
HE Access and Participation Statement

Background

The University Centre at City of Bristol College provides an extensive range of higher education and professional courses across various subject areas. Our Higher Education programmes are delivered in a nurturing and professional environment, led by specialist lecturers committed to supporting students. This statement adheres to OfS regulatory advice¹, detailing the existing provision related to access and outlines current provision around access and participation and sets out ambitions and strategy for the future.

The College is situated in a strategic location to enhance the skills, knowledge and capability of the region's citizens, working alongside local schools and three prestigious universities. Through students' success, the College contributes to the wider West of England economy and is at the heart of the city's growth. Bristol has become increasingly diverse, and some local communities have changed significantly. There are now at least 45 religions, at least 187 countries of birth represented and at least 91 main languages spoken.

The University Centre works with a range of Higher Education Institution partners (HEIs) and Awarding Organisations (AOs), with programmes being validated by University of Plymouth (UoP), the University of the West of England (UWE), Pearson, and a suite of Franchised programmes through Bath Spa University (BSU). The College is part of a diverse strategic and operational network of local and national organisations, including West of England Local Education Partnership, Learning Partnership West, Bristol City Council, Bristol Women's Commission, Safeguarding Children's Board, Prevent Regional Office, Somerset and Avon Police, local Schools and the Civic University Network².

Access and Participation

In 2020, the West of England region experienced a 4.5% population growth since 2015, adding 41,160 individuals. Projections suggest a further 4.5% increase between 2020 and 2025, totalling a growth of 42,397 people. Notably, 42% of adults in the region hold a degree or equivalent, surpassing the national average by 10 percentage points, and only 4% of residents lack formal qualifications, contrasting with the national rate of 7%. The College strives to mirror the diversity of Bristol's population in its student body and actively strives to align the staff profile with the demographics of the student population it serves.

The Black or Minority Ethnic Group (BME) constitutes 17% of Bristol's total population, excluding all White groups. Specifically, 'White British' comprises 81.1% of the population, while 'White non-British' constitutes 1.9%³. The college has seen a rise of 14.8% in mature students (over 21) from 67.8% in 2016/2017 to 82.6% in 2021/2022. The underrepresentation by area and is based on young students (under 21) who attended state funded mainstream schools in England, shows that for the college the lowest rate of participation rose from 33.3% in 2016/2017 to 56.4% in 2021/22, whilst the highest rate of participation also rose from 14.5% in 2016/2017 to 18.4% in 2021/22⁴.

Bristol exhibits a notable socioeconomic divide, as highlighted by research conducted by the University of Bristol on higher education progression by council ward for individuals aged 18 and over entering any higher education programme in the last three years. Among the 34 council wards, 14 showed less than 15% progression into higher education, with 9 council wards (7 located in South Bristol) exhibiting less than 5% progression. Nationally, the South Bristol Area ranked among the bottom 10 regions for higher education progression, with 3 wards being among the bottom 5.

City of Bristol College aims to provide the best possible service for our students while maintaining affordable tuition fees. The college offers value for money to encourage students from none traditional HE backgrounds to aspire to Higher Education.

¹ [Conditions of registration - Office for Students](#)

² [Civic University Network – Maximising the civic impact of universities in their place](#)

³ [How life has changed in Bristol: Census 2021 \(ons.gov.uk\)](#)

⁴ [Data dashboard - Office for Students](#)

Our Widening Participation Strategic Aim

'Promote and increase the progression of underrepresented groups into higher education programmes, and to successfully recruit non-traditional or disadvantaged students by making higher education an accessible option'.

Our Widening Participation Strategic Objectives

- Widen access opportunity in subject pathways to increase HE student intake from South Bristol and from ESOL students.
- Develop opportunities with South Bristol schools to deliver a cohesive level 3 offer with progression pathways into higher education,
- Develop a blended approach, providing both physical and digital engagement opportunities, to promote accessibility and flexibility.

Fair Admissions Process

Our Admissions Policy is regularly updated to ensure its fairness for applicants from all backgrounds and abilities. We employ a Widening Participation Officer and an Equality and Diversity Lead who are jointly responsible for reviewing, developing and ensuring that applicants and students from all backgrounds are provided with the same opportunities.

Tutorial Support and Additional Support to Improve Retention and Achievement

All HE programmes include a tutorial slot where a personal tutor will conduct one-to-one progress reviews with each student. Careers advice is also provided through student services.

In addition to this, the college has Study Centres at each of the four sites with specialist advisers who can assist in studying skills.

Study Centres have extended opening hours for students to access IT services and the internet. Students can also access HEI University Partner libraries and resource centres.

The college offers a dedicated Additional Learner support (ALS) service for HE students, identifying and using information for students with additional support needs.

Disabled Students' Allowance⁵ (DSA) assessments for Higher Education students is also carried out and appropriate support is put in place with Financial advice is available at each site.

Students with a disability, mental health condition, long-term health condition or specific learning difficulty may be eligible for extra help through Disabled Students' Allowances (DSAs). Available to full-time and part-time students (depending on the number of hours you study), this allowance is non-repayable, and is not means tested. The amount you are entitled to depends on your level of need.

To find out more visit [Disabled Students' Allowance](#).

Hardship Fund

A Hardship Fund, guided by NASMA⁶ is available to HE students that is designed to alleviate financial distress for students confronted with unforeseen emergencies, unexpected course-related expenses, or unanticipated health costs. This fund serves as a crucial resource for students experiencing financial strain with limited access to alternative sources, aiming to ease their financial burden.

⁵ [Help if you're a student with a learning difficulty, health problem or disability: Disabled Students' Allowance - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)

⁶ [NASMA – National Association of Student Money Advisers](#)

Flexibility of Provision to Enable Growth

In order to grow HE there are a number of courses that offer flexible modes of delivery. The College's Curriculum Strategy aims to increase the offer for FE students to access HE across HNC, HND, Foundation Degree, BA (Hons), BA (Hons) Top-Up and Degree level apprenticeships.

To enhance flexibility in learning, the College plans to introduce module-based options for short courses, including those accessible through the Lifelong Learning Entitlement⁷ (LLE). This initiative aims to provide opportunities for upskilling and reskilling, thereby facilitating career development. The College will systematically identify the most suitable accreditation routes for introducing the LLE Modular-based Acceleration programme. Additionally, pricing evaluations for module/unit-based offerings will be conducted to ensure accessibility and affordability for students.

The College makes extensive use of its e-learning to provide materials for students. It is well used and remains a supportive tool to supplement the lecture materials.

Aspiration Building

City of Bristol College is a significant member of the Future Quest (FQ) consortium. A programme which encourages young people into education from backgrounds which are underrepresented. Members include UWE Bristol, University of Bristol, South Gloucestershire and Stroud College (SGS), St Brendan's sixth form college, Bristol Learning City and the West of England Combine Authority (WECA).

Future Quest aims to:

- Increase application rates from young people in target areas to HE, with a focus on south Bristol.
- Improve academic attainment at Key Stage 4 and 5.
- Improve educational perseverance (positive transition from Key Stage 4 to HE pathway appropriate Key Stage 5, and continuation within Key Stage 5).
- Increase conversion post application to HE.

The College has a dedicated Future Quest Co-ordinators who works towards these aims by organising and offering opportunities to students.

Mental Health Support

The college provides a dedicated welfare service for all HE students. Students have the option to self-refer or request referrals through their personal tutors. The Student Support and Wellbeing Advisors serve as the initial point of contact for students dealing with inquiries or concerns related to health, mental health, overall well-being, and any pastoral issues encountered throughout their academic journey.

We will also collaborate with external agencies when necessary, direct students to specialised counselling services.

Our experienced Advisors are friendly, approachable, and ready to assist students in navigating any challenges they may be facing. These challenges may include, but are not limited to:

- Feeling low, sad or depressed
- Feeling stressed, worried or anxious
- Having problems at home, with friends or in relationships
- Bullying or harassment

⁷ [Lifelong Learning \(Higher Education Fee Limits\) Act 2023 - Parliamentary Bills - UK Parliament](#)

College Student Council

The College has an active student council, through which the student body are involved in decision making. The Student Council is entrusted with the responsibility to consult, lead, and elevate the overall student experience. Its influence spans various aspects of student life, encompassing initiatives such as improving sports services, spearheading anti-bullying campaigns, and contributing to mental health provisions on campus.

Monitoring the Widening Participation Strategy

City of Bristol College is working to improve widening participation for all HE provision and is part of the wider College Strategic plan. Performance is scrutinised at the HE Academic Board and HE Operational committee level with subsequent actions tracked through the HE Strategic Action Plan (SAP) aligned to the OfS A2 regulatory condition.

Achievement and High Grades:

Achievement (22/23) is at 82%, [of which 25% are high grades⁸]

Achievement and High Grades 3-year targets:

	23/24	24/25	25/26
Achievement	86%	88%	90%
High Grades	28%	31%	34%

Version	
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⁸ Definition of high grades; Higher National Certificates / Diplomas – Distinction. Foundation Degrees – Total Score of 70%+ defined as Distinction
Bachelor Degree – Total Score of 70%+ defined as a 1st Class.