



Wirral Met College

OFFA Access Agreement 2018-19

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Introduction

Wirral Metropolitan College (WMC) is a medium size general further education college geographically located on the Wirral peninsula in the North West of England. WMC is the only further education college on the peninsula which serves a wide range of students. It has a high widening participation factor with many adults returning to learning. This is contrasted with a large selective school system within the borough, which contains six grammar schools, a sixth form college and additional sixth form provision in a number of the schools.

The College operates from four main campuses: Conway Park; Twelve Quays; Wirral Waters (located in Birkenhead); and the Oval Campus in Bebington. There are also two outreach sites: a Trade Union Education Centre in Liverpool, and Art Studios in Woodside Business Park, which is adjacent to the Twelve Quays Campus.

The College higher education student population for 2015/16 was 399 which were all directly funded by HEFCE. In the current academic year (2016/17) there are 318 directly funded students.

The Provision

Higher education courses are delivered across the two recently refurbished main campuses which contain the specialist resources required to support WMC's higher education provision. A Higher Education Administrator is based at the Conway Park campus, and this is the main point of contact for higher education partner institutions.

The HE portfolio at WMC includes a BSc Psychology programme jointly delivered by WMC and the University of Liverpool. Students study year 0 and year 1 at WMC and then progress to the University of Liverpool to complete years 2 and 3. The BA Cultural Studies programme and the BA Fine Art programme are two of the College's longest serving programmes and were previously validated, respectively, by Liverpool Hope University (1992) and Liverpool John Moores University (1993). Both programmes have recently been revalidated by the University of Chester joining the BA Illustration with Animation and a Foundation Degree in Computer Science, both run as freestanding validated courses at WMC.

The College has a long and successful tradition of teacher training and has recently changed its validating university from Manchester Metropolitan University to the University of Central Lancashire. The UCLan Certificate in Education and PGCE programmes were first delivered from September 2013 and were then rewritten and revalidated in November 2013 as a consequence of the changes to the National Framework.

Other additions to the College's HE portfolio validated by UCLan include an FdSc Chemistry and a BSc Chemistry (top-up) programme.

The College pays an average of 17% per year of its received funding and tuition fees to its partner universities.

HNC/D development in the past three years includes new programmes in Travel and Tourism Management, Photography, Advanced Practice in Work with Children and Families and Higher Level Apprenticeships in Chemical Science.

Sector and Institutional Context

The Higher Education Green Paper '*Fulfilling Our Potential: Teaching Excellence, Social Mobility and Student Choice*' (November 2015) signals the biggest shift in the national framework for higher education in England for a generation. The core aims of the document are to raise teaching standards, provide greater focus on graduate employability, widen participation in higher education and open up the sector to new high-quality entrants.

However, the reforms also present unprecedented opportunities for HE in FE, as colleges have more freedom to decide what curriculum is offered. The freedom to enrol unlimited full and part-time students has increased the possibilities for devising flexible, part-time and work based higher level learning.

Much of the College's higher education provision fits within the Liverpool City Region's (LCR) priority growth areas, particularly within the Knowledge Economy, including Creative and Digital Industries, Advanced Manufacturing, Life Sciences and Financial and Professional Services, and also in the priority areas of SuperPort, Low Carbon and Visitor Economy. Most of these areas for growth have key employment demands for higher level technical and management skills, which can be filled by graduates and higher level apprentices (LCR Skills for Growth: Annual Report 2014-15).

The College's HE strategic priorities have been developed following detailed analysis of current national, regional and local policy and discussion with key local partners. The College will continue this level of focused analysis in determining its HE provision to ensure that it supports students in achieving higher level skills and employment and contributes to the improvement of higher level skills in the region.

To support its strategic objectives, the College will spend 48.5% of the tuition fee income above the basic fee on measures to support access, success, retention and progression.

Fees, Student Numbers and Fee Income

The level of tuition fees set by Wirral Metropolitan College takes account of the following policy considerations:

- That the cost of full-time higher education to students should not act as a barrier to participation;
- That income from tuition fees should be managed to provide appropriate support for students throughout the student lifecycle, and not just at the point of admission.
 - This includes aspiration-raising and pre-entry activities; transitional stages as students move through the course; and progression into employment and post-graduate study.

Students entering full time degree education from September 2017 will incur a maximum tuition fee of £7,500, irrespective of the academic discipline and programme level. There is no intention for WMC to seek to raise the fees for the following three years up to September 2020.

Part-time degree students entering HE from September 2017 will incur fees based on a pro rata equivalent of the full time fee. So part time student fees should not exceed £3,750 in any one academic year. Students taking or retaking specific modules will be charged on a pro rata basis. No students will exceed the basic full cost fee in one academic year.

The total estimated number of HE students at the College for the 2018-19 academic year is 409. Of those students, 140 new and continuing full time degree students will be liable to pay the increased fee of £7,500.

Students enrolled on Higher National Certificates or Higher National Diplomas from September 2017 will incur a maximum tuition fee of £3,975, irrespective of the academic discipline and programme level.

Students enrolled on part time Higher National Certificates or Higher National Diplomas in September 2017 will incur a maximum tuition fee of £2,650, irrespective of the academic discipline and programme level.

Financial Support for Students

The College proposes two bursary schemes for students – the Support Bursary and Access and Progression Bursary:

Support Bursary

New full time degree students entering higher education from September 2017 with a household income below £25k per year will receive a bursary towards equipment/resources to the value of £1500 over the three years of their programme.

This will be made to individual students via a £500 cheque or bank transfer of funds to enable them to use the bursary flexibly to aid the start of their HE programme, and at the start of each subsequent year.

Applicants who receive offers of an undergraduate place at the college will be sent full details of the scheme. Based on current enrolments and associated deprivation factors the College estimates that 49% of HE students entering the college in 2018-19 will be eligible for the bursary, and the bursary will be offered to all eligible students who apply. It is estimated that expenditure will be as follows:

Year	Estimated student numbers receiving a Bursary.	Estimated Bursary value per learner.	Estimated cost to the college.
18 - 19	115	£500	£57,500
19 - 20	135	£500	£67,500
20 - 21	135	£500	£67,500

Access and Progression Bursary

Eligible full-time students will be awarded financial support of £1,500. This will comprise £500 support in the first year of study and £500 in years 2 and 3. Students must be paying a tuition fee of over £6,165. Applicants must have a declared household income of between £25,000 and £42,600 and must be ordinarily resident in England, Wales, Scotland or Northern Ireland. Additionally applicants must have completed Level 2 (GCSE) studies at WMC or a link organisation in the four years prior to commencing an undergraduate course, or completed Level 3 (A Level) studies at WMC or a link organisation in the two years prior to commencing an undergraduate course. In 2015/16, 3% of our Level 3 students progress to HE at WMC however we intend to increase student numbers and it is estimated that expenditure will be as follows:

Year	Estimated student numbers receiving an Access and Progression Bursary.	Estimated Bursary value per learner, per academic year.	Estimated cost to the college.
18 - 19	7	£500	£3,500
19 - 20	8	£500	£4,000
20 - 21	8	£500	£4,000

For part time students awards will be a pro-rata amount in line with their intensity of study. The scheme is open to home and EU students but not international students.

The College will create a HE hardship fund with a value of £4,500 to support students who fall into severe financial difficulties who, without help, would not be able to continue their course of study.

Eligibility will be means tested and based on household incomes below £25k per year.

Financial support to students will represent 31.2% of the higher fee income above £6,165.

Monitoring the impact of financial support arrangements

The impact of financial support arrangements on access, student success and progression will be monitored and evaluated. Monitoring and evaluation will take place through the following mechanisms:

1. The Higher Education Quality Assurance Committee
2. The College's Equality and Diversity Group

These groups will review progress on the targets set within this Access Agreement, and agree modifications to the resource plan and the College's approach to increase access, success and progression.

Access, Student Success and Progression measures

Assessment of performance

Summary of College performance across the student lifecycle

Indicator	Wirral Metropolitan College performance
Percentage of higher education students from low participation neighbourhoods	<p>In 2013-14, the percentage of degree learners attending the College from Low Participation Neighbourhoods (LPN), classified by POLAR3 as quintile 1, was 61%. This figure is 4% higher than the sector average for all FECs.</p> <p>However, the number of young (18–25) entrants is significantly lower than the proportion of older ‘second chance learners’, with only 33% of LPN learners being under 25 years old, although this is significantly above the 2012-13 national benchmark of 17%.</p> <p>The College has set a target to increase access for young, full time, undergraduate entrants from LPN to 55% by 2021.</p> <p>Indicative access activities will include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community projects aimed at LPN in collaboration with: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Merseyside Collaborative Outreach Partnership ○ Magenta Housing ○ Wirral Community Action ○ Primary School Links ○ Feeder School links ○ Voluntary Sector Services
Percentage of higher education students from ethnic minority/non-white groups	<p>In 2014/15, 7% of HE entrants to the College indicated that they are of black or minority ethnic (BME) origin. HEFCE data for the same year specifies that 4% of HE students in the Liverpool City Region indicated they were BME origin.</p>
Percentage of higher education students with a declared disability/learning difficulty	<p>In 2014/15, 14% of WMC’s HE entrants indicated that they have a disability/learning difficulty, well ahead of HEFCE’s 2013/14 data for the region which states that only 5% of HE students in the Liverpool City Region are in receipt of Disabled Students’ Allowance.</p>
Non-continuation following year of entry	<p>The College’s non-continuation rate following year of entry for all undergraduates is currently at 7.82% (2014-15 HEIFES Return). This compares favourably with the national 2011-12 entrants data (Higher education indicators for further education colleges February 2016/01) of 15.2%.</p> <p>The College has set a target to reduce non-continuation rates for all full-time students from LPN (POLAR3, quintile 1) from 14% to 6% by 2021.</p>

	<p>Indicative activities to address non-completion of module and/or academic year activities will include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Summer school support workshops • Identification of 'at risk' students through attendance monitoring, with interventions and referrals to college support services • Identification of 'at risk' students through performance monitoring, with intervention and referrals to academic college support services such as Learning Mentors • Peer to peer mentoring scheme for higher education students
Higher education student retention and success	*Please see tables below on page 9 for retention and success performance three year data trends.
Internal progression of level 3 students to higher education within the College	<p>In 2015/16, only 4% of level 3 students progressed internally onto HE provision and 13% of the College's own students went on to study HE courses externally. With no external benchmark the College will establish the internal progression rate as a baseline.</p> <p>Indicative internal progression activities will include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Higher Education student union activities • Promotional activities to inform student choice • Student IAG through progression interviews at level 3
Progression to employment or post-graduate study	<p>The College invites those who successfully complete their final year to be a part of our Alumni. Our Alumni Association invites graduates back to the College to encourage students to progress to higher education as well as using those Alumni in promotional case studies. The College's Alumni Association grants a clear line of communication with graduates to allow us to monitor their progress following their successful completion.</p> <p>The College has set a target to increase progression onto further study or graduate level employment for those young, full-time, first degree achievers from LPN (POLAR3, quintile 1) from 84% to 90% by 2021.</p> <p>Indicative progression activities will include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support on HE research, including top up/level 6 and postgraduate study • Foundation degree to honours degree transitional summer schools • Expansion of the Art Fellowship scheme to all degree programmes in the College • Subscription to on-line resources/services that support graduate recruitment • Follow up graduate interviews 6 months post-graduation

***Higher Education Retention and Success three year data trends**

All HE Provision		
Year	Retention	Success
2013/14	96%	83%
2014/15	88%	84%
2015/16	91%	83%

Degree Provision		
Year	Retention	Success
2013/14	96%	86%
2014/15	91%	91%
2015/16	91%	84%

Recruitment

The College operates under the 'principles of fair admission' in relation to recruitment, selection and admission.

The College aims that its admissions policy and values:

- are transparent;
- enable the selection of students who are able to complete the programme as judged by their achievements and their potential;
- use assessment methods that are reliable and valid;
- minimise barriers for applicants;
- are carried out professionally in every respect and underpinned by appropriate organisational structures and processes.

HE enrolments by age group over last 5 years

	Age Band (Total New Starts Only)	
	21+	24+
2012/13	122	95
2013/14	197	142
2014/15	149	131
2015/16	162	117
2016/17	140	103

The College's own FE students remain a crucial market for HE. The College recognises the need to provide improved information and widen curriculum choices in order to encourage greater internal progression for students. Further activities will be developed to encourage and support Level 3 students to consider progressing into HE and be fully aware of the Level 4 opportunities available. In 2015/16, only 3% of Level 3 students progressed internally onto HE provision and 7% of the College's own students went on to study HE courses externally.

Clearly, the College's investment in securing progression routes from its own provision requires further development. A proportion of the increased fee will be used to stimulate interest and progression opportunities for both the College's own learners and those from feeder schools, colleges, and the wider region of Merseyside.

Overall, for Higher Education within the College in academic year 15/16, data demonstrates that retention is 91% and success is 83%. For degree provision alone in the same year, retention is 91% and success is 84%. Consequently, the additional rise in income from the fee increase will be used to facilitate strategies to maintain and improve further retention on the College's degree programme. Such measures would be targeted within the curriculum areas concerned and tailored to meet individual student needs.

The College estimates that it will spend a maximum of £36,330 on access, student success and progression measures overall. Based on the College's current performance and strategic aims, 10.5% of the higher fee income will be spent on access, 1.7% on student progression and 5.1% on student success. Internal progression is a key focus for action at the College and

some of the additional funding allocated for access will be used to fund activities, taster days and other associated events to aid internal progression.

To support our strategic objectives we propose to allocate 48.5% of the additional fee income above £6,165 on measures to support access, success, retention and progression. Financial support to students will represent 31.2% of the income above £6,165. Allocation of the 48.5% higher fee income in 2018/19 will be as follows:

Activity	Amount
Access (pre-entry activities to support students from disadvantaged backgrounds to enter higher education)	£22,050
Student success (post-entry activity to retain and support students from disadvantaged backgrounds)	£10,710
Progression (post-entry activity to support undergraduate students from disadvantaged backgrounds to progress to employment or postgraduate study)	£3570
Support bursary (£500pa for those with household income below £25k)	£57,500 (£500 x 115)
Access and Progression bursary (£500pa for those with household income below £25k and studied at WMC in previous 2 years)	£3,500 (£500 x 7)
Hardship fund (ad hoc support for those with household income below £25k)	£4,500
Total	£101, 830

Since the introduction of the new higher fee regime in 2012/13 the College has struggled to meet its student number targets, despite setting a low full time fee of £5,975 p.a. for full time programmes and £2,650 for part time programmes. The College has reduced its full time fee for HND down from £5,975 to £3,975 from September 2014 to try to attract more students. The majority of the College's HE students are mature adults, many from Low Participation Neighbourhoods (LPN) of the Borough (data below).

Year of Enrolment	% of enrolled students from LPN
2012/13	45%
2013/14	49%
2014/15	42%
2015/16	47%
2016/17	49%

The College has intensified its marketing activity via its website, Twitter and Facebook, in addition to advertising its portfolio in the local newspaper. The College held a HE progression event at the Twelve Quays Campus in May 2015 and was also represented at the recent 2015

UCAS Convention at the University of Liverpool. Internal progression to Higher Education is actively encouraged within the College. In addition, the Art and Design programmes were represented at the UCAS Creative Futures event in Manchester in December 2015. A task group was set up in 2013 to review Access to HE Level 3 programmes to identify any gaps in provision which may prevent students progressing to higher education. The College has an Access to Higher Education Manager. Part of this role is to regularly review and develop Level 3 provision with programme teams. This Manager has worked with local HEI partners to develop new health pathways to ensure that content provides the students with the best opportunity to progress to HE.

Fourteen Access to Higher Education programmes are available from September 2016.

Widening Participation

Care leavers - WMC is determined to provide educational opportunities for any students leaving care. The College appreciates the need to provide a clear network of support for students and has Learning Mentors who will support students in care during their studies. The Learning Mentor works with the students' tutors, Social Worker and other related agencies. This will include transitional help from FE to HE and financial advice to aid progression.

Protected characteristics

- **Age** - The College has a long history of providing Higher Education opportunities for mature students. The data shows that recruitment of students aged 21+ was 162 (15/16) and 140 (16/17). The College hopes to maintain this level of access for mature entrants as fees increase. This group will be included in targeted campaigns delivered to communities and employers within the region. This group will also be offered tailored IAG highlighting the benefits of higher education and the financial support available.
- **Disability** - In 2015/16, 24% of WMC's HE entrants indicated that they have a disability/learning difficulty, well ahead of HEFCE's 2013/14 data for the region which states that only 5% of HE students in the Liverpool City Region are in receipt of Disabled Students' Allowance. The College will continue to provide high standards of support and student inclusion activities.
- **Race** - In 2015/16, 11% of HE entrants to the College indicated that they are of black or minority ethnic (BME) origin. HEFCE data for the same year specifies that 4% of HE students in the Liverpool City Region indicated they were BME origin.
- **Sex** – In 2015/16 of all entrants to higher education at WMC, 52% were female and 48% were male. This is better than the sector average which, for 2015/16, 57% were female and 43% were male.

Additional learning support for students on HE courses

The College is determined to support all of its students to achieve their qualification. This support is delivered under the protocols of Student Finance England, and in line with the policies of its validating Universities, and Pearson. This is so that they have parity with Universities across the UK. HE students are made aware that they will need to apply for a Disabled Students' Allowance to pay for this support.

The Additional Learning Support team at the College numbers over 60 highly trained and qualified staff, including Specialist Tutors, Communication Support Workers and Learning Support Assistants. Staff from the Learning Support team work with students in every subject area and at every level from Entry Level to Higher Education.

The students the College supports have a wide range of needs, including:

- Dyslexia/Dyspraxia, ADHD, ADD;
- Mental Health and wellbeing;
- Physical Difficulties, and Autism Spectrum/Asperger's Syndrome.

Collaborative outreach work

The College is part of the recently-formed Merseyside Collaborative Outreach Partnership (MCOP) The network is led by the University of Liverpool and includes six HEIs and three FECs which provide HE level courses. The network was established via HEFCE's NCOP initiative and provides schools and colleges within Greater Merseyside with a 'Single Point of Contact' to signpost teachers and advisors to relevant outreach activities at each of the partner organisations.

HEFCE funding through this scheme requires the network to create a website for schools, appoint an officer to act as a single point of contact for schools, and develop resources and activities. The aim of the network for collaborative outreach is to ensure that all state-funded secondary schools and colleges understand how they can access higher education outreach activity and to simplify the way in which they can do so. They also wish universities and HE providers in FE to target 'cold-spots', where schools have little or no engagement with a university.

HEFCE is encouraging networks to spend funds on developments that can be continued after the funding period (2014/15-2015/16). Plans for the Greater Merseyside network therefore focus on existing target groups that will benefit from a collaborative approach, but which also connect to long-term institutional targets.

WMC expects that with the additional funding from the increased fees from 2017/18, it will be able to continue the work of the network at a local level. This will include development of resources and activities in schools; identifying and responding to any gaps in engagement; and ensuring that schools and learners are receiving the support and information they need to progress onto higher education. The College will also seek to develop other targeted activity, beyond its current undertakings, on raising aspirations of learners such as looked-after children. The College will also be working closely with schools around family and community learning events. This is direct expenditure for a member of WMC staff to work on increasing outreach activity and for retention of HE students.

The College has a Teaching and Learning Policy which outlines its strategic and operational approach to supporting students to ensure they reach their full potential in terms of development and achievement. This policy outlines what support the students will receive; from choosing the right course, supporting the students on programme and helping them to plan for the future. The College has an Equality and Diversity Policy and actively promotes equality and diversity via staff development and the provision of a range of teaching resources. The College ensures equality of opportunity for all its students, who come from extremely diverse backgrounds.

Student progress and development is monitored by all course tutors throughout their programme of study, enabled by small class sizes that involve and engage students. One to one tutorials are made available for students to provide the individual support they may need. Course data showing enrolment numbers, retention, achievement and classifications for all HE courses is monitored via the College HE quality processes. Course Leaders are held to account on any poor performance and provide explanations for this to the HE Academic Panel and this is reported to the Higher Education Quality Assurance Committee (HEQAC). Three

year datasets are provided for review to show trends. Where courses are not showing improvement in recruitment numbers or retention over time, they will be considered for removal from the College portfolio. University validated programmes are also monitored via the University's own quality processes. Module assessment boards take place to review and assess student progress for each module and Course Leaders are required to submit annual monitoring reports to the University, containing information regarding student development and achievement.

In addition to reviewing course data information, the Panel and Committee receive student feedback and the actions taken to respond to students. Information on student support, progression and student success profiles is also submitted for review. Accommodation and resources are monitored throughout the academic year.

Equality and Diversity

The fundamental purpose of this agreement is to stimulate access and participation in higher education by learners from LPN. As a further education college within an area of recognised deprivation, the College has an Equality and Diversity Strategy that encourages participation in learning from all areas of the community.

The College will ensure those groups most in need of Information, Advice and Guidance relating to the accessibility, affordability and benefits of HE will receive associated targeted information.

Wirral Metropolitan College is committed to valuing diversity and to promoting and implementing equality of opportunity in all its activities.

This commitment is based on the principle that those who learn, work and are involved in the College should be treated fairly and with respect. The performance of the College depends on all people having a stake in its future and recognising that everyone has both rights and responsibilities within this context.

The College will work towards an environment and culture where everyone is encouraged and supported to develop their full potential, which includes giving due regard for protected characteristics as outlined in the Equality Act 2010 and the Technical Guidance on Further and Higher Education.

The protected characteristics for Further and Higher Education Institution provisions are:

- Age
- Disability
- Gender reassignment
- Pregnancy and maternity
- Race
- Religion or belief
- Sex
- Sexual orientation

The College will also meet the Public Sector Equality Duty, which requires it to:

- Eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation;
- Advance equality of opportunity;
- Foster good relations between people who do and do not share the same protected characteristics.

The College's Equality and Diversity Policy and Action Plan have the following objectives:

- Value and respect diversity and recognise the benefits from our differences;
- Create a positive, safe, accessible environment and culture in which discrimination has no part;
- Listen to, engage and collaborate with a wide range of learners, partners and staff in order to continually improve the College's equality practice;
- Promote equal opportunities in all aspects of employment;
- Make reasonable adjustments to support and respond flexibly where there is a clearly identified need;
- Ensure that all policies and procedures are accessible and clear and reflect the College's commitment to equality;

- Ensure that all learning programmes reflect and promote equality and diversity in content and delivery;
- Be accountable by target setting, monitoring, evaluating and reviewing progress on a regular basis;
- Take necessary action when non-compliance with Equality and Diversity is identified;
- Secure resources to ensure that the College meets its public sector duty in respect of Equality and Diversity.

Impacts of the above action plan are monitored through the College's Equality and Diversity Committee and also through the designated College HE quality committees.

Targets and Milestones

The College constantly reviews and evaluates its current position within the sector. With this in mind, it has set targets that focus on areas for improvement, which stretch and challenge the College, and targets that are in line with OFFA's strategic plan 2015-2020. Therefore, targets are set that encompass all aspects of the students' life cycle with the aim to improve and maintain student access, success and progression. The use of milestone targets to measure progress and evaluate performance will be either on a yearly cycle or through interim reviews.

Access target

Overall in 2013-14, the percentage of degree learners attending the College from Low Participation Neighbourhoods (LPN), classified by POLAR3 as quintile 1, was 61%. This figure is 4% higher than the sector average for all FECs. However, the number of young (18–25) entrants is significantly lower than the proportion of older 'second chance learners', with only 33% of LPN learners being under 25 years old.

Therefore, the College has set a target to increase access for young, full time, undergraduate entrants from LPN to 55% by 2021. The College will encourage applications to higher education through outreach activities that are focused on raising aspirations and attainment among potential applications from LPN. There are twelve local areas of LPN that are classified as quintile 1 (POLAR3) within the College's demographic. The College will engage in opportunities to visit Primary and Secondary schools in LPN, as well as summer school taster days, which will contribute to raising access. The internal progression of WMC level 3 students aged 18-25 from LPN will also be raised and supported through specific Information, Advice and Guidance activities.

The College, in partnership with other HEIs, participates in HEFCE's MNCO aspiration-raising activities across the region. Part of this collaboration with MNCO includes a project created, planned and implemented by the College that features sustained and co-ordinated activities in LPNs (POLAR3 quintile 1 areas). Progress on this target will be measured and evaluated on a yearly cycle using widening participation indicators in line with HEFCE UK performance indicators.

Student success target

The College has set a target to reduce non- continuation rates for all full-time students from LPN (POLAR3, quintile 1) from 14% to 6% by 2021. This will be achieved through the implementation of a Student Mentor scheme that will offer social support and signpost those students 'at risk' of non-continuation to college support services. The College will facilitate accommodation for personal study and support distance learning (where mitigating circumstances deem this appropriate). The use of induction activities and HE Student Union activities will be further developed to promote student engagement, enhancement and belonging. A number of HE tutors are currently in the process of gaining Fellowship of the Higher Education Academy, this process will see HE tutors reflect on their own performance and practice. This in turn will support student success through the continued improvements in teaching and learning. Performance and progress will be measured and evaluated on a yearly cycle, using non-continuation rates and module completion rates. This measure is in line with HEFCE UK performance indicators.

Progression target

The College has set a target to increase progression onto further study or graduate level employment for those young, full-time, first degree achievers from LPN (POLAR3, quintile 1) from 84% to 90% by 2021, with an interim milestone target after two years, of 87% in 2019. The College will work with local employers and those in professional careers to build on and increase the national figure of 84.5% (this figure is related to 16% of Further Education Colleges 2012/13). The intention is to close the gap in employment for this group between FEC and HEI graduates. The College will engage with already established links with employers to source work placements for undergraduates. Progress on this target will be measured and evaluated through follow up contact with leavers after six months. This will ascertain the number of graduates in employment or in further study.

Collaborative and long-term outreach targets

Activities to increase access to higher education through collaborative and long-term outreach work will include the following:

Continue to build on the collaborative outreach work, by developing resources and activities in schools, ensuring schools and pupils are receiving the support and information they need to progress onto higher education.

Developing drop-in sessions and workshops, as well as one-to-one appointments from a dedicated HE engagement team; student finance advice team; careers team; additional learning support team.

Providing drop-in sessions and workshops to raise aspirations and confidence in order to raise participation from identified target groups, such as looked-after children.

Working closely with schools around family and community learning events to raise participation from target groups.

Monitoring and evaluation arrangements

The Principal and Vice Principal for Curriculum have overall responsibility for the Access Agreement.

Monitoring of progress on targets set by the College will be the responsibility of the Academic Panel. This panel meets twice throughout the academic year and receives an Academic Panel Report from each course leader detailing not only the quality of provision, but also information and data regarding all aspects of the student lifecycle. Therefore, access, success and progression will be reviewed at this level to ensure quality, consistency and that milestone targets are being met.

The Academic Panel will then report its findings to the Higher Education Quality Assurance Committee (HEQAC). The HEQAC, who also meet twice during the academic year, are responsible for the following strategic developments: overall college performance evaluation; overall quality assurance and standards; any actions arising from QAA reviews; and ensuring any actions are implemented and completed in the appropriate timeframe. A HE student representative is invited to both the Academic Panel and the HEQAC.

The College also holds a HE Forums throughout the year. This forum is an arena for HE tutors to share good practice, inform and update HE staff on developments within the sector and to support Continued Professional Development specifically for HE. The forum will be used to support HE staff in monitoring and achieving targets set at course level as part of the Access Agreement.

Evaluation of activities

Evaluation of the effectiveness of student lifecycle activities will be undertaken by:

- Tracking the progress of students who participate in collaborative and outreach activities to see whether the activities result in improved recruitment to higher education
- Collecting participant feedback to evaluate the impact of activities on attitudes and aspirations towards higher education, and whether this results in improved attainment of participants
- Gathering feedback from student ambassadors and academic staff on the effectiveness of activities to improve success and retention
- Utilise the HEFCE Toolkits and the experience of our university and FEC partners to review activities against benchmarks
- Use of KIS and NSS data for national comparisons of student satisfaction rates
- Use of DLHE data for national comparisons of progression into employment or postgraduate study

Provision of Information to Prospective Students

The College will provide information relating to finance and current course fees for students via the following platforms:

WMC HE Prospectus – this publication contains information for students about the first port of call for guidance on the application process, including contact details of student advisers. Information will also include associated tuition fees, loans and grants. The document also contains details around making an application for student support.

College Website – the website includes up to date student fee information, as well as information around loans and bursaries.

HE Events and Open Days – Teaching staff and learning Support Staff will provide advice and guidance to potential students and associated family members. The College also attends external events and presents exhibitions within the local community Galleries and such events will also be a vehicle to raise student awareness of the financial options available to them to study at HE level.

UCAS and SLC – the College provides information to UCAS and the Student Loan Company in order to ensure that accurate information is available to potential students. The College will comply with all associated deadlines through the College's HE Administrator.

CMA - In accordance with the Competition and Markets Authority guidance, all information provided to students is distributed in a durable medium and subsequent changes to that information is brought to the attention of students.

Consultation with Students

The College proactively seeks to encourage all students to engage in all aspects of college life and processes, which enable students to communicate with staff in a range of ways and levels. Students' views are valued by the College, and the engagement between students and staff allows consideration of new ideas and ways of working, and also ways to resolve issues, resulting in enhancement of the students' experience.

WMC students have been directly involved in the development of the OFFA Access Agreement, and they have been consulted over the proposed tuition fees and how the plan will be implemented.

A copy of the draft document was sent to the College Manager for Student Engagement who has discussed the content of the agreement with HE student representatives. In addition the HE Director and Manager have held seminars with both HE and FE Level 3 course groups, to discuss the content of the agreement. A proforma was given to students and their feedback has been collated and consequently aspects of the agreement were amended. For example the bursary as a fixed sum rather than other options was preferred by student representatives. Other additional amendments have also been included within the agreement.

Student representatives are also members of the HE quality committees within the College and they have attended meetings where discussion around the implementation of the Access Agreement has been discussed. Currently all HE quality committees meet every term, as do the HE Forum and HE Student Union. Feedback and actions from the committees are forwarded to the College leadership team where necessary, otherwise actions are implemented through the Directors for each curriculum area concerned.

When students are inducted at the College they receive a considerable amount of information regarding the opportunities that are available to them, both educational and in terms of quality processes. Also, as the academic year progresses further opportunities will be promoted to students. It was thought that because of the amount of information given at the start of their course, students may not take on board all of the opportunities available to them. The new HE student handbook is a directory that students can take away and refer to in their own time. The HE handbook contains a student charter and information on how students can become involved in a range of councils, panels and committees, and also become a student representative at the Board of Governors. This enables students to present their views, the views of students within their class group, and the wider student body.

The College has a Student Engagement Policy and Implementation Strategy. This details how it will develop and strengthen student representation and participation, and how it might involve students in quality improvement. It also gives details of how the College will measure and report on the impact of student engagement.

The College operates a Student Union which students are encouraged to join so that members can take advantage of a range of organised activities and trips and engage with college staff about all aspects of HE.