



North Warwickshire and South Leicestershire College (NWSLC) Access and Participation Statement 2020 - 2021

Introduction

North Warwickshire and South Leicestershire College is a medium sized general further education college that serves south Leicester and Leicestershire and the north of Warwickshire including the districts of Blaby, Oadby and Wigston and Harborough and the boroughs of Nuneaton and Bedworth, North Warwickshire and Hinckley and Bosworth.

The College operates from campuses in South Wigston, Nuneaton, Hinckley town centre and a further specialist construction centre in Hinckley. The College has also built a new automotive engineering campus at the Horiba MIRA Technology Park which opened in September 2018.

Crossing the boundaries of the East and West Midland regions, the College has developed a dynamic curriculum that effectively meets the priorities of both the Leicester & Leicestershire LEP and the Coventry & Warwickshire LEP. The College also currently works with the West Midlands Combined Authority and the coalition of Councils, Combined Authorities, Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEP), Universities and businesses known as the 'Midlands Engine'.

The College offers a diverse range of qualifications from entry level to degree level across 15 Subject Sector Areas, meeting the needs of students, employers and local communities.

The College offers seamless progression routes for students from Level 3 programmes on to higher level programmes and continues to grow our 'Access to Higher Education' offer to ensure that educational routes are affordable and accessible to all including those who, due to various barriers, (social, emotional, financial, limiting responsibilities) may not be able to otherwise access Higher Education (HE), as well as those returning to education as mature students.

NWSLC is proud to offer a diverse and expanding range of HE programmes including a portfolio of HND BTEC qualifications and a range of foundation degree and top up degree programmes through franchised and validation arrangements with our partner universities. The College works in Partnership with several universities, offering a rich and comprehensive HE provision. We value our continuing relationships with **Coventry University**, **The University of Warwick** and **The University of West London** and remain alert to the benefits of diversifying and creating new partnerships and progression opportunities.

Our HE provision enables students to study at a local HE centre, for a variety of higher level academic and professional qualifications, enhancing skill levels and career progression opportunities. Our flexible delivery model and online resources enable our students to study around their existing commitments and achieve their academic targets.

Context and Strategic Priorities

The College serves areas that are ranked as being some of the most deprived areas in England. (*NOMIS, Office for National Statistics, Indices of Multiple Deprivation 2019*).

The number of people with HE qualifications (level 4 or above) within the local demographic is generally below the national average (33.2% for Leicester, 30.6% for Leicestershire and 36.4% for Coventry) with the exception of Warwickshire where the number of people with HE qualifications is 2.5% above the national average (40.3%). (*ONS Local Authority Profiles*)

Whilst Higher Education Initial Participation Rates (HEIPR) for English domiciled first time participants continue to rise nationally (50.2% in 2017-18), Office for Students Participation of Local Areas data (POLAR4) shows the progression rate for young people accessing HE by age 19 within the local demographic is low.

The number of local residents who are unemployed and in receipt of benefits in Nuneaton and Bedworth and Leicester (south) is higher than the national rate. Data published by the Office for National Statistics for 2019 shows that Nuneaton & Bedworth Borough has significantly high levels of unemployment and the percentage of out of work benefits claimants, as a proportion of the resident population, being 0.6% higher than the equivalent figures for Great Britain. Youth unemployment in the borough is also particularly high with 10.2% of out of work benefit claimants in the 18-21 age group. *NOMIS, Office for National Statistics (www.ons.gov.uk), Indices of Multiple Deprivation 2015*

North Warwickshire and South Leicestershire College is committed to improving access, success and progression for all students, particularly those from disadvantaged backgrounds and those coming from non-traditional routes into HE.

NWSLC 2018/19 HE admissions data demonstrates recruitment from a diverse community. 60% of our HE student population is drawn from areas with the lowest higher education initial participation rates (POLAR4 quintiles 1 and 2) and 37% are from the UK's most deprived areas (IMD Quintile 1 and 2). 44% of students undertaking higher level qualifications at NWSCL in 2018/19 were aged 21 or above and 37% declared a disability on enrolment.

The College recognises its pivotal role in supporting the delivery of higher level skills to meet the LLEP, CWLEP and the West Midlands Combined Authority priorities and is committed to working strategically and collectively, to ensure it contributes to the transformation that is needed to bring sustained prosperity to the region.

These commitments are embedded within our Mission Statement and HE Strategy 2018-2021.

Our Mission

Our Mission statement is '**To achieve success through learning**'. Our vision is that we will be recognised as a high quality learning institution for our students, and a great learning partner for individuals and businesses, helping to drive up productivity and growth within the East and West Midlands.

Our aim is to make a positive difference for our local communities and employers, to help 'drive up productivity and growth for our local economies' through the high quality teaching and learning experiences that we offer.

HE Strategy (2018-2021) - Strategic Aims

- We will develop a HE offer to meet the current and future needs of our local community and the economy
- We will strengthen and reaffirm our College partnerships to ensure there is a collective vision for HE prosperity and growth
- We will provide a first class HE student experience and high-quality learning that is good value for money
- We will plan meticulously to ensure our HE curriculum offer is informed, relevant and effectively marketed to reach the diverse needs of the community.
- We will cultivate openness, scholarship and innovation to improve teaching, learning & assessment

Access and Participation Priorities 2020-21

The College is fully committed to actively promoting shared values that include equality, diversity and social inclusion, involving our community and valuing their contribution to the delivery of our work. We will develop our work in this area by actively listening to and involving our stakeholders.

The College has published specific equality objectives within our Equality Scheme which demonstrate our commitment. The objectives state that we will:

- advance equality of opportunity between all student groups in education and training and promote inclusion through dynamic governance and leadership;
- enhance the teaching, learning and assessment environment, ensuring it is safe, supportive and anti-discriminatory and raise aspirations, success and progression opportunities for each individual;
- promote equality and diversity in order to have a positive impact on the release of the potential of all staff, learners, employers and the community we serve.

The drivers within our Equality Scheme link to our HE Strategy and the desire to widen participation among the more disadvantaged groups within our catchment area. To improve access, success and progression for students on our HE programmes, the College has identified the following key access and participation priorities:

Clear Information, Advice and Guidance

The College recognises the importance of clear information, advice and guidance to meet the needs of students from a diverse range of backgrounds, including those returning to study or coming from non-traditional routes into HE. To ensure that those needs can be met we will aim to ensure that accurate information is available to prospective students through:

- Our HE publications and website content
- Our HE marketing and promotional campaigns
- Our well established partnerships with HEI's, local schools and communities
- Universities and Colleges Admissions Service [UCAS]
- Our pre-entry guidance, (HE Open Events / Interviews / Taster Days)

A Clear and Affordable Fee Policy

The College aims to provide a high-quality learning, teaching and training experience for its students while maintaining tuition fees that are affordable and commercially appropriate to both students and employers. As the tuition fees charged by other HEI's continue to increase, the College aims to maintain affordable fees (within the basic fee level) to improve access and participation for all students, particularly those from underrepresented groups.

We continue to seek funding to widen participation for example grant funding from the Office for Students (OfS) for widening access for students from disadvantaged backgrounds, improving retention and improving provision for disabled students, as well as potential funding from LEPs and other government initiatives, as they arise.

Effective Marketing

The College has a successful record of recruitment and progression within the HE cohort, it does, however, recognise the need for diverse and effective marketing and recruitment strategies to ensure policy and practice are responsive. The HE provision has been 'branded' and continues to promote and recruit by emphasising its unique qualities and opportunities. The marketing team within the College will ensure continuing publicity for HE by adopting differing approaches to recruitment activities.

We currently use several marketing techniques such as newspaper advertising, radio commercials, social media, open events, Schools information events and employer information events.

Fair Access and Effective Admissions

The College is committed to excellence in admissions and aims to provide a professional, fair, equal and transparent service to all applicants. The College aims to recruit students who have the potential to meet the demands of and benefit from their programme, and is committed to widening participation.

The College takes every possible step to ensure that no prospective student or applicant is treated unfavourably on the grounds of race, colour, nationality, ethnic origin, gender, gender identity, marital status, family responsibilities, disability, age, sexuality, political or religious beliefs, social class, trade union activity, being an ex-offender (there are some courses which are exempt from the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act due to the nature of the work they will undertake. Where this is the case that information will be provided in the course information), or other unreasonable grounds.

The College's Recruitment Policy and Higher Education Admissions Policy outline the admissions procedures which seek to eliminate barriers to access, support inclusion and provide the framework for admissions practice relating to UCAS and direct applications across the College. These policies are underpinned by high quality careers advice and guidance provision.

Pastoral and Academic Support to Improve Retention And Achievement

The College is committed to improving retention and achievement and learner feedback to inform the pastoral and academic support available to students, as well as the wider student experience is paramount.

To support students' pastoral and academic needs including those from disadvantaged backgrounds and those returning to education, the College provides:

- A dedicated HE induction programme to introduce students to the College, resources, support services and academic regulations.
- Designated academic and pastoral tutorials to support students with individual / diverse needs, review progress and support achievement
- Workshops to support academic study and IT skills.
- Educational visits and residentials to enhance research and study skills relevant to vocational pathways.
- Guest speakers from industry to enhance industry knowledge and requirements.
- Valuable work experience and / or collaborative projects with industry to strengthen links to employment.
- Timetabling flexibility to accommodate the personal commitments of students.
- Support with Disabled Students' Allowance applications and dyslexia assessments.
- IT resources such as lap tops, and our Virtual Learning Environment 'Moodle' to ensure all students have access to resources which will enable success and help overcome barriers to retention.
- Support for students in financial hardship through the Access to Learning Fund.
- Access to affordable on site nursery facilities.

Flexible Modes of Study

The College maintains a flexible approach to teaching and learning, offering flexible HE learning programmes to ensure learning is available for all. This includes recent developments

in online blended learning opportunities. We will continue to monitor market trends and demands to ensure the provision meets the needs of local and wider industry.

The College is currently working with partner HEIs to develop and implement higher level qualifications designed to enhance work-based learning opportunities and meet the specified needs of local and national employers.

Engagement In Outreach Work To Encourage More Young People Into Higher Education (HE) Through The National Networks For Collaborative Outreach (NNCO)

The College is a partner of Coventry and Warwickshire's National Network for Collaborative Outreach 'ThinkHigher'. The network aims to help streamline HE outreach for local schools, as well as exploring new ways of delivering outreach to meet local needs and priorities.

ThinkHigher Mission Statement

ThinkHigher exists to foster collaborative working across partners to enhance and promote progression to further and higher education for young people from under-represented groups in HE.

The Director for HE is a member of the 'ThinkHigher' steering and strategy group and continues to work collaboratively to develop initiatives to raise the aspirations of young people to progress to further and higher education, particularly those young people where the aspiration to progress in to further or higher education is low. As a partner of the ThinkHigher network, we offer a 'discovery day' at the Hinckley Creative Arts Campus to raise the profile of Higher Education within Further Education Colleges.

In addition, a HE fair is held at the College each autumn term and is attended by many local and national HEIs as well as employers, supporting a diverse range of Information Advice and Guidance for potential applicants for HE programmes. The event provides the opportunity for potential learners to meet and discuss progression opportunities. The College also engages in outreach work by attending post 18 careers events in local schools to promote our HE portfolio of qualifications. As a sponsor of the Midland Academies Trust the College proactively promotes HE directly to the 4 schools who are part of the Trust.

Monitoring and Evaluation

Monitoring of our HE provision includes a strong focus on student feedback. Student forums are scheduled throughout the academic year and are well attended. Student voice is a standard agenda within academic board meetings and is used to inform quality assurance, self-assessment and curriculum planning processes to ensure that students are provided with an opportunity to assess and shape their own learning experience. In addition to student forums, students are actively encouraged to participate in the National Student Survey as well as internal questionnaire processes to ensure that the College is responsive to need.

The College is committed to continuous monitoring and improvement of the quality of our HE provision. The College has a dedicated Director for HE and a dedicated HE Quality Manager who, reporting to the Deputy Principal and Vice Principal for Quality are responsible for the monitoring of progress against action plans. The annual HE Self-Assessment Report and Quality Improvement Plan includes quality measures focusing on the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education Standards, pathways to progression (including widening participation), feedback from students, employers and partnership development.

The monitoring of progress against action plans is completed through a series of internal quality audits and termly quality panel meetings, leading to the on-going development of our annual HE Self-Assessment Report, Quality Improvement Plan and HE strategy which is approved by our Executive and Corporation.