

Bath College

Access and participation plan 2020-21 to 2024-25

1. Assessment of performance

Bath College's Higher Education provision aligns to local and regional priorities identified in partnership with the Local Education Authority and the Local Enterprise Partnership. TEF metrics for the college show a current 60%:40% full time : part time split.¹ The College's HE recruitment area includes regions outside of our local authority (Bath and North East Somerset - B&NES), and this is reflected in the local and regional data we have drawn upon, and the way in which we have set our targets. Recruitment trends are:

Post code area	16/17 (%)	17/18 (%)	18/19 (%)
BA (B&NES)	47	44	37
BS (Bristol)	29	31	31
SN (Swindon and Wiltshire)	11	11	14
Other	13	14	20

(Source – Bath College recruitment data)

Current student numbers (from TEF metrics) are 177 FT and 119 PT students. This relatively low number means that data is often suppressed in both the OfS dataset and also within our TEF metrics. Where possible we have used the OfS dataset, and when this data is not available we have drawn from our ILR and national and regional statistics. Where it is not possible to identify trends in our data we have used OfS Key Performance Measures to inform our planning.

1.1 Higher education participation, household income, or socioeconomic status

Access

There is an equality in the proportion of young people progressing to higher education which can be identified both geographically through measures of disadvantage. The gap between the proportion of students who progress to higher education in the best and worst performing neighbourhoods in B&NES is 88% between two areas where 100% of young people progress to HE and on area only where only 12% of young people do.

B&NES also performs poorly compared to England as a whole when considering pupils who are in receipt of free school meals In England 23% of students in receipt of free school meals progress to higher education whereas in B&NES that proportion is 16%.²

¹ TEF Metrics (Bath College)

² Bath & North East Somerset Labour Market Report, B&NES February 2018

Wiltshire has a similar demographic profile of socio-disadvantage to B&NES. Bristol has 42 areas in the most deprived 10% in England, including 6 of the most deprived 1%. Also 16% of its residents live in the 10% most deprived areas in England.³

We have used IMD and POLAR4 data in the OfS dataset. There is a gap between IMD Q1:Q5 access and POLAR4 Q1:Q5.

	2014-2015	2015-2016	2016-2017	2017-2018
POLAR4 Q1	12%	20%	15%	20%
POLAR4 Q5	22%	30%	30%	35%
Gap	-10%	-10%	-15%	-15%

FULL TIME	2013-2014	2014-2015	2015-2016	2016-2017	2017-2018
IMD Q1	13%	4%	-	4%	7%
IMD Q5	25%	31%	33%	30%	32%
Gap	-12%	-27%	-	-26%	-25%

PART TIME	2013-2014	2014-2015	2015-2016	2016-2017	2017-2018
IMD Q1	5%	10%	10%	7%	6%
IMD Q5	35%	41%	15%	34%	37%
Gap	-30%	-31%	-5%	-27%	-31%

(Source – OfS Dataset)

We will set targets to reduce these gaps, without decreasing the % of Q2 students. This will also support Office for Student’s Key Performance Measures 1 and 2.

Success: Continuation

The OfS dataset does not provide sufficient data on continuation rates when we consider Q1:Q5 or Q1+Q2:Q5. Using data available internally we have not identified a gap in continuation rates between Q1 and Q5 students. We will not set specific interventions within this plan but will continually monitor to ensure a gap does not form. This will continue to support Office for Students Key Performance Measure 3.

³ State of Bristol: Key Facts 2018-19 (February 2019)

Success: Attainment

The small numbers involved has made reporting on individual years difficult due to GDPR considerations, however the following cumulative analysis (from 15/16,16/17 and 17/18) is useful to identify trends.

	POLAR4 Q1	POLAR4 Q2	POLAR4 Q3	POLAR4 Q4	POLAR4 Q5
1 / 2:1	100%	67%	84.%	67%	50%
2:2 / 3	0%	33%	163%	33%	50%

(Source – Bath College / University of Bath Exam Board analysis)

The majority of the cohort are achieving either a 1st or 2:1 and although the number of POLAR4 Q1 students is low within the cohort, their performance is very strong in relation to Q5 students. We have therefore not set a target for this within this plan.

Progression to employment or further study

The TEF metrics show that students leaving the College have a better chance than the average HE student of achieving above medium earning threshold of higher study (47.6% c.f. 44.1% giving a Z score of 1.4). Also, from our internal data for 16/17 and 17/18, non-progression rates are:

	16/17	17/18
POLAR4 Q1	6%	7%
POLAR4 Q5	9%	9%
Gap	+3%	+2%

(Source – Bath College non-progression data)

There is a positive gap, therefore we do not intend to set a target for this cohort.

1.2 Black, Asian and minority ethnic students

Access

From local census data (2011 is the most recent data available) the B&NES BAME population is 5.4% of the total population (c.f. 14.03% nationally). Wiltshire has a very similar demographic, but Bristol is far more diverse. The proportion of the Bristol population who are not 'White British' was 22% in the 2001 Census, and more recent data on school pupils show that the 7 of pupils who are not White British was 37% in 2018.⁴ The percentage of HE enrolments from students who are BAME are as follows, showing the actual student numbers are low.

	2015-2016	2016-2017	2017-2018	2018-19
BAME	5%	3.6%	3.3%	4.5%

(Source – Bath College Internal data)

⁴ State of Bristol: Key Facts 2018-19 (February 2019)

Over the last three years our HE enrolment numbers have been below the 2011 census. We therefore have set a target for improvement. This will also support Office for Student's Key Performance Measures 1 and 2.

Success: Continuation

Continuation rates for BAME students are not available in the dataset due to small numbers. Our own analysis shows that there is no gap between the continuation rates for BAME students, who outperform White students. The figures are not reportable due to GDPR considerations.

BAME students consistently perform better than that whole cohort, therefore we will continue to support this group in the way that we currently do so but will not set specific interventions within this plan. This will continue to support Office for Students key performance measures 3 and 4

Success: Attainment

The college has one course at level 6 which has a relatively small number of students per year. Analysis of the exam board results show there is no attainment gap between the BAME students and their peers. We plan to continue our support for this group to support Office for Students Key Performance Measure 4, but not set a specific target within this plan.

Progression to employment or further study

Although our TEF metrics data is positive, as previously reported, our internal information for 16/17 and 17/18 it shows there is a negative gap of BAME students who **do not** progress to employment of further study.

	16/17	17/18
BAME	12%	10%
White	9%	8%
Gap	-3%	-2%

(Source – Bath College non-progression data)

There is a negative gap, therefore we intend to set a target for this cohort.

Disaggregation of BAME students

The small number of students has meant that it has not been possible to undertake an analysis of the disaggregation of BAME students by ethnicity. We have set ourselves a strategic target to increase BAME numbers, and therefore aim to be able to carry out meaningful analysis of disaggregation by disability type by 2022 where we hope that numbers will have increased to allow meaningful analysis and reporting.

1.3 Mature students

Access

Since growth is predicted in high skill occupations, a greater proportion of B&NES residents (45.8%) are equipped to access the opportunities holding higher level qualifications (NVQ4+) than those in the West of England (43.8%) as a whole.⁵ this proportion has remained static over the last five years where across England these has been steady growth..⁶

Wiltshire have a similar demographic age-wise, but is slightly less well-educated at level 4+. Bristol's population has a younger age profile (median age is 32.7 c.f. 39.9 across England and Wales), and are more highly qualified with 54.2% qualified to degree level or above (c.f. 38.6% in England and Wales)⁷. The percentage of HE students aged 21 or over (mature) at the start of their course is as follows:

		13/14	14/15	15/16	16/17	17/18
Full time	Young	54%	54%	63%	47%	52%
	Mature	46%	46%	37%	53%	48%
Part time	Young	35%	30%	29%	23%	19%
	Mature	65%	70%	71%	77%	81%

(Source – OfS Dataset)

Currently 48% of full-time students and 81% of part-time students are over 21 on enrolment. This compares favourably with the overall national figures from the OfS dataset for full-time (a gap of +19.2% c.f. 27.8% nationally) but unfavourably for part-time (a gap of -16.4% c.f. 87.4% nationally). We will set a target to improve part-time mature students, **but intend to meet this target through curriculum delivery models and not by allocating resources from this plan.**

Success: Continuation

Continuation rates for mature students are as follows

		14/15	15/16	16/17
Full time	Young	80%	85%	-
	Mature	80%	70%	80%
	Gap	0%	-15%	
Part time	Young	-	-	-
	Mature	90%	75%	-
	Gap	-	-	-

(Source – OfS Dataset)

The OfS Dataset provides an incomplete picture but suggests that there is a negative gap between mature and young students. Using internal data, no current gap is readily apparent. We will not set a target but will continually monitor this and will intervene should a gap appear.

⁵ Annual population Survey, ONS, 2016

⁶ Bath & North East Somerset Labour Market Report, BANES 2018

⁷ State of Bristol: Key Facts 2018-19 (February 2019)

Success: Attainment

The college has one course at level 6 which has a relatively small number of students per year. Attainment rates for the cohort are as follows

	13/14	14/15	15/16	16/17
% of young achieving 1 st or 2:1	88.9%	55.6%	30.8%	100%
% of mature achieving 1 st or 2:1	18.2%	50%	44.4%	42.9%
Gap	-70.7%	-5.6%	+13.6%	-57.1%

(Source – Bath College / University of Bath Exam Board analysis)

The data fluctuates and we will continue to monitor this using exam board analysis to ensure that gaps are minimised. Due to this fluctuation we will not set a target within this plan.

Progression to employment or further study

The TEF metrics show that students leaving the College have a better chance than the average HE student of achieving above medium earning threshold of higher study (47.6% c.f. 44.1% giving a Z score of 1.4). There is also a positive flag for part time students. However, using the OfS Dataset we see there is currently a negative gap for full time mature students, therefore we intend to set a target for this cohort.

		13/14	14/15	15/16	16/17
Full time	Young	-	50%	55%	70%
	Mature	-	75%	-	65%
	Gap	-	+25%	-	-5%
Part time	Young		-	-	-
	Mature	65%	-	-	70%
	Gap		-	-	-

(Source – OfS Dataset)

1.4 Disabled students

Access

FULL TIME	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18
Without a disability	86%	96%	86%	86%	78%
With a disability	14%	4%	14%	14%	22%
Gap	-72%	-92%	-72%	-72%	-56%

PART TIME	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18
Without a disability	-	92%	94%	93%	97%
With a disability	-	8%	6%	7%	3%
Gap	-	-84%	-88%	-86%	-94%

(Source – OfS Dataset)

For full-time our gap is decreasing and is better than the national gap (70.8%), but for part time it is widening and is worse than the national gap (70.4%). We will therefore set a target to improve our part time access rates for disabled students.

This will also support Office for Student’s Key Performance Measures 1 and 2.

Success: Continuation

Continuation rates for disabled students are as follows (using internal data as numbers are too low to be reportable on the OfS dataset)

	16/17 Non-Disabled	16/17 Disabled	17/18 Non-Disabled	17/18 Disabled
Continuation rates	90.4%	81.5%	96.0%	100%
Gap	-8.9%		+4.0%	

(Source – Bath College Internal Data)

We will continue to monitor, but will not set a target for intervention within the plan as currently no negative gap exists. We will support Office for Students Key Performance Measures 3 and 5 through this monitoring.

Success: Attainment

The college has one course at level 6 which has a relatively small number of students per year. The data for disabled students is not reportable due to the possibility of identifying individuals but does show there is a negative gap of -10%. We have set a target for this group.

Progression to employment or further study

The TEF metrics show that students leaving the College have a better chance than the average HE student of achieving above medium earning threshold of higher study (47.6% c.f. 44.1% giving a Z score of 1.4). However, there a negative flag for disabled students.

Also, from our ILR data for 16/17 and 17/18 there is a sustained, large negative gap for **non-progression** rates, therefore we intend to set a target for this group.

	16/17	17/18
Disabled	19%	18%
Non-disabled	9%	8%
Gap	-10%	-10%

(Source – Bath College non-progression data)

1.5 Care leavers

There have been no care leavers progressing internally onto HE courses at the College for the last five years, nor to any other HEP. The college tracks the progress on Care leavers on its FE courses and encourages them to make UCAS applications to apply to HE institutions. Our strategy will focus on access to **any** higher education providers for students who are care leavers. Currently our retention of care leavers at level 3 is low, and we have recognised this is a priority area. Our ambition is that we have care leavers accessing HEPs in the future by successful completion of level 3 programmes at the College.

1.6 Intersections of disadvantage

Given the lack of large volumes of data, the intersections of disadvantage proved difficult to meaningfully analyse, and the small numbers would mean that we would be at risk of allowing individual students to be identified.

No discernible patterns emerged when analysing intersections of disadvantage due to the low numbers involved. We will be investigating further to find interventions that assist these groups, but this will not be forming part of this access and participation plan. We anticipate that the interventions we are putting in place will improve intersectional groups as our interventions cover all underrepresented groups.

1.7 Other groups who experience barriers in higher education

We have considered the other recommended groups. The College does have HE students who are also carers, from military families and who are estranged from their families. This information is not currently captured at enrolment and so our current knowledge is anecdotal. We plan to improve the capture of this information during enrolment and induction from 2020 onwards. We have not set a specific target for these groups, but the resilience and employer mentor interventions would be extended to include these students where they are identified.

2. Strategic aims and objectives

Our overarching strategic aims to achieve equality of opportunity and outcomes for all students are aligned to the equality objectives within the College's Equality Policy. These include

- To demonstrate consultation with learners with protected characteristics so that there is meaningful and evidenced contribution to quality impact assessments and key strategic decisions.
- To ensure that student satisfaction rates, as evidenced through student surveys are as high for students with protected characteristics as for those without.

2.1 Target groups

Based on our analysis we have chosen the following areas of the student's lifecycle for the various underrepresented / underperforming groups.

Target Group	Access	Continuation	Attainment	Progression
Care Leavers	√			
Mature students				√
Disability	√		√	√
BAME	√			
POLAR4 Q1	√			

2.2 Aims and objectives

The aims and objectives between 2020- 2025 that will use A&PP funds will be as follows, and the time scales and measurable objectives are contained within Appendix 1.

Target Group	Access	Continuation	Attainment	Progression
Care Leavers	Increase access rates of care leavers from the College to any HEP			
Mature students				Eliminate gaps in progression between full time mature and young students
Disability	Reduce the gap between students with and without a disability		Eliminate the gap in attainment rates between part time students with and without a disability	Eliminate gaps in progression between students with and without a disability
BAME	Increase BAME access rates to 7% of the cohort			
POLAR4 / IMD4 Q1:Q5	Reduce the gap between the IMD Q1:Q5 and POLAR4 Q1:Q5.			

We will continue the bursary scheme to support IMD4 Q1 and POLAR4 Q1 students with access, continuation, attainment and progression.

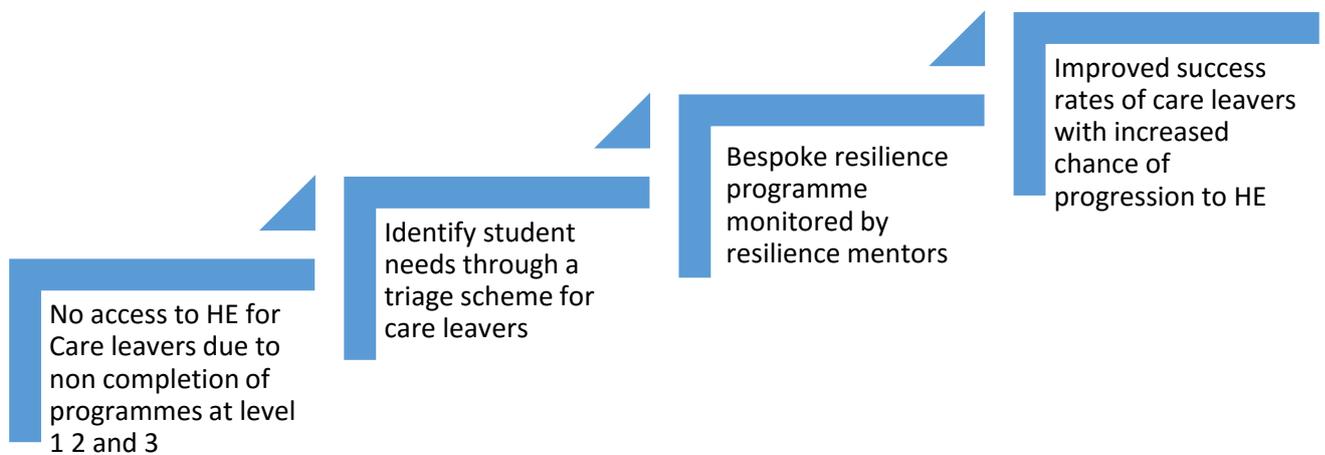
3. Strategic measures

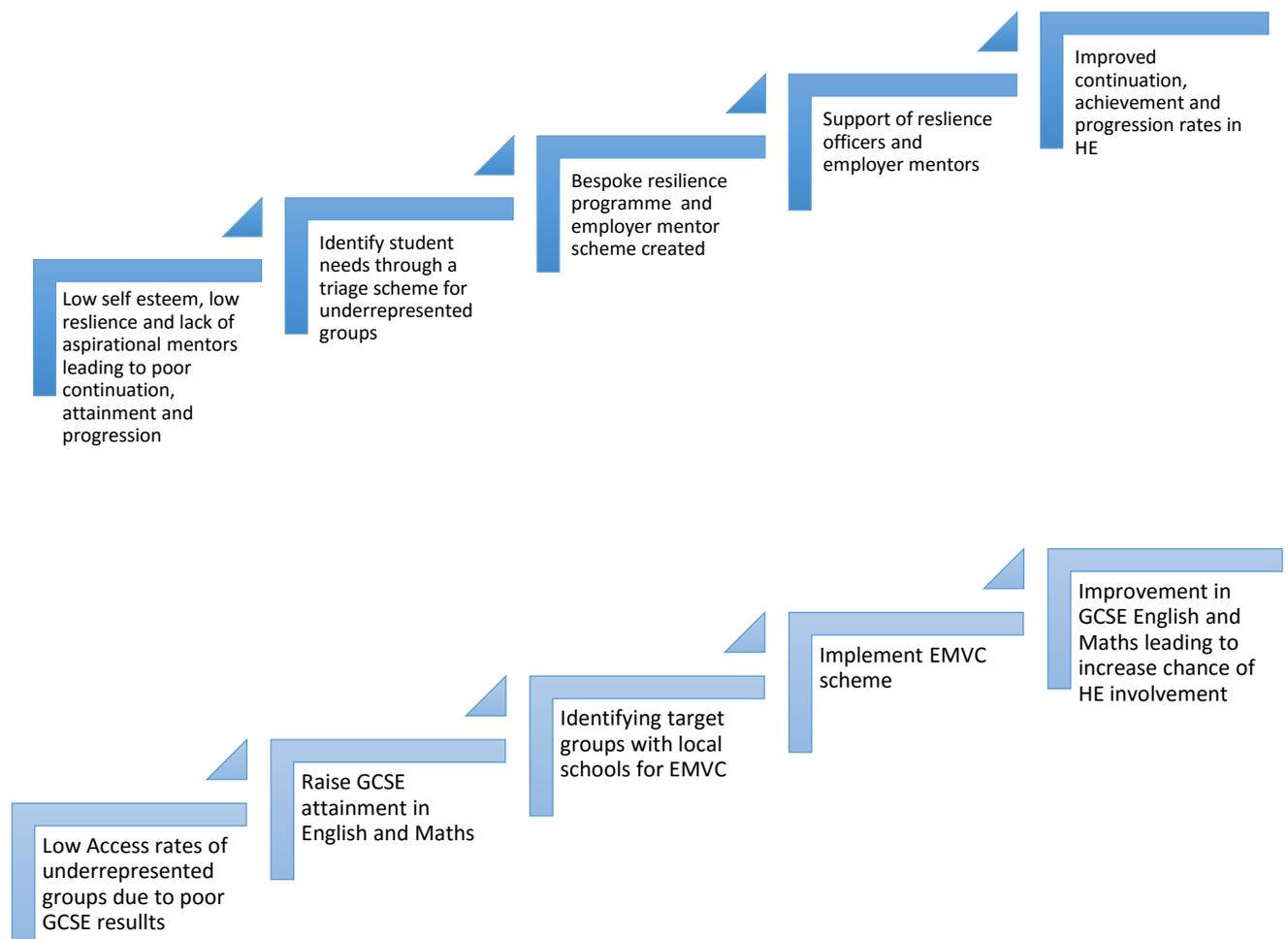
3.1 Whole provider strategic approach

Overview

The College will take a 'whole institution' approach to access and participation in view of the guidance issued by the OfS. A senior manager will take overall responsibility to ensure that there is a consistent approach to inclusion and support for all students, and that the interventions stated in the plan are intertwined with that. There will be a steering group, consisting of a range of managers and staff across the institution who will meet to monitor and measure the implementation of this 'whole college approach. This group will contain staff from a variety of curriculum and service / support departments. The College has a regular staff e-bulletin which will contain updates and reminders on the importance of the A&PP plan and the need for all staff to proactively engage. It will also form a regular time on team meetings. A staff training programme (via the College's staff development days) is also planned to ensure dissemination to all staff. The college already delivers training to all staff on equality and diversity, inclusion and discrimination and it is planned that the additional training and information will form part of this rather than be a completely separate set of training. Later in this plan we outline how this will be monitored and reported to other senior stakeholders and governors, and how students will be involved in the plan.

The College will use theories of change to develop this plan. The underpinning evidence is set out in the *strategic measures* section.





In order to evaluate our theories, the College will use the NERUPI (Network for Evaluating and Researching University Participation Interventions) Framework⁸⁹. This framework was initially developed by the University of Bath, and is embedded into the work that the WIN (Wessex Inspiration Network) do as part of the National Collaborative Outreach Programme (NCOP). We are part of the WIN, and thus it seemed logical to extend this overarching strategy and theory of change to all our access and participation plans activity. It is already embedded into the NCOP activity within the College and therefore our strategy is one of roll-out to the whole institution.

This Access and Participation Plan also builds on the approach of our previous Access Agreements, but also sets more ambitious targets over the whole student lifecycle. Our interventions align with the five aspects of the theory of change.

⁸ Network for Evaluating and Researching University Participation Interventions (NERUPI)
<http://www.nerupi.co.uk>

⁹ Understanding the evaluation of access and participation outreach interventions for under 16 year olds (Harrison, Vigurs, Crockford, McCaig, Suire and Clark)

Underrepresented and underperforming groups				
Develop students' knowledge and awareness of the benefits of higher education and graduate employment	Develop students' capacity to navigate Higher Education and graduate employment sectors and make informed choices	Develop students' confidence and resilience to negotiate the challenge of university life and graduate progression	Develop students' study skills and capacity for academic attainment and successful graduate progression	Develop students' understanding by contextualising subject knowledge and supporting attainment raising
Interventions 1, 2 and 3	Interventions 1, 2 and 3	Interventions 1 and 2	Interventions 1, 2 and 3	Interventions 1, 2 and 3
Improve continuation, attainment and progression				

(note: Intervention numbering outlined in section 3)

The NERUPI framework has a solid basis of evidence based theory. The following is an extract from the NERUPI theory of change, and further information can be found on the NERUPI website www.nerupi.co.uk.

'The transition to and through higher education can be a socially disorientating process for students generally, but for those without a cultural tradition of university can be a more acute 'out of habitus' experience'¹⁰. For some students starting university is an intimidating leap into the unknown¹¹, and inaccurate expectations of university can have a detrimental effect on academic performance and students' personal and social development. This can lead to drop-out and under-achievement.

Alignment with other strategies

Equality, diversity and inclusion

This access and participation plan is aligned to the College's Equality Policy, which commits the College to going beyond compliance with Equality law (Equality Act 2010) and become 'a *proponent of best practice in all aspects of equality and diversity*' by giving due regard to

- Eliminating discrimination, harassment and victimisation
- Advancing equality and opportunity between those who share a relevant protected characteristic and those who don't.
- Fostering good relations between those who share a relevant protected characteristic and those who don't.¹²

Our access and participation plan has overt targets for underrepresented groups who have protected characteristics.

Curriculum, pedagogic, student support developments and employability

This plan is aligned to our curricula and pedagogic developments through our HE Quality Enhancement Policy and the Teaching, Learning and Assessment policy.

¹⁰ https://www.researchgate.net/publication/249825977_'Strangers_in_Paradise'_Working-class_Students_in_Elite_Universities

¹¹ https://www.researchgate.net/publication/243784496_First_Year_on_Campus_Diversity_in_the_Initial_Experiences_of_Australian_Undergraduates

¹² Equality Policy 2018, Bath College

The purpose of these policy is to ensure that appropriate and effective teaching, support, assessment and learning resources are provided for students; that the learning opportunities are monitored; and that the College, in consultation with students, works to enhance them.

The policies aim to embed and exploit opportunities to address issues of equality of opportunity, diversity and inclusion matters in planning and delivery. Furthermore, they are written to ensure all teaching staff are working to reduce any achievement gaps between different groups of learners on their programmes and promoting total inclusion

The College is committed to enabling all Higher Education students to reach and exceed their goals whilst at college. An integral part of this commitment is to create an ethos of quality enhancement that impacts in a positive and progressive manner on all aspects of the Higher Education experience at Bath College. This includes the scrutiny of teaching materials, IAG and particularly learner voice data, where the views of learners are monitored and equality impact assessed. Meaningful intervention will help ensure that our AP&P targets are met.

The College is committed to developing and implementing quality assurance and improvement procedures that promote widening participation and quality of access for all students, regardless of their mode of study, age, disability, race, religion, sexuality or transgender status. We are also committed to providing flexible, high quality and student-centered teaching and professional education, and to offer equality of opportunity to anyone with the ability to benefit.

The College promotes its provision as widely as possible amongst suitably qualified applicants in the UK and internationally. The College welcomes applications from motivated applicants from all backgrounds. We recognise that student potential is not always demonstrated within formal academic qualifications and welcome applications from backgrounds that are under-represented within Higher Education. The College Admissions policy aims to ensure that its recruitment, selection and admissions processes are transparent to all. The Policy is fair and impartial to all applicants and to ensure that the College meets the obligations reflected in relevant legislation, HE and other College policies.

The College has a strong track record in student support and wellbeing. A dedicated Student Welfare and Participation team will be helping the College to monitor progress and achieve its AP&P targets through bespoke campaigns and individual support for groups identified. The impact of the College's Mental Health & Wellbeing Strategy will directly affect underrepresented groups via a combination of bespoke tutorial support and targeted campaigns.

The College has a strong background in enhancing student employability. Our Ofsted complimented provision includes employability staff who give careers and employability advice to the College population in general and also have a widening participation strand that directly targets underrepresented groups, giving bespoke advice. This, coupled with the College's strong relationship with the wider community, in particular employers, enables the underrepresented groups identified in our AP&P plan to enjoy specific and meaningful input.

Collaboration and alignment with other work and funding sources

The College has worked with local schools for many years. The College has been working with local schools for many years, and employs a Schools Liaison Officer. School engagement in

B&NES is politically sensitive as all secondary schools in the county have sixth forms and often view the College as competition for the post-16 market.

The College also engages with pupils lower down the school by offering 'taster days' in vocational subjects to cohorts at Year 10, and asks schools to identify pupils who they think will benefit from this experience. At present these days focus on further education courses at the college, rather than a progression through FE towards HE and employment. This programme is being enhanced to form the English and maths vocational clubs (EMVC) strategic measure (see strategic measures).

Via the College's school liaison work, there is a direct link between Careers and Employability Advisors in schools and the College. Via this link, we liaise directly with the advice providers in order to ensure that they are not only given FE progression advice but, at an early age, gain exposure to the HE options available for them to access at the College. Combined with the schools' knowledge of their learners and the input of our HE staff, we are able to jointly target pupils likely to appear in underrepresented groups at a later date and give early advice on access, continuation etc

In 2017 Bath College joined with seven other HEIs in the area to sustain the Western Outreach Network (WON) to organise HE awareness and progression activities for students and their parents as part of the NCOP initiative. The WON is managed through the Western Vocational Progression Consortium (WVPC) Board. The college is an active member of this consortium, and the outreach work and evaluation methodology has been incorporated into this plan, although the work of the NCOP is in addition to activities within this plan.

We are also an active partner with an Office for Student Challenge competition: Industrial strategy and skills – support for local students and graduates. Its aims are:

- (a) improve the rates of progression of students from underrepresented groups, particularly those from minority ethnic groups and those with disabilities
- (b) To improve graduate outcomes of mature students or part-time students intending to remain in their local area for study and post-study work.
- (c) To address skills gaps by ensuring that interventions developed to enhance graduate outcomes respond to and reflect local labour market demands.

Strategic measures

The three strategic measures that will use A&PP funds will be as follows

Intervention 1 Resilience Officers (RO)

We will build resilience for the access to HE for Care leavers who are currently studying at 1,2 and 3 within the College to progress to any HEP, and the attainment and progression of disabled students and the progression of mature students through the use of **Resilience Officers**. Students will be 'triaged' during the first few weeks to identify potential barriers and a bespoke 'resilience' package put in place for the academic year which is reviewed regularly.

We are aligning several strategies around the concept of resilience. We have identified the need to develop and promote strategic plans and interventions that focus on improving student resilience to stress, anxiety and similar barriers to achievement and success. Resilience as a term

can be understood as the capacity and ability to overcome and recover from difficult situations, which might be related to emotional and interpersonal concerns as well as academic and social difficulties; in a nutshell is the ability to 'bounce back' and find a balance during transitional and adverse periods. In Bath College, we intend to holistically address resilience by:

- a) paying emphasis on students' wellbeing and mental health,
- b) focusing on improving 'academic confidence' and
- c) increasing motivation to set and achieve future life goals (university, employment etc.).

With a positive and proactive approach towards students and with the use of a personalized support plan and evidence-based interventions, we can focus on enabling students making improvements to their physical and social environment to build resilience.

Resilience is "one of the key qualities of the effective real-life learner"¹³ and we want to promote this idea to our students to give them a sense of control and purpose, reduce the stigmatization and increase the inclusion and offer equal opportunities to make all of them feel heard and understood. This intervention fits into a wider College strategy to support mental health issues within the institution and the wider wellbeing strategy.

For care leavers, the purpose of this intervention is to support continuation, success at levels below level 4 and therefore increase the chance of progression to higher education provision

Intervention 2: Employer mentor scheme (EMS)

This scheme will support *attainment and progression* for disabled students and *progression* of mature students. Mentors will be allocated to students early in the academic year and will create an on-going programme of support, advice and guidance, in conjunction with other College services.

The College has been piloting employer mentors in a few curriculum areas, as outlined in an article for FENews¹⁴ Feedback from students, employers and staff all showed that this improved motivation for students on programme, and gave employers a better insight in the skills being gained by HE students that made them more attractive to employers. Some students achieved direct employment from this scheme. We found that there was an equal improvement from students who fall into an underrepresented category as those that didn't.

Qualitative evidence from students and employers show that the barriers for employment can include

- lack of employer awareness of how to make adjustments for students with a disability
- lack of role models for particular ethnic groups
- lack of self-esteem and confidence from students who come from dis-advantaged backgrounds
- lack of awareness of local employment opportunities if students have additional commitments or financial constraints in finding work outside of a local region.

The mentors will work with individuals to help overcome the above barriers.

¹³ Learning for Life in the 21st Century: Sociological Perspectives of the Future, Wells and Claxton, Wiley-Blackwell 2002

¹⁴ <https://www.fenews.co.uk/featured-article/20393-ensuring-our-higher-education-students-are-employment-ready>

Another source of evidence is our involvement with an Office for Student Challenge competition: Industrial strategy and skills – support for local students and graduates¹⁵. There is a clear synergy between this project and our ambitions to improve positive graduate progression, and our investment in an employer mentors scheme (which is not part of the funded project) will be part of the wider and larger employer engagement strategy included in the bid.

Intervention 3: English and maths vocational clubs (EMVC)

These clubs will support access, targeted at the four 16-19 underrepresented groups, by assisting in the improvement of GCSE English and maths grades. These clubs will support the development of English and maths through vocational contexts, and would be a structured programme covering the whole academic year.

Our strategy for GCSE improvement supporting the transition to HE comes directly from the Office for Students Website. When students from underrepresented groups achieve the same levels of attainment as their advantaged peers at age 16, they are almost equally likely to go on to higher education. However, research shows that students who are underrepresented in higher education are far less likely to get the GCSE grades they need to enter higher education.¹⁶

Our own experience / evidence for this intervention comes from consultation with current students and also with local schools. Barriers include

- a lack of awareness from pupil groups on the importance of English and maths and how they link to other subjects
- pupils may struggle to find ‘a voice’ in a school setting and benefit from working in a different group away from the school setting
- a lack of reinforcement of the importance of these subjects outside the school environment
- cultural and family barriers

There is some evidence that suggests that there are significant groups of learners who are not able to link school performance with College/HE performance and future careers and earning potential. Due to some of the factors listed above and other influences such as the school / FE knowledge gap, some pupils are not exposed to different alternatives. In order to remove barriers, the College is working with schools on Pre-16 provision particularly targeted at groups that are underrepresented.

Target Group	Access	Continuation	Attainment	Progression
Care Leavers	1 and 3			
Mature students				1 and 2
Disability	3		1 and 2	1 and 2
BAME	3			
POLAR 1	3			

These aims and objectives are based on the expectation that we will (a) improve access as outlined above and (b) eliminated the current identified gaps in attainment and progression as outlined in Appendix 1

¹⁵ <https://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/advice-and-guidance/skills-and-employment/improving-outcomes-for-local-graduates/>

¹⁶ <https://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/advice-and-guidance/promoting-equal-opportunities/evaluation-and-effective-practice/strategic-relationships-with-schools-and-raising-attainment/>

In order for the interventions to be meaningful we want to be able to make an appropriate financial contribution to each. As we are a small HE provider our A&PP funds will be limited, and we do not wish to spread resources too thinly. Also, due to small numbers our contribution to national statistics will be small, so we have focussed where possible on Office for Students KPMs and areas of national concern (i.e. mental health, care leavers) and interventions that can apply to multiple cohorts.

3.2 Student consultation

Students have been involved in the design of the plan as part of the Colleges wider 'Learner Engagement Strategy' Our learner involvement strategy aims to:

- Create a valued and equal partnership with learners where strategic and operational decisions are informed by the learner voice.
- Enable learners across the whole provision to effectively use their voice to bring about improvements in their future experiences.
- Challenge under-representation and empower under-represented groups.
- Invest time and resources into a learner voice strategy that will take the College through the entirety of its strategic plan.
- Provide learners with opportunities to develop democratic skills, self-confidence, expertise, independence, citizenship and employability.

The College already has Staff Student Liaison Committees (SSLC) for its full-time HE courses, and these were used to raise awareness of the aims and purpose of the A&PP and get feedback from draft copies of the interventions that were distributed beforehand. Course reps were asked to discuss these with their peers. The College's Student Union is in an embryonic state for our current HE students, and so this was not an effective tool to get feedback.

Once the final version of the interventions had been written, a focus group was set up with a selection of students from underrepresented groups and the interventions were 'tested'. In both cases students were given the email of the main contact member of staff for the A&PP and asked to give further feedback at any time. Positive feedback included the availability of the bursary, the employer mentoring strategy and the resilience officers. These were also useful suggestion on how the overall plan could be communicated to students. This feedback was taken on board in formulating how information would be given to students in the future.

3.3 Evaluation strategy

- Strategic context

The college used the self-assessment toolkit provided by the OfS to evaluate current process and practices. Currently, there is not a consistent approach to the evaluation the validity and success of access and participation programme design outside of that activity connected with the NCOP activity. In order for the evaluation strategy to be fully implemented the College is committed to putting in place the necessary staffing resource and skill-set required. Through the creation process of this plan, skills and roles were identified as either requiring upskilling or were absent within the organisational structure and / or job descriptions. In no particular order these include, expertise in data analysis, review of academic literature and research, expertise in creating, conducting and reviewing evaluation strategies within a rigorous academic context. The capacity of current staff was also a readily identified consideration.

In creating our evaluation strategy we have drawn on the various guidance documents provided by The Office for Students¹⁷ and the evaluation of access and participation outreach interventions for under 16 year olds ¹⁸. Our evaluation strategy is aimed to provide us with robust qualitative and quantitative data that will inform the evaluation process, as well as draw upon the academic literature available.

- Programme design

We are intending to use Type 1: Narrative to enable us to show that we have a plausible rationale for the programmes and the impact that they will have. We have based our programmes on existing academic literature. We believe our targets are ambitious and will eliminate our identified gaps as well as improve Office for Students KPMs. Our programmes are based on continua intervention (where required) and are not single one-off events or activities. We are expecting this to assist in the ongoing cultural change in the College towards continual development and support for all students.

- Evaluation design

We are intending to use Type 2¹⁹ Empirical Research to enable us to show that we can measure the impact that they will have. This research will take many forms, including the gathering of qualitative data student surveys and questionnaires, structured interviews, (all of these at various stages of the intervention – before, during and after). Quantitative data will also be gathered using the Colleges ILF and other data collection sources such as Pro Monitor and Pro Solution.

Due to the nature of our College interventions (both within this access and participation plan and the wider interventions put in place) we are not committing to Type 3: Causality evaluation.

- Evaluation implementation

The evaluation will be implemented by the WPO in liaison with the staff undertaking the interventions. Ensuring that more than one person is analysing data is important to ty and eliminate bias. The College's Quality team will have oversight of this process and will conduct regular audits to ensure compliance. The Quality team will also oversee the ethical protocols and processes.

A range of qualitative (written and oral feedback, written responses to surveys, interviews) and quantitative (attendance, progress grades, statistical data relating to the student lifecycle) will be collected. A work flow diagram of data-collection and analysis will be created to ensure a transparent process that it auditable. The evaluation process will ensure that all data protection legislation and requirements are adhered and that ethical considerations have been adhered to.

It is expected that the implementation will be a continuous process, with a reporting mechanism to inform managers of the effectiveness of the interventions.

- Learning to shape improvements

We are committed to piloting the resilience officer and employer mentor schemes in 2019-2020 with our care leavers at level 3 and HE students with identified mental health. This trial phase will

¹⁷ <https://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/publications/standards-of-evidence-and-evaluating-impact-of-outreach/>

¹⁸ <https://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/publications/understanding-the-evaluation-of-access-and-participation-outreach-interventions-for-under-16-year-olds/>

¹⁹ <https://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/publications/standards-of-evidence-and-evaluating-impact-of-outreach/>

allow us to explore the best way to 'package' the support in a student friendly way, test out engagement and implementation approaches and gather feedback from staff and students on the effectiveness of the trial over the academic year. Thus we aim to have a more refined model for implementation during the first year (2020) of this plan. This refining model is one we will replicate with all the intervention strategies over the course of the plan – and we currently envisage that although the implementation may change, the over-arching approaches of resilience building, employer mentoring and improving GCSE grades in English and maths have solid evidence within the sector that they have a proven ability to succeed.

A similar approach will be taken with the GCSE intervention, and we intend to use 2019/20 as a trial period to work with schools to identify potential barriers of data protection, use of Progress 8 data and / or individual pupil achievement records, identification of underrepresented students and overcoming fears of 'poaching' potential students post-16. The tracking of pupils using HEAT will also be a discussion point.

It is also envisaged that our targets may change if we find interventions are particularly successful. Good practice identified through the evaluation phases will be sent to the Centre for Transforming Access and Student Outcomes in Higher Education (TASO) for consideration for wider dissemination.

Financial support

Due to the positive data surround our POLAR4 Q1 we will continue to offer financial support mechanisms through our bursary scheme, and applications for a bursary will continue to be made by individual students.

Bursary payments can be used for travel costs, books and materials, accommodation expenses and childcare costs where appropriate. Key eligibility criteria are students with a residual household income below £30,000 and all care leavers where these are identified. The bursary scheme applies to home/EU students only but is available to both part and full-time students and all those learners not covered by this Access Agreement (i.e. all Higher Education students studying at the College).

Bursary payments will be allocated to students based on their personal level of income. The amount of the bursary will not exceed £450 per academic year per eligible student and application for a bursary will be made by individuals through the Student Finance area of the College. The College anticipates that the majority if not all of bursary payments will be for the full amount of £450. (The value of £450 may be increased in line with inflation throughout the student lifecycle).

Evidence from previous years show that students require the Bursary payments for a whole range of purposes, including travel costs, books and materials, accommodation expenses and childcare costs where appropriate. An internal analysis, which involved interviews with students who were in receipt of the bursary, as well as analysis of continuation and attainment rates has shown that students who receive this bursary have continuation and attainment rates that not significantly different to their peers, and there is some evidence to indicate that learners on level 6 provision in receipt of bursaries out-perform their peers. Whilst this is not possible to prove, we are confident that our bursary scheme is supporting underrepresented groups where finance is a potential barrier.

3.4 Monitoring progress against delivery of the plan

The monitoring of the plan will be carried out through a mix of existing College committees and structures and new structures that have been identified as areas for development through use of the self-evaluation.

The targets and milestones set out in this access and participation plan will form the bedrock of the monitoring done by the College. The primary person responsible for the initial monitoring will be a newly formed Widening Participation Officer (WPO). This person will liaise with the various teams undertaking the programmes and act as project manager for the plan.

The targets and milestones will form part of the key performance measures for this post. Where progress is not being made towards targets, the WPO will draw on other College strategies (additional resource from departments, line manager involvement, investigate where other stakeholders and partners could be involved, garnering good practice from other providers through FE / HE networks) to ensure improvement are made.

The Widening Participation Officer will also hold student forums and focus groups to (a) give an opportunity for students to be engaged with the programmes (b) report progress on the plan and (c) give students to have opportunities to give suggestions of where the programmes could be improved.

The progress against the plan will be reported, by the WPO, to their line-manager and / or the Senior Management Team (SMT) on a regular (bi-termly) basis. Further intervention may be given by SMT at this stage. SMT will report progress to Governors via the Quality and Standards Governors Committee as a standing item on each agenda. There will also be an annual report to the full governing body. The College is also implementing a Link Governor Scheme, so there will be a Governor who has a particular focus on Widening Participation and Office for Student matters.

4. Provision of information to students

The College will ensure that all applicants are directed to the website where up-to-date information will be available. These will be in-line with the fees submitted to Office for Students, and the commitment to how fees may change throughout the duration of the programme. Information for students will be published in the following ways:

- Advice and guidance in prospectus and on the College's website
- At Open Days and via interviews
- Flagged on the enrolment form
- Publicly displayed in HE areas of the College on notice boards
- Reinforced through tutorials via personal tutors.