunities available. • Subject specialist awareness events hosted by each academic area. • Taster Days for 400 Year 10 students. • Advisor Days aimed at providing information to Careers Guidance staff in schools and other institutions.
<p>Academic staff visits and taster sessions to provide tailored IAG sessions.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Visits to College based level 3 groups to promote HE provision. • Open taster sessions for internal and external applicants on HE provision. • Visits to local 6th form and employer groups to promote HE provision.
<p>Uni Days events and Open Day /Evenings.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 3 'uni days' events aimed at internal level 3 students. • Annual HE Open Day aimed at external adult applicants. • Monthly College Open Evenings supported by targeted Communications to provide IAG on HE.
<p>Supporting and encouraging applications from part-time and mature learners.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The College is the best performing Access to HE provider in the North East, with 88.5% achievement in 2017/18 with all students receiving an offer at their first choice university. To ensure students have effective support, the College employs an Access to HE Coordinator whose role includes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Intervention activities for students experiencing personal and academic challenges. ○ Guidance and support with UCAS applications. ○ Liaison work with HE Programme Leaders. ○ 1:1 support for Access to HE students. • Wherever practicable, all HE awards are offered in flexible delivery patterns and part time mode with specific support provided for part time students. Targeted recruitment campaigns including local TV advertising are held each year to promote the opportunities available. • The programme approval process, requires all programmes to be developed with reference to employer expectations and needs.
<p>HE Careers Guidance Coordinator</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Focussed IAG on progression to higher education. • Support with UCAS applications. • Liaison between students and progression agencies. • Liaison with programme teams.
<p>Careers Team</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support for potential applicants to higher education. • Guidance and support for students considering higher and degree level apprenticeships.
<p>Postal/social media campaigns</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Targeted social media and postal campaigns to level 3 leavers without a clear destination.
<p>Progress Programme</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Programme of focussed activities and guided sessions to support level 3 students who are interested in applying to HE

**Portfolio
development**

- Annual review existing portfolio to ensure it appeals and is appropriate to all students
- Develop awards that appeal to female and male applicants
- Increase promotional activity that identifies the benefits of the portfolio in enhancing economic prosperity
- Validation process with OU to introduce undergraduate degrees.

Ambition and strategy

HE Strategy

The College has a long history of delivering higher education; initially this was through a franchise agreement with the University of Sunderland which enabled the College to offer a range of Foundation degree programmes delivered within a dedicated space within the College. HE has been a key element of the continuing success of the College since 1993 and is central to our ambition to act as a catalyst for change in our local communities through enabling economic regeneration and social inclusion. The local economy was historically based upon coal and iron mining, railways and farming, all of which have seen decline over many decades. The area includes some of the most socially deprived communities in the Country with economic activity, earning and skills levels well below the national average. The levels of worklessness have been higher than those in the region and nationally. However, more recently County Durham has been identified as having the fastest growing economy in the Country, (albeit starting from a low base). Recent developments will have further positive impacts on the area, with railways re-emerging as a key employment opportunity with the construction of a train manufacturing factory by Hitachi and major developments in Bishop Auckland linked with leisure and tourism through the Auckland Castle and Eleven Arches projects. The demand from employers for higher level skills will continue to influence the HE portfolio. Although a relatively small area of the College's activity there has been growth in numbers rising to 235 students in 2019/20.

The strategic relationship with the University of Sunderland led to capital investment in the College's new build in 2009 with the inclusion of the HE Gateway. This relationship supported the College in developing its own processes and capacity for higher education delivery and led to an application to HEFCE in 2013 for direct funding. This was approved and the College has offered a broader combination of Foundation Degree, HND and PCET since that time. The programmes on offer and validating bodies mean that the higher education offer at the College has been restricted to levels 4 and 5.

The next stage in the development of the College's higher education journey is its application for validation by the Open University for a range of full undergraduate programmes. First enrolment to these programmes will be in September 2019. This is as a direct result of feedback from students communicating that they would like to continue their higher education at the College. This will directly enhance the opportunities available for students to progress to higher levels in addition to broadening the HE offer directly related to employment in the area.

This move represents a significant shift in strategic direction for the College's HE provision and is reflected in the focus of investment. Throughout the process, the College is committed to ensuring that its HE offer will continue to be built upon good quality of provision and outcomes for students. The College is investing in infrastructure, staff and students to ensure that this positive reputation is maintained. This activity includes:

- Involvement of employers in the development of the Open University validated programmes.
- Additional core staff to support HE teaching teams and staff new to HE to provide consistent high quality provision
- Additional remission from teaching time for teaching staff to undertake and apply relevant research and scholarly activity directed at enhancing the student experience
- Additional resources to enhance new programme development and to enhance existing provision including an extension to the HE Gateway
- The inclusion of additional National Occupational Standard qualifications in HE awards where they are required to support employment or will enhance employment opportunities.

- The continuous pro-active approach to student engagement at all stages of HE activity to ensure the whole experience is student led

Under-represented groups

The College's Marketing Strategy and also the curriculum development process is rooted in providing an articulated progression route in each curriculum area from entry level to higher education. The gap analysis carried out each year considers recruitment, non-continuation and achievement of students. The action plan drawn from this gap analysis informs the marketing plan and leads to targeted campaigns whilst linking with current events such as the International Women in Engineering Day. Recruitment does currently evidence the traditional gender bias associated with certain vocational areas however the Marketing Strategy addresses these stereotypes and progress can be seen with recruitment of females to engineering and males in the early years programme. The College caters well to the needs of mature learners and recruitment of this cohort is strong. Programmes are timetabled to meet the requirements of employed students and those with childcare responsibilities as well as younger students. The College has attracted a low proportion of BME students historically, however the proportion does mirror the local demographic profile. The Marketing Strategy identifies the importance of attracting students from all ethnic backgrounds and use of positive images and case studies is made to broaden its appeal to all. A wide range of marketing media is used, again to broaden reach and attract a diverse population.

Value for money

The College is committed to ensuring that students receive value for money and that they recognise the link between higher education and positive employment outcomes both in gaining first employment and in promotion opportunities. In order to achieve this ambition the whole of the HE portfolio is vocationally focussed with employability at its centre. All new programmes have this at their centre and must be demonstrated prior to development; new programmes validated through the Open University will include the relevant national occupational standards as an element where appropriate. The College will use labour market intelligence and its extensive employer links to ensure the content meets industry requirements and prepares students for employment.

The next stage of programme development will include degree apprenticeships alongside its existing higher level apprenticeships from 2020; as with undergraduate programmes the development of these will be employer led. Current recruitment is a combination of internal progression from level 3 alongside direct entry however with the addition of new programmes to the portfolio the opportunities for broader recruitment will be possible through the College's schools liaison activity and also employer engagement. This three pronged approach will ensure that communication and marketing is wide reaching and key groups are targeted.

Complementarity between this plan and other sources

The College's work through the Future Me project has enabled a focus on those FE students who are capable of progressing to HE but are unlikely to do so; typically white working class boys and more broadly those from disadvantaged neighbourhoods which broadly describes the College's catchment area. The barriers communicated by these potential students are a combination of real and perceived barriers; this plan is devised to counteract those barriers. This plan draws on information from the TEF metrics, NSS, HEIFIS, marketing research and student feedback and aligns with the College's HE Strategy, Marketing Strategy and the Group Strategic Plan.

Continuous improvement and engagement with schools and employers

The College is committed to the continuous improvement of its higher education offer both in form and delivery. Programmes are developed and devised to respond to the interests and needs of students and employers. The College has a wide ranging employer network and uses these relationships to develop programmes to be current and ensure the employability of its graduates. Termly Business Breakfasts provide a forum for managers to engage with employers and share key developments whilst on a sector specific basis individual employers contribute to programme development.

College schools liaison and CEIAG staff work with schools to improve the quality of information available to school children and communicate the full breadth of opportunities available in terms of higher education and employment-including higher level and degree apprenticeships.

Monitor performance

Higher Education in the College follows the formal quality management cycle. The key forum for monitoring performance of higher education in the College is the HE Quality and Standards Working Group. It is in this forum that the HE Strategy is reviewed, marketing direction and priorities agreed and curriculum direction approved. Student performance in terms of recruitment, non-continuation and achievement are monitored. The outcomes of the NSS and TEF are considered and the annual action plan to address any shortfalls approved and monitored. Representation on the Working Group is broad with governors, senior leaders and managers, academic staff and students. Meetings are chaired by the Deputy Chief Executive who is the College senior manager with responsibility for higher education supported by the HE Development Manager. Minutes of this meeting are presented at Corporate Board along with key performance data and the annual SED.

The Academic Board quality assures the individual programmes providing a forum to review the performance of each programme and interrogate the various feedback mechanisms used to understand the student voice. It receives and reviews unit reports providing feedback and is the decision making forum for validation and certification. The membership is senior level and is a subset of the HE Quality and Standards Working Group.

The Assessment / Exam Boards – dependent on validating organisation- are the programme level forum for the discussion of classroom level issues attended by academic staff. A broad range of factors are discussed within this arena from extenuating circumstances for students to initial grade proposals, prior to validation at Academic Board.

Working under the direction of the Academic Board, the HE Development Manager is tasked with collating and gathering information and data on all aspects of HE management and performance. The HE Development Manager will have ownership of the Access and Participation Plan and will take a lead role in ensuring that the College meets its obligations as described in Condition A1 of the Regulatory Framework.

The Access and Participation Plan will be a standing item on the Academic Board agenda and updates on progress against the plan will be evaluated to identify actions required.

Equality and Diversity

Bishop Auckland College is committed to the development of non-discriminatory policies and practices providing an environment in which there is equality of opportunity for members of its community, whether required by legislation or not, in all aspects of its activities as an employer and a provider of education.

The Equality Statement and Policy applies to Governors, staff and students of the College which incorporates South West Durham Training Ltd and also includes partners, volunteers and visitors or contractors working in college sites. The Equality Statement and Policy sets out the College's commitment and intent as an equal and diverse employer and as a provider of education and training. The Equality and Diversity Statement and Policy is reviewed regularly and at least annually to ensure up it reflects changes in legislation and their effective implementation.

The Equality and Diversity Working Group takes the lead on ensuring compliance with the expectations of the Equality Act 2010 and the requirements of the Public Sector Equality Duty.

Student Consultation and involvement

The College is committed to the full consultation of its students in relation to all aspects of their experience at the College. All courses have an elected student representative for each year group, who are invited to course team meetings as a representative of the cohort view. All student course representatives are invited to attend termly cross college representative meetings which are chaired by the Principal. Students elect the Student President and Deputy annually and together with the Principal, they make up the Student Leadership Team. This small but extremely important group discuss key issues and agree actions.

The programme of formal College meetings, Equality and Diversity Working Group, Marketing Working Group, IT Working Group, HE Quality and Standards Working Group and Corporate Board also include student representation. The Student Representative is a named elected member and is invited to attend all meetings or to submit items for discussion.

The Student President receives an honorarium supported by the College and is an annually elected position. The Student President is supported by a deputy and a team of student ambassadors drawn from across the student population.

In accordance with the policy on student consultation, this Access and Participation Plan has been made available to all HE students via the College VLE. In addition, student representatives have been provided with a copy and invited to comment. The Student President and student representatives provide the College with the College with a means to consult with the entire student population.

Evaluation

How will we evaluate our performance?

We will use a variety of data and information sources to evaluate the success of our activities including continuation data, student feedback, NSS data, TEF data, NCOP results. Progress against each of the metrics will be compared year on year to provide a rich source of longitudinal data, both quantitative and qualitative to identify trends and highlight areas for future focus.

How will this influence future plans?

The outcomes of the evaluation will form the basis of the annual improvement plan, with targets set and reviewed regularly throughout the year. Financial budgets will be set to ensure that resource, staffing or revenue, is directed at bringing about improvements, if any improvement targets have not been achieved. Student involvement will be encouraged to ensure that plans are sensible and appropriate.

How will outcomes be shared?

The College publishes its performance data on its website; it displays 'you said, we did' information around the College to share the results of student feedback and the actions taken by the College to achieve the desired improvement. Opportunities for sharing learning are embraced both regionally and nationally through the Association of Colleges HE in FE network, NCOP groups and with partner providers. Staff will continue to present the results of research projects regionally and nationally and work with partner colleges to both learn from others and share successful strategies.

Access, student success and progression measures

Approach to improving access

In order to improve access to higher education the College will:

- Build on the schools liaison and outreach programme to support and encourage applications to higher education
- Monitor and act upon gaps in recruitment between mature and younger students
- Monitor and act upon gaps in recruitment of BME students to ensure the student population is reflective of the local community
- Monitor and act upon gaps in recruitment of disabled students to ensure the student population is reflective of the local community
- Further develop flexible delivery options to improve accessibility for all learners both full and part time
- Develop cost effective delivery models to improve accessibility for all student types
- Feedback from students has illustrated that additional costs above the fee element can pose a barrier to applications this is addressed through this plan
- Develop programmes directly linked to key employment sectors in the area
- Provide support to parents and carers to help them better understand the benefits of higher education and remove perceived barriers
- Allocate a named tutor to applicants (both internal and external) to provide a point of contact and positive reassurance and encouragement in the pre enrolment phase, with access to advice and guidance where the applicant has concerns about meeting eligibility criteria
- Provide assistance in writing UCAS applications and preparing for higher education interviews through CEIAG staff
- Target level 3 College students with grades which will enable them to progress to higher education programmes and strengthen personal tutor support to achieve this
- Timetable bridging courses pre enrolment to support applicants with study skills and preparing for level 4 study
- Link applicants with the Future Me staff to help prepare them for higher education and allocate a student mentor
- Target young white males and mentor to increase applications to higher education

The HE Quality and Standards Working group will monitor the range of approaches outlined above to ensure that applications, particularly from low participation neighbourhoods, grows in line with targets. Student views will also be used to inform this evaluation to ensure that the information, advice and guidance as well as curriculum design, continues to meet student' needs and expectations. There is also an expectation that information advice and guidance will extend to parents and other key influencers who may have an impact on student decisions around application to higher education.

Investment will be monitored closely to ensure that it continues to drive activity in the desired direction. In particular the focus on recruitment activity, both outreach work and marketing more broadly, will be monitored closely to identify where it is having most success and impact through the translation into applications. Canvassing of students who enrolled will seek to determine the key influencing factor in their decision, likewise application which do not progress to enrolment will also be contacted to understand why enrolment did not take place. Feedback will be sought after each event to gain insight and suggestions for improvement.

Approach to improving success

In order to improve the success of those who enrol the College will:

- Use the non-continuation profile from 2017/18 to risk rate students and implement additional support
- Ensure all students are provided with regular access to tutorial support, both academic and pastoral.
- Maintain focus on the needs of BME students to ensure high levels of continuation are achieved
- Maintain focus on the needs of students with a disability to ensure high levels of continuation are achieved
- Provide private study areas for higher education students which are available during all the Colleges opening hours
- Provide all academic resources to support achievement
- Provide access to the College VLE both in College and remotely
- Provide counselling support to those students who disclose mental health concerns
- The Access and Participation Plan includes a non means tested bursary payment at the beginning of each year to ensure students have the financial resource to buy necessary books and equipment and reduce the chance of non-continuation.
- All programmes will include a funded visit per year or a programme of master classes depending on relevance to the programme

The review of the approaches to improve success will be based on statistical analysis and comparison of relative improvements or decline in student continuation rates and achievement rates. This will be carried out termly for all students including those with protected characteristics and reported to the HE Quality and Standards Working Group who maintain oversight of performance. Any negative trends will be investigated and measures implemented to reverse the trend.

Student feedback will be gathered through termly surveys which focus on key elements. Outcomes from the termly student forum will be used to plan timely interventions where any issues are highlighted. Student perception of the quality of specialist equipment and resources including the VLE will be gathered through module reviews and the NSS. Academic and support staff expertise will be used to inform the programme of investment in resources. This will be considered successful if both qualitative and quantitative data indicate that students feel that they can access the equipment and resources they require.

The effectiveness of the non-means tested bursary will be evaluated in the autumn term for second year students to ensure it is effective in driving improvements in continuation rates. Continuation rates will be compared with previous years where the bursary was not available to measure its success. The value placed on the funded visit / masterclass will be measured through student satisfaction surveys and their view of the quality of their experience.

Approach to improving progression

In order to improve the progression to further study or employment the College will:

- Offer a work placement opportunity to all students
- Provide support with CV and job applications
- Provide at least two individual IAG sessions per student from qualified CEIAG staff
- Incorporate employer talks into programmes
- Establish intended destination of students early in the programme and ensure support is in place to support students to achieve the target
- Establish alumni events and invite past students to speak to current students
- Review the curriculum offer to ensure it is aligned with LMI and vacancies

The review of the approaches to improve progression will be based on statistical analysis and comparison of relative improvements in progression to further study or employment. Internally gathered intended destinations will assist in highlighting where students have not planned effectively for future steps. Targeted support will be implemented to establish a positive path and mentor students to achieve this. Student forums and individual tutorial sessions will be used to identify barriers to progression for individuals and target support. The involvement of past students will provide an opportunity for current students to ask questions about challenges faced and solutions found as well as providing a motivating factor in terms of seeing successful outcomes.

The use of internally captured data in addition to TEF metrics will provide the opportunity to respond more quickly where student progression is not in line with, or exceeding, benchmarks. The proportion of work placements planned and completed will be reviewed regularly at the HE Quality and Standards Working Group.

Approach to raising attainment of underrepresented groups to support entry to higher education

The College is located in an area of deprivation and cold spot in terms of participation in higher education, and more generally the proportion of County Durham residents qualified at level 4 and above, is well below the national rate. The cold spot classification has been a key factor in the allocation of NECOP funding to improve progression to higher education and the College has an action plan to address this gap.

A key barrier for young people preventing them from even considering entry to higher education is failure to meet the basic entry criteria; especially good passes in GCSE English and Maths qualifications. The pass rates for those subjects at key stage 4 in County Durham are slightly below the national average but even lower for students from disadvantaged areas. The profile of the College's students GCSE maths and English scores as they joined the College, put them in the bottom 5% of GFE colleges nationally in 2017/18. Over 60% of the College's students come from the 3 highest categories of deprivation and over 65% of 16-18 year olds in the College had not achieved a good pass GCSE at the point of enrolment. Consequently, the development of English and maths skills to support students to achieve a good pass at GCSE, is a key strategic target for the College. In support of this, maths and English staff have taken part in an intensive CPD programme to develop new skills in supporting students to improve their understanding of maths and English and consequently improve grades. Alongside this, a range of support mechanisms are in place.

In addition to the restriction posed by good pass GCSEs, there is often a failure to participate in higher education as a result of lack of positive role models, failure to see the benefits available through higher level qualifications and considerations that higher education is not for 'people like me'. The College, working with its partner schools and South West Durham Training, is focussed on delivering a programme of careers education, taster sessions, trips and visits alongside articulated progression routes which lead to higher education, in each vocational area, to increase progression to higher education of underrepresented groups.

In order to improve participation of underrepresented groups in higher education the College will:

- Provide on line resources to help students learn outside of lessons
- Small classes for maths and English with learning support for vulnerable students
- Provide one to one tutoring to support struggling students to achieve good pass GCSE Maths and English
- Allocate Student Progress Mentors to all students to provide both academic and pastoral support
- Provide maths and English revision clubs during holiday periods
- Provide a programme of higher education taster sessions for school children – 'uni-days'
- Ensure there is an articulated routes to higher levels of study in every vocational area

- Fund trips to higher education careers fairs for level 3 students from the College and South West Durham Training
- Establish a group of HE mentors to provide positive role models to level 3 students
- Establish clear career destination targets with level 3 students, including the progression ladder required to achieve these
- Provide at least two one to one CEIAG sessions for every level 3 learner
- Provide at least two one to one CEIAG sessions for every South West Durham Training level 3 learner
- Provide higher education financial support sessions for parents and carers of level 3 students
- Provide termly myth busting sessions to understand barriers and find solutions
- Provide weekly drop in sessions for FE students to increase likelihood of progression to HE
- Provide 'surgery' support to assist in UCAS applications

Investment

Activity	Total £	APP Countable £	Percentage of total spend
Access	£25,000	£5,000	4%
Student Success	£25,000	£5,000	4%
Progression	£36,000	£5,000	3%
Investment in Financial Support	£20,500	£20,500	16.3%
Total	£107,500	£35,500	28.3%

Investment

In addition to the investment made through the Access and Participation Plan the College will use NECOP funding to increase the number of students from disadvantaged wards studying at higher levels; this amounts to £40k annually and is supported by a detailed action plan to target young people attending the College who live in the targeted wards. In addition the College allocates a budget annually to higher education which supports visits, trips, speakers and additional resources. The College Hardship Fund can be accessed by students experiencing financial difficulty to ensure their ability to access higher education is not hampered.

Outline of activities

In addition to the direct financial support to students, a range of other support measures and activities are provided, to support students through the various stages of higher education from the access to progression points. Staff in the Learning Zone provide a high quality, study skills support service, underpinned by a broad range of print and electronic resources and other learning materials to support students through the early stages of higher education and on to the increasingly demanding research / dissertation phase. Support is sensitively provided and encourages students to develop their independent learning skills from the initial stages and practicalities of accessing e-learning resources and publications to submitting work through the portal. ClickView has enabled lecturers to explore flipped learning and develop video based assessment into lectures and sessions which has assisted in ensuring students have access to learning resources used in lessons on demand. Other services include Study Skills Workshops, 1-2-1 sessions, Reading Lists, Factsheets, Assignment hand-in and more, to help improve success measures across programmes. All Learning Zone facilitators and E-learning facilitators hold a teaching qualification. This College policy, which provides greater understanding of the academic needs of students among support staff, strengthens the provision of academic skills support to students.

Top-up talks and progression sessions are delivered by the CEIAG team, with support available through programme/module leaders to identify and expand upon progression opportunities for learners. Articulation agreements are in place with a number of programmes and the curriculum is refreshed regularly in consultation with learners and employers to ensure progression and employment opportunities are maximised.

Description of financial support

In addition to the financial support available through the Student Loans Company, the College has committed financial support to address two specific areas. The College will fund a £500 bursary to each student to ensure they are able to purchase any books or equipment at the start of each year; 50% will be paid once students have been on programme for 6 weeks and the remaining 50% at the start of the spring term. The College will fund either a trip or master classes every year, up to a maximum of £500 per student, to ensure that the student experience is not diminished as a result of financial hardship; the College has been committed to widening participation for many years.

Evidence base underpinning support measures

The key source of information underpinning the plans to improve access, participation and progression of learners from under-represented groups has been direct student engagement. Data analysis has identified where there are specific gaps in engagement with higher education and student forums and questionnaires have been used to engage with learners from the target groups, to better understand barriers to engagement. The NECOP project and funds have enabled activity focussed on learners from disadvantaged wards, both to better

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understand barriers and to engage with potential learners and their families to remove perceived barriers. Overwhelmingly the greatest barrier stated is financial pressures followed by a perception that 'people like them' do not go to university. The NECOP activity has been focussed very much on encouraging learners to open their minds to the idea of higher education through visits to university, mentoring by previous students, positive case studies and the 'people like me' initiative. The College is located in a semi-rural area with limited public transport connections, many of the College's students have not travelled outside of the local area and often trips through College are the first time many students have been beyond the County boundary. The financial support detailed in the Access and Participation Plan promotes broadening aspiration and horizons as well as widening participation.

Provision of information to students

The College manages and monitors the information provided to students through the HE Quality and Standards Working Group. This ensures that information provided to students is accurate, timely and consistent. A student representative sits on Working Group.

The Group reviews the content of all web and print based communications to ensure they are accurate, fit for purpose and comply with legal requirements. Specifically this includes all information on:

- Course content, structure and length, location of study and the award made on successful completion
- Total cost of the course, including tuition fees and any essential costs
- Information relating to the payment of bursaries or other financial support
- Ensuring that students have access to all relevant policies both prior to application and after enrolment explaining what they will be charged for
- Arrangements for payment and rights of cancellation
- Complaints handling

All College staff engaged in any part of the recruitment process including those making offers to prospective students are trained in how to manage the process. They are aware of the importance of information being provided in an accurate, clear and timely fashion and the requirement that advice and guidance must be accurate and impartial. They are aware that information provided at this stage can influence students decisions and consequently form part of the contract between the student and the College.

The College commits to maintaining the level of fee advertised at the time of enrolment and does not increase fees on an annual basis in line with inflation. Fees are explained in the College Fee Policy

The approved Access and Participation Plan will be published on the College website within the higher education section.