

WIDENING PARTICIPATION STATEMENT



Halesowen College

INTRODUCTION

Halesowen College is a tertiary college located in the Metropolitan Borough of Dudley, eight miles west of Birmingham. It currently operates from three sites close to the centre of Halesowen. The main Whittingham Road campus is primarily where higher education is delivered in the new purpose built HE Centre, but some delivery is still located at Coombs Wood Advanced Science and Technology Centre. The college serves the local population from surrounding townships in the boroughs of Dudley and Sandwell plus a significant number from West Birmingham. The area served is primarily urban in character and includes wards with a high index of deprivation. POLAR 3 data indicates that many of the census wards in the surrounding area are in the lowest or second lowest quintile for HE Participation. For example, Bartley Green (19.5%), Rowley (17.2%), Blackheath (20%), Cradley Heath / Oldhill (24.1%) and Lye (17.9%) www.hefce.ac.uk/analysis/yp/POLAR/Map,of,young,participation,area/. The Ofsted Inspection Report published in July 2013, graded the college as “good”

HIGHER EDUCATION

Students study across subject sector areas which deliver over 40 A Levels and over 30 vocational courses. The College has a contract for employer responsive provision to deliver workplace training and apprenticeships. The college’s mission is to be “the leading choice for Post 16 Education and Training”.

HE STRATEGY

Our HE Strategy is an intrinsic part of the overall college strategic plan and reaffirms the college’s commitment to the development and enhancement of its HE provision with clear aims and objectives within the strategic priorities. The key drivers for developing HE qualifications stems from the desire to add higher level qualifications to the long-established **Further Education (FE) provision supported by the following themes:**

1. To remove barriers and raise aspirations for learners wishing to progress into HE
2. To improve student choice, particularly for internal progression of Level 3 students
3. To fulfil the training demands of local employers up-skilling their apprentices and workforce
4. To broaden curriculum pathways for clear progression routes to HE courses
5. To provide an Access to HE programme that gives adult learners the opportunity to enter their chosen career paths
6. To further enhance our reputation and branding
7. To generate an alternative income stream

STRATEGIC PLAN

The key aims of the College’s strategic plan (2015 – 2020) being to increase the level of skill in the local community through offering a range of HE progression routes for students who would not otherwise participate in higher education. **The core strategies:**

- Deliver the most extensive range of high-quality 14-25 learning and progression opportunities
- Lead in diverse, inclusive and innovative learning, teaching and assessment
- Drive strong collaborative learning partnerships in meeting the needs of the economy, education and the community

Widening participation to HE is highlighted through the following key drivers:

- Recognise the individual needs of learners and put in place support and direction through the delivery of an inclusive portfolio of provision from entry level to higher education
- Expect the highest levels of aspirations and outcomes for the performance of all activities
- Design and deliver an exceptional range of subjects and courses to provide a mixed economy of qualifications, additionality and extended opportunity leading to further progression and employment
- Expect all students to extend learning and achieve at a higher level
- Ensure that learning environments and access to learning resources are cutting edge with high profile, professional and inspiring facilities
- Establishing the College as a leading centre for training in education and learning within the region
- Extend relationships and partnerships with schools and universities to provide clear progression routes
- Enhance capacity, competitiveness and expertise through mutually beneficial partnerships and education/employer alliances
- Make a positive contribution to the local community as a major employer, resource for local groups and a positive impact on the local economy
- Select and admit students on the basis of their ability to succeed, irrespective of their background
- Accept and give equal consideration to applications from well-motivated students with appropriate qualifications, traditional and non-traditional, academic and vocational

OUR PROVISION

Our HE provision offers courses in partnership with the University of Worcester and Newman University as well as Pearson HNC/HND provision. The college continues to work with its two partner HEI's as well as developing its own strategies to support widening participation.

Halesowen's widening participation strategy is underpinned by a belief that anyone with the necessary ability should feel that they can aspire to higher education regardless of their background.

As a further education college with higher education provision we see widening participation as an integral part of our mission and vision, indeed we have been carrying out initiatives for some considerable time. These initiatives include our progressing further education students, ensuring they are well informed and assisted in the transition to Higher education; if they chose this as an outcome of their studies. Progression will inevitably involve applications to universities and HE provision other than our own.

The guiding principles of the strategy are as follows:

- A commitment to the highest standards of teaching and learning, in a high-quality learning environment, that is as accessible as possible to all prospective students regardless of background
- A belief in the educational and social benefits of higher education.
- To support a diverse student population that reflects the world in which our student's will live and work
- A recognition of the importance of programme design and a flexible approach to delivery that meets the needs of industry and students
- A commitment to support the academic and pastoral needs of our students
- Recognition of the value of working in partnership with partner HEI's, schools, the community and industry to secure our widening participation agenda

The initiatives that the college operates:

- Academic retention initiatives including study skills, academic writing and Harvard referencing
- Financial assistance – the Halesowen Foundation extended its support to give money to students continuing their education at Halesowen College who are entering the first year of an HNC/HND course. Students are awarded money to help alleviate some of the pressure associated with the payment of tuition fees
- Pastoral support - specific activity to reduce withdrawal rates
- Student voice – opportunity for students to be heard in a variety of forums (formal & informal) including the use of HE Ambassadors
- Careers and IAG events, tutorials and support from the HE specific Careers Coordinator
- Work experience - the college works closely with industry who influence the curriculum and supply work experience opportunities for all undergraduates and many FE students
- HE Careers fair in March and Mini HE fair in October in which all cohorts are able to attend
- Excellent career facilities which were awarded Gold Standard Quality award for Careers Education, Information, Advice and Guidance
- Student finance events including parent's / guardian's information evening
- University talks, benefits of HE sessions, Thinking of HE, UCAS Apply, Personal Statement workshops
- Personal Statement and interview workshops

In Widening Participation with local secondary schools we offer:

- University Access Project – a unique taster for year 9 pupils who are gifted and talented, pupil premium and who have no family history of participating in Higher Education. It consists of 5 weeks (2 hrs per week) in college experiencing subjects not available at school and which will stretch and challenge, followed by a University Taster day. 7 local schools are currently participating
- Pathways – a series of subject related courses lasting 2 or 3 mornings or afternoons followed by input from employers/ people doing the job and a visit to a university. P2T – pathways to Teaching and P2C – pathways to Computing are examples
- Taster days for years 9-11, which can be general, themed or for Gifted and Talented young people