Access and Participation Statement

Widening Participation Access Statement (WPAS)

City of Bristol College is a large further and higher education college in the South West of England. We offer a wide range of academic and vocational qualifications in the South West of England, catering for students of all ages and backgrounds, including 16 to 18-year-olds, adults, apprentices, higher education students and international students. We offer more than 1,000 courses from entry to degree level validated by our Higher Education Institution (HEI) partners. Based in our four main centres across Bristol, we always strive to offer a learning experience that puts students right at the heart of one of the best cities in the UK, contributing to the cities prosperity and growth. The College is poised as a key provider of high quality education, training and skills development with over 20,000 students each year.

The College has been offering Higher Education since 2001 and it was originally delivered by four faculties specialising in different subject areas. In 2013 the College created a distinct Higher Education structure with a specialist management, delivery and administrative support team to provide HE in the College with the infrastructure and focus needed for growth and development. The creation of the University Centre has allowed us to set a specific focus of higher education within the organisation. This focus has allowed us to attract a diverse entry of HE students from across the city and surrounding area; 60% full time and 73% part time are local students; The University Centre connects with Schools and Sixth Forms and HEI partners, providing progression, in particular for with those schools with students from low-economic and disadvantaged backgrounds. This helps provide a platform for prospective applicants and their advisers and families to learn more about the opportunity choices at Higher Education.

Part 1: Our Widening Participation Primacies

City of Bristol College is committed to Widening Participation and Access (WPA) to Higher Education for students from disadvantaged backgrounds and those coming from non-traditional routes into HE. This commitment is embedded in our proposition with regard to the collaborative outreach WPA initiatives that we deliver to ensure our direct impact on numbers of students entering into our higher education from such backgrounds and routes, enabling widening participation with 59% of students are 21 years of age or older (23% over 30 years old); 14% of students declaring a disability and 20% of students from a Black or Ethnic Minority background. In 2016 the overall satisfaction is 83% in the National Student Survey (NSS) which exceeds by 3% the national benchmark for HE in FE. The University Centre and wider College is also dedicated to its municipal role to help meet the ambitions of young people in the City and wider geographical regions by continuing to apply best practice in relation to the use of data in the admissions process. We will always aim to improve:

- our provision of information and guidance for prospective higher education students
- our collaborative links with appropriate source institutions
- our quality of higher education provision with an emphasis on retention, success and targeted financial support for prospective students experiencing financial difficulties.

The raising of aspiration and attainment of disadvantaged groups is at the heart of the College’s mission and core values.

Our Mission Statement is: “To enable access to higher learning, employment and career progression through the development of technical and vocational skills and professional behaviours”

Our Core Business is:

- Study programmes which enable young people to be in the best place to secure access to higher learning or skilled employment in the local economy

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1 For further detail refer to City of Bristol College TEF Yr. Two Provider submission; UKPRN: 10001467; p.3, p.4.
3 City of Bristol College Admissions Policy | January 2011.
4 http://cobc-intranet.cityofbristol.ac.uk/executive/Pages/Strategic%20Leadership%20Team.aspx
Further Education courses which enable adults to maximise their access to higher learning, skilled employment and career progression
- Traineeships and Apprenticeships which enable access to higher learning or sustained employment in a skilled workforce
- Higher Education courses which are rooted in the world of work and recognised by employers
- Commercial education and training supporting employers to meet their current and future skills needs

Our Values are: Integrity | Respect | Ambition | Pride

Our Behaviour Values are:
- Student focused
- High expectations and aspirations for all
- Focused on progression and employment
- Proud of what we do and or our place in the City
- Collaborative
- Continually improving

Strategic objectives
- To enable all students to develop the skills and behaviours they will need to play a productive role in the economy
- To offer high quality provision which responds to the needs of the economy and opens doors to the best opportunities for everyone
- To collaborate in order to support the development of the College and the City
- To provide excellent services to businesses
- To develop a responsive, highly skilled and committed workforce
- Be a strong, financially sound and active contributor to the City's success

University Centre Strategy WPA
The University Centre continues to contribute to the prosperity of the City as a leading provider of high quality higher education and has many of the significant features in place to ensure further WPA success, for example, we have a long history and good reputation for supporting students from disadvantaged and low-economic backgrounds.

The University Centre works with a range of Higher Education Institution (HEI) partners with the majority of programmes being validated by Plymouth University. Teaching and learning are consistently at least good with positive student and staff relationships embedded in a culture of commitment and student focus.

Our WPA approach at the University Centre includes, but is not exclusive to:
- Creating tailored outreach activities for communities, schools and employers to raise aspirations for HE in lower socio-economic postcode areas\(^5\), “Increase student experience and revenue by widening opportunities such as introducing theatre performances and a counselling service”\(^5\).

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Bursaries for general access and childcare support will be available from the College to provide financial help to eligible learners whose access to, or completion of, education or training is inhibited by financial constraints or barriers.

**Funding Scope**

- Vulnerable learners; those disadvantaged by financial constraints; disabled students (including those with sensory impairment); or have learning difficulties; those on probation; in care, have been in care, or are young parents, young carers (16-19) or are otherwise considered to be at risk; lone parents.

19+ year olds, for example,

- Are vulnerable learners
- Are ex-military personnel
- Are disadvantaged by financial constraints
- Are disabled (including those with sensory impairment); or have learning difficulties
- Are on probation
- Are in care, have been in care, or are young parents, young carers (16-19) or are otherwise considered to be at risk
- Are lone parents
- Are taking programmes where the primary learning goal is adult basic education or English for Speakers of other languages (English as a second language – ESOL)
- Are eligible for free remission
- Are aged 19+ without a full level 2 or full level 3 qualification
- Are progressing on the same route of study

**Part 2: Student Opportunities Fund and WPA**

The University Centre is in receipt of HEFCE Grant funding for Enhancing Student Opportunities and Widening Participation. These funds take the form of ‘annual’ non-mainstream allocations that help FE colleges and HEIs develop a strategic approach to enhancement of the student experience and addressing widening participation during the whole life cycle of a student in HE – from pre-entry to progression on completion of study. The HEFCE emphasis lies on teaching enhancement and improving retention. The University Centre has provided further investment in:

- Equipment such as lap tops, to ensure all students have access to resources which will enable success and help to overcome barriers to retention.
- The financial support available with clear guidelines for application and relevant information, such as criteria for acceptance.
- Outreach programmes within areas of learning, primarily contributed to staff costs associated with delivery [these activities are generally managed and delivered both by the academic staff and is centrally managed by our schools outreach team].
- Welfare, targeted support for University Centre students.
- Disability, such as dyslexia assessments.

**Part 3: Retention**

The University Centre has identified the needs of students from as wide a range of backgrounds as possible, including those coming from non-traditional routes into HE, and to ensure that as many of those needs can be met through systems of support. We will always endeavour that accurate and timely information is available to prospective students through;

- Our own publications and website content

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7 City of Bristol College Discretionary Learner Support (DLS) Fund Policy 2015/16.
8 For further guidance please refer to the City of Bristol College Student Progression Policy | September 2014.
9 [http://cobc-intranet.cityofbristol.ac.uk/sites/faculties/HigherEducation/Pages/WideningParticipation.aspx](http://cobc-intranet.cityofbristol.ac.uk/sites/faculties/HigherEducation/Pages/WideningParticipation.aspx)
10 NB: This is a limited fund so applications are encouraged as soon as a need is identified.
Our planned marketing and promotion campaigns
Our well established and enduring partnerships with all our HEI’s, locals schools and communities
Universities and Colleges Admissions Service [UCAS]
Our pre-entry guidance, for example, Taster

The design of bespoke activities to improve retention and success include, but are not exclusive to:
- Master classes
- Preparing for HE Courses

Enhancement of the Student Experience through:
- Focused support for identified groups
- Workshops, team building activities and educational visits
- Prizes and Competitions
- Guest speakers from industry to strengthen links to employment
- Timetabling flexibility to accommodate work and personal commitments

Part 4: Evaluation and Monitoring

The quality process ensures groups such as staff, students, HEI partners and other applicable stakeholders are involved in the process. We believe all our students are co-creators of the student experience and as such, student representation is rooted in all groups and communities – formal and informal within the University Centre. The University Centre has an agreed Quality Cycle\(^{11}\) to ensure the monitoring of progress against targets and enabling improvements in practice are effective and timely. Developments around monitoring and evaluation will include, but are not exclusive to:

- The creation of a WPA monitoring committee that will include students and will focus on developing effective systems through which better tracking, monitoring and progress of students entering the University from non-traditional backgrounds. This will allow for more useful data analysis to identify areas for improvement in relation to admissions\(^ {12}\), progression and success of students from particular target groups\(^ {13}\). This in turn will contribute to more effective research and data analysis to support effective targeting of outreach activities and allocation of funding.

We are committed to always developing our knowledge and understanding about the Widening Participation Access requirements of particular student groups in order to:

- Continuously develop best practice to continually improve access, retention and progression for students from disadvantaged backgrounds and those coming from non-traditional routes into higher education.
- Continuously develop best practice to improve our focus on the employability skills by working with employers and students.

An annual evaluation will be carried out and presented to the College’s Higher Education Board for scrutiny with action identified taken forward in the University Centre Improvement Action Plan.

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\(^{11}\) [http://cobc-intranet.cityofbristol.ac.uk/sites/faculties/HigherEducation/Pages/Quality.aspx](http://cobc-intranet.cityofbristol.ac.uk/sites/faculties/HigherEducation/Pages/Quality.aspx)

\(^{12}\) It is intended that the policy should uphold the principles outlined in the Schwartz Report on Fair Admissions (2004) and the Quality Assurance Agency’s UK Quality Code Chapter B2.

\(^{13}\) For further information refer to City of Bristol College; Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy | April 2015.