

Walsall College 2019-20 Access and Participation Plan

Assessment of current performance

Walsall is the thirtieth most deprived local authority ward in the UK, with below average levels of employment and a high number of residents (30%) who are economically inactive, compared with the West Midlands (24.9%) and UK averages (22.3%). Walsall College stands out as a 'beacon of hope' within the Black Country area, and is proud to inspire our students to increase their aspirations and life goals. A recent study from the Office for National Statistics (ONS) shows Walsall in the top four towns in England with the greatest share of the most deprived households. Walsall is the eighth most deprived town in terms of education. The work the College does is vital to the regeneration of the greater Walsall area.

Walsall has significantly lower qualifications within its population, when compared with England and Wales. The number of pupils leaving school without five GCSEs is 3% higher than the national average, at 50.8%. Of the 3,477 16-18 students starting in September 2016, over 50% had either no maths or English GCSE at grade C or above. The percentage of Walsall residents with a level 4 qualification has improved from 18.2% (in 2010) to 24.3% (in 2016), but is still 13% behind the national average. These statistics are at the heart of our Widening Participation Strategy.

Socio-economic factors, whether measured in terms of family income, occupational classification or neighbourhood, remain a key factor of educational attainment at school level and access to Higher Education (HE) or Higher Apprenticeships. There are 81,660 less people with degrees in the Black Country, when compared to the average in England. Therefore, Walsall College has a vital role to play in developing locally based HE and Higher Apprenticeships, in providing and supporting progression routes to higher level skills and harnessing expertise in working with local businesses and industries. We remain fully committed to supporting local and regional residents in accessing higher levels of education and skills, and increasing participation rates. Through firmly embedded support structures for students from non-traditional backgrounds and a HE and Higher Apprenticeship offer which is both attractive and vocationally relevant, we are able to successfully support a seamless progression into higher skills and training within the College.

Walsall College's Strategic Ambitions and Mission Statement position the College as an agent for social inclusion and social change, and one that welcomes students from all backgrounds, including those not traditionally well represented in Higher Education. Whilst recognising relevant statutory and professional requirements, this regulation and associated procedures are framed within the College's published Equality and Diversity Policy, and operate to ensure equality of opportunity for all applicants to the College irrespective of protected characteristics.

In 2016/17, more than 60% of overall students are from the Walsall borough, others travel from Staffordshire, Dudley, Sandwell, Wolverhampton and Birmingham. The majority of the College population is White British with 29% of students from ethnic minority groups, reflective of the wider Walsall community.

Our internal quality assurance and assessment informs where there are areas for improvement and where our performance is compared to that of the national position. Living in an area of social deprivation does not prevent a successful outcome for students at Walsall College, and the gap in success between those who live in different areas is consistently small. Student achievement during 2016/17 has continued to be outstanding in many areas.

Disadvantaged Postcodes	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17	Grand Total
No	32%	31.47%	36.42%	33.2%
Yes	68%	68.53%	63.58%	66.7%

Figure 1.

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The College has large numbers of students from areas of deprivation. They continue to achieve at outstanding levels. In 2016/17, the gap narrowed from 3% to 1%, so success is very similar to that of their peers who live in areas that are more affluent.



Figure 18. Student success by widening participation

The participation of local areas (POLAR) classification groups areas across the UK based on the proportion of the young population that participates in HE. It shows the recruitment to HE over the past four years (including 2017/18) based on the POLAR Quintile rating.

1 = most disadvantaged.

5 = most advantaged.

Quintile Areas	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18
1	13.48%	13.97%	5.30%	3.39%
2	21.02%	31.93%	12.12%	7.93%
3	24.26%	20.62%	19.21%	17.71%
4	23.72%	21.29%	35.81%	38.32%
5	17.52%	12.20%	27.55%	32.66%

As measured by the third iteration of the Participation of Local Areas measure (POLAR3). POLAR classifies local areas or 'wards' into five groups, based on the proportion of 18-year-olds who enter HE aged 18 or 19 years old. These groups range from quintile 1 areas, with the lowest young participation (most disadvantaged), up to quintile 5 areas with the highest rates (most advantaged).

ibid.

Worth noting - We started enrolling with LCCA in 2016/17. 38% from POLAR 3 and below. While progress has been made to improve access to higher education from under-represented groups, there is still more to do. For example, access to higher education has improved for those from the most disadvantaged backgrounds. However, the achievement of the Government's target to double the proportion by 2020 is likely to require a significant rise in the rate of progress.

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On average, around 550 Walsall College Level 3 students progress to University each year, and events to support this progression are planned throughout the student's experience, even for those starting with us at Level 2. For some students, leaving home and moving away is not an option and even regional universities can present a challenge in terms of commuting, when for example, a student may have childcare demands or a part-time job. For this particular cohort, Walsall College offers progression into university level learning across many subject areas. HE provision is well-established in the College through direct HEFCE funding for a range of Higher National Certificate (HNC) and Diploma programmes, and there is a growing portfolio of Level 6, in partnership (and validated by) Birmingham City University. There is provision for PGCE courses through franchised provision with the University of Warwick. HE provision is predominantly located in Business and Management, Computing, Creative Arts and Hospitality. The College works in partnership with the London College of Contemporary Arts (LCCA) and has a growing provision based in the heart of London. Achievement rates for HE students are high on the majority of courses. The QAA review of Higher Education (December 2014), recognised the high quality of teaching, learning and assessment. The College was commended for the quality of student learning opportunities, identifying many areas of good practice.

Equality and Diversity for Higher Education

Walsall College is passionate about inclusion, respect and enabling all students and staff to reach their full potential. Our work in this area was recognised by Ofsted in February 2013 as outstanding. The Equality and Diversity Policy was developed in consultation with trade unions, staff, students and partner organisations that have a legitimate interest in the Equality and Diversity policy. We ensure there is focus on access and equity across the student lifecycle, providing public transparency around commitments and progress in improving access. Our vision for Equality and Diversity is clear; we want to go beyond outstanding through inclusion. Staff and students must be able to flourish at the College and feel that they have a fair and equal chance to reach their potential. To achieve excellence for our community we need to continue to "bring talent to life". By doing so we are creating an aspirational, motivated and diverse community which is able to thrive in a changeable global economy. We aim to respond to the huge range of needs expressed by students and our stakeholders and celebrate the benefits of difference.

As a truly inclusive College we will continue to recruit talent from all sectors of society, fully develop the talent of all our staff and students and build collaboration and a sense of community. We aim to go beyond statutory requirements to ensure our staff, students and partners have the best experience possible. We aim to continue to develop a corporate culture that is inclusive at all levels and in every system and process. Through our Single Equality Scheme, Equality and Diversity Strategy and Equality Action Plan we will work with people from across the College and beyond to not only deliver our statutory responsibilities, but to exceed them. It is our aim to ensure that our key College Policies, Procedures, Plans and Practices are initially created with an Equality and Diversity ethos and are then meticulously reviewed to effectively monitor their potential impact on people who share Protected Characteristics (these are Age, Disability, Gender, Gender Reassignment, Marriage and Civil Partnerships, Pregnancy and Maternity, Race, Religion or Belief and Sexual Orientation).

The Equality and Diversity Committee meets on a termly basis and is chaired by the Principal and Chief Executive. This process and subsequent actions have significant impact on driving equality forward and ensuring that actions are monitored for impact. Each curriculum area meets termly with the Director of Quality and Higher Education to review the learner experience. During these meetings, the welfare of students is at the forefront of discussions, and includes consideration and evaluation of equality and diversity within the student body, together with any concerns around retention of students across all protected characteristics, with a particular focus on any emerging gaps between groups of students, and the actions around addressing these gaps where required.

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2016/17 Equality and Diversity Impact Measures (EDIMS) Achievement HE Provision Pro-Achieve Data

Identification of underrepresented student groups is continually monitored and analysed by Heads of Cluster, to identify where there are gaps in equality of opportunity in relation to access, success and progression. Equality and Diversity is embedded within all College activity across the full scope of our provision. This includes Higher Education and those students progressing from level 3 to Higher Education. For last academic year's HE provision, there were three gaps in achievement for consideration:

- HE provision predominantly consisted of adults (87.2%), and achievement was -6.2%, when compared to their younger counterparts.
- Nationally, white males from lower socio-economic groups are among the most underrepresented in higher education. For Walsall College, they are well represented. There were 48% male students in HE provision and achievement was -18.1%, compared to their female counterparts.
- There were 24.25% BME students in HE provision and their achievement was -13.5%, compared to their non-BME counterparts. We know this mirrors a national phenomenon however. Data is based on 57 students, which adds some context to the gap; nevertheless, this is an action to address in the College's Quality Improvement Plan (QIP).

2016/17 EDIMS

EDIM		Starts	Withdrawn after 6 weeks	Retained Number	Achieved Number	Achieved %	Gap
Total		235	34	201	172	74.6%	
Age	16-18	30	3	27	24	80.0%	No
	19+	205	31	174	149	73.8%	-6.2
Gender	Female	122	10	112	100	83.3%	No
	Male	113	24	89	73	65.2%	-18.1
BME	No	178	21	157	137	77.8%	No
	Yes	57	13	44	36	64.3%	-13.5
Learning Disability	No	200	28	172	147	74.6%	No
	Yes	35	6	29	26	74.3%	No

2017-18 EDIMS (In-Year Retention): HE Provision Pro-Achieve Data

For this academic year, there are three gaps emerging for consideration however, these are small and inflated by low overall numbers of students in Higher Education:

- HE provision predominantly consists of adults (71%), and as we noticed last year adult retention is -4.2%, compared to their younger counterparts.
- There are slightly more male students in HE provision, and retention is -3.1% compared to their female counterparts. This is on target to significantly reduce last year's achievement gap for male students.
- There is a pleasing increase this year of BME students and there is no current gap in retention. Therefore, we are seeing the benefits of increased support and interventions.
- 14 students have learning difficulties however; they are all currently retained on their course.
- 30 students have a learning disability, and they are equally well retained.

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2017/18 EDIMS

EDIM		Starts	Withdrawn after 6 weeks	Retained Number	Retained %	Gap
Total		265	8	248	96.8%	
Age	16-18	34	0	34	100%	No
	19+	189	8	181	95.8	-4.2%

Gender	Female	103	2	101	98.1%	No
	Male	120	6	114	95.0%	-3.1%
BME	No	161	6	155	96.3%	No
	Yes	62	2	60	96.8%	No
Learning Difficulty	No	209	8	201	96.2%	-3.8%
	Yes	14	0	14	100%	No
Learning Disability	No	193	7	186	96.4%	No
	Yes	30	1	29	96.7%	No

Ambitions and strategy

Governance

Governors have a significant role in creating and maintaining an inclusive organisation where all can work, learn and reach their full potential. The Governing body instructs the College to:

- Ensure that relevant policies are in place, up-to-date and effectively implemented and monitored for impact.
- Set and monitor challenging equality targets.
- Promote equality of opportunity and celebrate diversity.
- Not discriminate on the grounds of any protected characteristic in any aspect of its work.
- Listen to the voice of its students and use it to make improvements which support inclusion and drive equality forward.
- Ensure that all in our College community are protected from bullying and discrimination, wherever they may be learning or working.

The Equality and Diversity Policy is annually updated and approved by our Senior Management Team (SMT). The approval process includes analysis of the Policy and associated Equality Impacted Assessment (EIA). The approval and EIA processes are followed for all key College policy documents. The College undertakes a range of activities relating to continuous improvement (reducing gaps in access, success and progression) for underrepresented groups. Most of our HE students (67%) progress internally from level three programmes, and we carry out specific activities with groups that we are prioritising to encourage progression to Higher Education and throughout the student lifecycle. The assessment of our performance, and the priorities we have identified for access and participation is firmly embedded in the quality assurance processes and governance of the College.

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Our key target group are the residents of Walsall and surrounding boroughs where aspiration to consider higher-level student is low. The percentage of Walsall residents with a level 4 qualification has improved from 18.2% (in 2010) to 24.3% (in 2016), but is still 13% behind the national average. These statistics are at the heart of our access and participation plan. The College works collaboratively in the region (with schools, colleges, universities, employers and local authorities etc.), to support Government targets to increase participation in HE (this includes an ambitious increase by 20% of students in HE from ethnic minority groups, and to address the under representation of young men from disadvantaged backgrounds in HE). The measure of success is the progression of young people (aged 18-19) onto courses of prescribed higher education, whatever the mode of study (HNC, HND, foundation degree, degree, and higher apprenticeships). The proportion of care leavers and people estranged from their families progressing to HE nationally, remains extremely low. Walsall College has had some historic progression from this group, especially where students begin with us at level 2 or 3. The tracking of these particular groups of students has not been as systematic as those in other categories, and the College is working on an ambition to address this during 2018/19.

The College is currently exploring how best to review recruitment and performance of wider underrepresented groups such as people from Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities, refugees and children of military families. General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR) is set to add further challenge when gathering and working with this data. However as stated there is an ambition to improve the flag and tracking of these groups during 2018/19.

Collaborative Working and Sustained Outreach Activities

The College is working in two formal partnerships, which feed directly into progression and success activities. Firstly, with the Black Country College's Consortium who meet each term to explore shared good practice methods to raise awareness and increase retention. A shared online prospectus has been designed in order to simplify and make transparent the HE offer across the Black Country. Prospective students will be able to more easily able to review subjects, levels and locations to inform their decisions. Secondly, as members of the 'Aspire to HE' partnership, we have a range of progression activities in place which have also been designed to raise attainment in schools and in the College, as pupils and students aspire to HE as a real opportunity for them.

There are 11 schools attending the HE Graduation Ceremony, one of several activities based around a series of initiatives called 'I can do that'. A post-event questionnaire will evaluate the impact of such activities. The tranche 2 tracker of activities takes us up to July 2018 and this will be closely monitored at the partnership leadership level. School pupils will benefit from purpose made videos, which have been commissioned under the 'Aspire to HE' banner. The videos explore HE 'myth buster' themes and will be included at such events as the Walsall College Universities HE fair (a 'mini' UCAS event – inviting universities and apprenticeship organisations to attend and support). Such plans are clearly linked to raising awareness for those at school study age, of the specific entry requirements for HE and therefore what they must be aiming towards in terms of their own attainment levels whilst at school. A clear sight into HE will boost aspirations to do well and progress. Extra maths and English sessions are planned on Saturday morning as an intensive ten-week experience to support attainment levels, specifically for those wanting to progress into HE.

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We are working at local level to target specific underrepresented wards:

Ward	Current participation rate	Target participation rate	Difference young participation rate	Estimated total target population	Increase needed (based on measure inc. ethnicity)
<u>Birchills Leamore</u>	19.90%	21.20%	1.3%	975	13
<u>Blakenall</u>	11.80%	14.80%	3.0%	895	27
<u>Bloxwich East</u>	16.40%	20.20%	3.8%	770	29
<u>Bloxwich West</u>	21.10%	21.40%	0.3%	1030	3
					72

There has been a range of specific activities to target this increase in recruitment of underrepresented students, with more to come this academic year. The College has recruited ex-HE students to act as ambassadors who are available to visit lessons and share their inspirational 'progression to and beyond HE' stories:

Activity	Date	Student attendance	Cost per student
Cooking on a budget	15/01/2018	6 attended – All Aspire students	£48.28
Cooking on a budget	24/01/2018	5 attended – 4 were Aspire students	
Cooking on a budget	01/02/2018	4 attended – All Aspire students	
Living on a budget	09/02/2018	1 Aspire students	No Cost to this event. There will be costs for future Living on a Budget sessions
Theatre Workshop	16/04/2018 - 17/04/2018	All together (3 shows) 256 attended – 44 were Aspire students	£373.50
HE Awards	10/11/2018	7 attended as guests – 4 were Aspire students	£87.50
121 mentoring	Ongoing	Out of an original 99 Level 3 Year 2 students, Viv has met 59 . Starting to meet Level 3 Year 1	N/A
Travel expenses (<u>uni</u> Visits)	N/A	So far we have had 2 aspire students claim travel expenses.	£27.05 for one student £60.40 for one student
UCAS payment	N/A	One student claimed UCAS payment.	£24
Trips	N/A	6 computing aspire students attended a Digital Explorers 'Experience Work' Birmingham workshop.	£60

The London College of Contemporary Arts (LCCA)

The College is continuing its partnership with the LCCA in 2019/20. The purpose of which is to provide London based students with an opportunity to undertake HNC/HND courses in a number of subject areas such as Creative Arts, Business, and Hospitality that will be taught in London. There is more work to do to fully analyse the makeup of those students applying for this provision, however, current indicators demonstrate that we are successfully attracting so-called non-traditional (non A Level/non BTEC) adult students. The College is expecting 400 students to participate in 2018/19, and this is set to increase for 2019/20 with the aim to rise to 550 by 2021/22. The relationship the College has with the LCCA is a formal partnership, delivering Pearson Higher National Diplomas (HND) at level 4 and 5.

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Quality of Experience

Walsall College is committed to continuously improving the high quality vocational education and training it provides for a diverse range of students. The College has produced a Higher Education Learning, Teaching and Assessment Strategy specifically for the delivery of Higher Education within the College and this is informed by The Framework for Higher Education Qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland (FHEQ). Regardless of full-time or part-time mode of study, education on the course can embrace a wide variety of modes of both learning and teaching, which can be used in combinations to support different students. These include flexible and distributed learning, work-based or placement learning, and technology-enhanced learning. The College remains committed to continuous improvement of the quality of learning for all students by:

- Applying a 'right student, right course' philosophy, which is designed to ensure recruitment integrity onto a programme of study that fits the individual concerned;
- Providing focused development to empower staff to deliver 'first class' education and training;
- Managing elements of provision that impact on the ability of the student to participate, succeed and progress. These key variables include; Curriculum offer at appropriate levels, enhancement to improve the quality of learning opportunities, Information, Advice and Guidance, entry requirements and initial assessment, e-Learning and Tutorial support.

The College is able to take steps to engage all students, individually and collectively, as partners in the assurance and enhancement of their educational experience. We are able to monitor and evaluate support arrangements and resources, which enable students to develop their academic, personal and professional potential.

Additional Learning Support Strategy

The College aims to provide sensitive advice and guidance to all students prior to entry, to raise aspiration and to assess any additional needs in a timely and comprehensive manner. Students are encouraged to disclose their needs confidentially at all stages of the student journey.

The College uses a range of strategies to design an appropriate and flexible support programme to reduce significant barriers to learning. It regularly reviews the impact of its interventions to ensure that available funding is used to the best effect and impacts positively on student achievement and development of independence. Walsall College works with the Local Authority to publish the Local Offer. This sets out, in one place, provision available across education, health and social care for children and young people in the Borough who have SEN or are disabled. This provides clear, comprehensive and accessible information about the available provision and how it can be accessed. This ensures that provision is more responsive to local needs by involving relevant parties, such as, children, parents and service providers.

Teaching, Learning and Assessment Strategy

We provide quality learning, teaching and assessment, which is core to Walsall College's commitment to provide all individuals with a personalised learning experience that will enhance confidence, aspirations and optimise their learning outcomes and progression. The College commitment to enable students to be *skilled, professional and enterprising* is fundamental to the strategy. Excellent teaching and learning is central to addressing differential outcomes, with particular attention paid to issues of inclusive curricular, learning and teaching and student engagement. The methodology is based on the view that the most successful initiatives work incrementally and need to encompass a range of different interventions, each of which targets a particular hurdle for some students. The College seeks to provide students with the best possible learning and teaching experiences in an environment, which enables them to have access to resources that will help them:

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- Interact and collaborate with staff and other students;
- Develop self-awareness, independent skills and become more autonomous;
- Reach their potential in their chosen areas of study.

As students begin Higher Education (HE) at Walsall College, delivery and assessment methods help them to move from dependency to independence and self-directedness. Study skills support enable students to accumulate a pool of experiences and knowledge that can be used as a basis on which to build their learning. Students will typically take increased control of their personal learning programme and demonstrate a readiness to learn associated with the developmental tasks of social roles and their independent performance. Good learning at Walsall College is vocational, active, motivational and progressive. It is closely linked to assessment; allowing development of skills, knowledge and attributes that will enable HE students to complete assessments. A large proportion of our HE units are practical in nature, giving students the opportunities to tackle 'real life' examples to apply their skills and knowledge to case studies or projects. College strategies for learning may include:

- project work carried out as an individual or as part of a group;
- work-based learning;
- lectures and seminars;
- facilitated activities;
- visits to companies with a facilitator to structure the visit;
- visiting speakers from the vocational sector.

An emphasis will be placed on active learning, drawing on materials gained from the working environment or industry wherever possible. This will help HE students to develop the transferable skills necessary in a changing and dynamic working environment, as well as achieve our *Walsall College Graduate (WCG)* outcomes.

Monitoring and evaluation arrangements

Monitoring and evaluation of all previous OFFA agreements takes place at the HE management board where student representation is able to comment and influence any developments. This will continue with the approved Access and Participation Plan where students will take an active role, in both evaluating outcomes and setting targets. The College also consults with a range of organisations/ individuals including staff, students and other stakeholders such as the Local Authority, Community groups and specific interest groups, such as Walsall Disability Forum, Walsall Black Sisters Collective and Walsall Multi Faith Forum.

Access, student success and progression measures

Our ambition and strategy to offer higher education provision specifically for those local students who do not have the opportunity (e.g. carers, parents, need to maintain a part-time job) or confidence to travel further for HE, requires very specific approaches to enable effective access and participation. In addition, prospective students and their parents have a strong adversity to taking out student loans and to being in debt. As previously outlined in our review of student demographics, a critical barrier to access is often students' self-belief, aspiration and ambition. Typically, investment is made in helping students to become more confident, self-motivated and able to set themselves mid and long-term career targets which are suitably challenging. It is extremely common for a prospective student to be surrounded by friends and relatives, which have all entered into various minimum wage positions after leaving school. Whilst the prospective student can often see that some of their friends/peers are somewhat dissatisfied with their careers or feel that their lifetime options remain limited, this does not always result in a natural realisation that higher education could possibly offer them greater choice and social mobility.

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School Liaison and Partnership Work

Our very earliest intervention is to support our local schools in helping young people to strengthen their understanding of the potential benefits of further and higher education, including apprenticeships. Walsall College has excellent relationships with many of our local secondary schools. For 2019/20, the College will continue to work with our school partners through our Schools Liaison Team, with a view to promoting the vocational curriculum with a new and more diverse set of short taster courses, which will aim to inspire increasing numbers of students to consider progression of their education. We are dedicated to working with schools in Walsall to support them in providing advice to their students on the many routes available to them when they leave school. Our services we provide to schools, both onsite at our state-of-the-art campuses and by visiting schools directly, include free Independent Careers Advice and Guidance, Take a Tour, Try Before you Apply, Subject Specific Tasters, Industry Specific and Apprenticeship Talks.

Walsall College makes excellent use of a variety of social media including Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and LinkedIn. We will use these communication channels to promote the vocational taster week. We have 14,000 likes on the College's Facebook page. We have 6,500 Twitter followers. We have 2,500 followers on LinkedIn and 1000 on Instagram. We drive followers to the College's website, via a targeted page to promote our Vocational and Curriculum Taster Weeks. Walsall College has excellent relationships with our local Pupil Referral Unit in Walsall. We work in close collaboration with the New Leaf Centre in Walsall, a short stay school for pupils who have been excluded from mainstream education. Walsall College is one of New Leaf's Learning Partners and pupils are referred to our Achieving Together Programme. Young people who are NEET or at risk of becoming NEET are targeted through New Leaf to raise awareness and encourage participation in the Vocational and Curriculum Taster Weeks.

For 2019/20, Walsall College will provide an innovative five day programme of vocational taster sessions which seeks to motivate and engage young people to explore a wide range of curriculum options, and the careers associated with them, giving them the knowledge and confidence to make career and life choices. This will include Campus Tours, explanation of the different routes available through Further and Higher Education, registration onto programme and the opportunity for participants to choose three curriculum areas in which they may be interested in studying.

Working with Level 3 Students

For many students, it is at the point where they enter into level 3 study when the possibility of higher education begins to be more seriously considered. This cohort will remain a key target group for the College during 2019/20 and therefore, a more defined plan of intervention will aim to increase applications to HE generally as well as for the College's own HE offer. The College is dedicated to increasing its range of activities specifically designed to target those students who have low aspirations and feel that higher education could not possibly be of benefit for them. There is strong correlation with this group and those students who derive from areas with so-called widening participation postcodes/'cold spots'. The previous analysis in this plan clearly shows that Walsall is a borough with a significant amount of potential students in this category and therefore our work forms a critical aspect of social inclusion and mobility and regional economic growth.

HE Activities/Sessions/Events planned for 2019/20

Careers Guidance Team provide the following throughout an academic year.

September onwards:

- UCAS 'Apply' internal system for students to apply to universities/colleges for HE courses only and for staff to access;

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- Annual HE Fair – The Hub – approximately 25 local and national universities invited in to showcase their HE courses over two days. In addition, students will attend specific talks on Personal Statement advice, HE Student Finance and HE Interview Technique.
- Specific HE and employability talks provided throughout the year by various universities and organisations for specific Year 1 and Year 2 Level 3 student groups:, for example:
 - Careers in Healthcare Sciences – University of Bradford
 - Primary School Teaching Degree – University of Wolverhampton
 - Paralegal and Solicitor Apprenticeships - University of Law
 - The Teaching Skills Test sessions – Newman University
 - University of Huddersfield – Job Mock interviews for A & D students
 - Ernst Young – Graduate Schemes/Opportunities/Application process/Assessment Day/Where to find vacancies
 - Lloyds Banking Group – Career opportunities, skills required and where to apply
- Full UCAS support throughout the year
- HE Mock interviews
- Computing Curriculum – Employer Led Event
- Job Alerts Service
- UCAS CPD for new and less experienced staff

January onwards:

- Mandatory Intro to UCAS & HE sessions for Year 1 Level 3 students
- HE Student Finance Talks
- Job Mock Interviews - HNC/HND Sports students
- Progression Talks – Alternative Options
- CV & Application Form sessions
- Employer Led Events – where applicable

April onwards:

- STEM Events
- Intro to UCAS & HE Sessions
- Progression sessions
- Employability sessions
- Employer Led Events – where applicable

A successful new initiative this year was the HE Parents Admissions Event, we will further develop this for 2019/20. Parents are not traditionally thought of as a target audience for HE guidance, however, we decided that because many HE students who study with us at the College continue to live at home, parents will have a vested interest in what this means for them and their family. With over 100 sets of parents attending, the evening was supported by a buffet and presentation from College finance and curriculum experts. Many parents had their son/daughter with them, and many had decided that they would attend without their son/daughter, simply for their own information and update. An open forum for questions at the end proved that this was clearly something that had benefitted parents. For 2019/20, the College will utilise incentives for HE student ambassadors to take a lead on this event, and therefore demonstrate the benefits of HE from a customer's point of view. In addition, the College will be holding IMPACT Access to HE Taster Days where we will be targeting non-acceptances on our Access Pathways, and no-shows. These days will include icebreakers, Access Team introductions, and introductions to studying in FE and HE, the support available (Student Finance Team) and subject pathway information including sampler sessions

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In 2019/20, we plan to invest in further progression activities by providing a new dedicated careers and progression facility for pre-HE students. Existing stock of University Prospectus' will be enhanced with additional hard copies and dedicated PCs for prospective students to access electronic information, regarding HE. This new facility will also be supported by trained staff, who are able to offer impartial and expert advice on such matters as loans, finance and entry requirements. There will be enhanced capacity available to support a large growth this year in students requesting mock interview opportunities, which is also provided from this facility and support. Despite a national decline in HE applicants this year, we are expecting an increase in students from the College being able to progress into HE, both by staying at the College for levels 4, 5 and 6 study, as well as leaving to study elsewhere at higher levels.

Our focus on work experience this year has benefitted from a further increase in staffing for cross-college employer links and work placement activities. This supports success activities, in that students are now more frequently able to take advantage of work experience both locally, and through formal partnerships with organisations across Europe. For 2019/20, this will be further developed with an increase in the range of work experience opportunities available as a result of the investment in dedicated work experience officers placed in each curriculum cluster area. Work experience activities are tracked and recorded centrally, and the feedback from students clearly demonstrates that this benefits their readiness for employment and higher education. Students have a comprehensive induction programme which feeds into success activity, as we see that planning for early support through project-based learning has had a year-on-year positive impact on the retention of all groups of students. Students are highly satisfied with the personal support they receive, as witnessed through NSS and in-college survey results as well as many regular opportunities to provide feedback about their experience as a HE student. We have been able to enhance our commitment to student voice by using off-site facilities to host an annual evening conference chaired by Governors of the College, attended by HE student representatives. This demonstrates our commitment at the highest of levels and gives students the opportunity to identify strengths and areas for further improvement.

The College uses a wide range of tools to monitor the effectiveness of our access, student success, and progression measures:

- Increase in HE learners from schools that we have visited;
- Number of students progressing internally from level 3 to HE;
- Number of students progressing externally from level 3 to HE;
- Asking students how they heard about Walsall College when they enrol;
- We register attendance at all HE events and monitor conversion to application.

Our Higher Education Fairs are attracting record numbers of students each year (in 2016/17, there were 1,256 - an increase of 6.6% compared to the previous year). Student feedback from these events is extremely positive: 98% of respondents stated that after attending the event, they were more confident in applying for HE courses and studying at university or College.

The Aspire to HE programme is a partnership funded through the National Collaborative Outreach Programme (NCOP) that supports the government's goal to increase the number of young people from specific postcodes entering higher education by 2020. The College plans to continue to expand this work as part of this access and participation plan. Over 250 College students attended the Aspirations Theatre Show, which explored the opportunities open to them through Higher Education. The production, presented by the Aspire to HE programme, was aimed at pupils in Year 10–13 who are considering their options after school and College. 'Aspirations' told the story of four College students who find their world turned upside down when their close friend is caught up in a deportation case. The comedy drama was created by Gazebo Theatre in Education Company, and was performed in The Venue (Wisemore Campus).

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Walsall College is in formal partnership with Gecko Programmes Ltd, who are a Vocational Education and Training organisation based in Wolverhampton and with facilities in Birmingham. Gecko has a history of engaging with the creative and third sectors to establish new projects and provide skills advice, the company develops organisations and people in the UK and Europe. With a specific target of HE students studying at the College we can take advantage of inspirational work experience placements in Italy, Spain and Germany for up to 60 days. Participants are placed in a role that is relevant to their own qualifications/experience. The College is noticing an increased interest in progressing to HE, where students see this work placement opportunity as an exciting feature as they advance in their studies.

Walsall College recognises that the cost of studying at College can place an extra financial burden on students. The College aims to provide students in need of financial support with impartial advice and guidance, in relation to types of support available and how to access it. The detail of this information is included within the Provision of information to students section of this plan.

Investment

Walsall College has a strategic ambition to increase internal Higher Education student numbers. This is achieved through:

- Enhancing the student's experience through offering an outstanding learning environment and excellent resources to support successful learning
- Outstanding experiences that students will experience through the varied forms of study & enrichment, both inside and outside of the classroom setting
- Engaging and stretching curriculum delivery to our HE students.

All of these require suitable and targeted investment which is funded through a mixture of student fees and retained College reserves.

In the financial year 2019/20, the College is expecting to provide a minimum of **£143k** of support to our HE students. **£47k** of this figure is expected to be spent on access, student success and progression activity, with the remainder spent on financial support for the College's HE students in the form of bursaries, scholarships and access to hardship funds. These figures represent **158%** of the income generated from fees over the basic fee cap of £6,000. This figure is expected to rise to **189%** of the higher education fee income by 2022/23 (real term value is **£178k**).

In addition to the expenditure on access, student success and progression activities the College has an ongoing equipment refresh and upgrade program based upon the needs of curriculum delivery.

Provision of information to students

The Head of Sales and Marketing is responsible for the College's CMA Action Plan and Publication of Information Policy and Procedure, and therefore is responsible for ensuring that the above information is up-to-date and complaint, via the College website.

This Access and Participation Plan applies to all prospective Higher Education students commencing in the academic year 2018/19. This plan outlines the College's Mission and Strategic Plan which demonstrates a clear commitment to widening and increasing participation in Higher Education, regardless of any potential barriers associated with previous experience, background or any other factors. As with all previous College OFFA agreements, the approved Access and Participation Plan will be published on the College's website.

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Higher Education Fees

Information outlining fees and financial support is available to prospective and current HE students from a number of sources including the College website. The HE:ED (Higher Education) webpage outlines Higher Education Fees and Financial Support Information. This contains comprehensive information, and customers are signposted to this page from other publications (both online and offline). These other sources include

- The Higher Education Prospectus, which is distributed at promotional events and schools, and available for prospective students to download (or request hard copies) from the website.
- A page for each Higher Education course on the website

In addition to this, students receive a HE Handbook for their chosen qualification, which includes information on financial matters. A standard template is issued to all HE Tutors, to ensure that all HE students have access to this information. Our HE tuition fees are charged annually at the start of each academic year. HE students can apply to pay their tuition fees by instalment. The instalment arrangements will not be more favourable than:

- One third of the tuition fee to be paid at enrolment;
- All other fees and charges (such as materials charges and learner pass charges) to be paid in full at enrolment;
- Two equal payments of the remaining tuition fee to be paid at the start of each of the following two terms.

These instalment arrangements match the arrangements for the payment of student loans.

University course fees cost up to £9,000 per year, whereas at Walsall College a typical HNC/D costs £4,900 (£2,600 for part time), and a Level 6 top-up costs £7,200 a year. As well as lower fees, students on higher education courses at Walsall College will also benefit from smaller class sizes, personalised tuition and outstanding teaching and learning, accredited by The Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) for Higher Education.

Full-Time HNC (level 4) and HND (level 5) Pearson Courses

The College's main HE partner is Pearson, whereby the majority of programmes form part of the well-respected and established suite of BTEC Higher National Diplomas. Pearson HE courses are studied mostly as full-time, and are the equivalent of one academic year in duration. They are stand-alone courses at level 4 and level 5. On the successful completion of level 4, students have the option to progress to the level 5 course, be that at the College (where progression levels are available and subject to group viability sizes) or elsewhere (subject to meeting the institutional entrance criteria).

Full-Time 2018-19 HE Annual Fees	
HNC (Level 4) or HND (Level 5)	
Returning	New
£4,900	£4,900

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Part-Time HNC (level 4) and HND (level 5) Pearson Courses

There are options available to study Walsall College Pearson HNC level 4 and HND level 5 courses, via a part-time mode, where each course/level can be studied over the equivalent of two academic years.

Part – Time 2018-19 HE Annual Fees	
HNC (Level 4) or HND (Level 5)	
Returning	New
£2,600	£2,600

Partnership with London College of Contemporary Arts (LCCA)

The College works in partnership with The London College of Contemporary Arts (LCCA) located in High Holborn, central London, and as such, students local to that institution are able to study Walsall College Courses there. The 2018/19 tuition fee associated with this partnership is £6,200 for each full-time Pearson level 4 and level 5 course. Cost of delivery in Central London, and the costs associated with administering additional internal quality assurance has resulted in Walsall College having to charge slightly above the £6,165 basic fee cap for 2017/18. Clearly, the fees generated as a result of this charge offer considerable opportunity to further develop and enhance our access and participation plan. This will strengthen our commitment to ensuring our HE offer is increasingly accessible for all groups of students, and that support measures are effective in helping students to continue in their studies. Students who study at LCCA are classified as Walsall College students, and therefore benefit from the same access agreement and financial regulations and support. Joint admission processes ensure that LCCA complies with Walsall Student Services Admissions Policy and Procedure. Walsall College is committed to advancing equality of opportunity between different groups, linked to the duty under the Equality Act 2010. The Policy and Procedure is to ensure that all applicants receive equitable and effective admissions to the College, which matches them to the most appropriate learning opportunity.

Partnership with LCCA has been risk assessed in terms of the student protection plan, which has also been submitted as part of the Office for Students registration requirement. This outlines the level of support to students, should this partnership change in any way during their studies. This confirms that students will remain on a financial support package equal in value to the package advertised when they originally applied for the course.

Information on inflationary increases

Students continuing to study on a one-year HNC or HND will continue to receive the financial support that was advertised to them when they applied, subject to any inflationary increases or decisions to increase the support offered. The College will honour the package outlined within a previous access agreement, for any continuing student. For two-year part time courses, the College may increase fees in line with any inflationary uplift as determined by the UK Government, if permitted by law or government policy, in the second and subsequent years of the course. It is anticipated that such increases will be linked to RPI (the Retail Price Index excluding mortgage interest payments).

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In terms of students wanting to progress to a higher level course (for example, HNC level 4 to HND level 5 or from HND level 5 to Level 6), the College publishes its fees for each two academic consecutive years ahead, at the end of every April. This will enable students to review costs of not only the course they are considering, but of the subsequent progression level course, if they chose to remain and progress at the College.

The College aims to offer excellent value for money at all levels of study, and will review this on an annual basis, in line with local providers, as well as outcomes for students and student satisfaction.

Partnership with Universities

The College's strategy for HE includes programmes which are validated by a partner universities. We offer a series of level 6 programmes through formal partnership with Birmingham City University (BCU). We also offer a level 5 Diploma in Education and Training in formal partnership with the University of Warwick. HE partnership provision fees are set by the partner/validating University, and will be subject to their own OFFA Access Agreements and pricing policies.

Birmingham City University (BCU)

Level 6 top-up courses delivered in partnership with Walsall College are £7,200 for the 2018/19 academic year. [Click here to view OFFA Access Agreement for 2018/19](#)

Partnership with Warwick University

Diploma in Education and Training delivered in partnership Walsall College is £3,000 for the 2018-19 academic year. [Click here to view OFFA Access Agreement for 2018/19](#)

Additional fees

There may be additional costs to your studies that are not included in the course fee, such as:

- The cost of additional examinations for any award other than the intended award.
- The cost of personal membership to professional bodies.
- Additional materials beyond the supplied standard provision
- Optional field trips and activities for personal development.
- Travel costs to and from placements.
- The cost of any Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) or Occupational Health Assessment where these are required either by the College or a placement provider.
- Printing and Photocopying.
- Library Fees and Fines.
- Own purchase Text Books.

Students can apply for extra financial support through [loans and bursaries](#) to cover the cost dependant on eligibility.

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Higher Education (HE) Financial Support Information

The following information illustrates the support available to Home students, resident in England in 2018-19.

HE Loans and Bursary

Student Finance England offer means tested loans/grants for Higher Education, so they may be able to offer HE students some money towards their course. Once students have applied for courses through UCAS, it is important that they begin to complete their application for student finance. Applicants can do this via the link: www.gov.uk/studentfinance

It is really important that applicants apply for funding as soon as possible in order to ensure their funding is in place. It can take at least six weeks to process applications. Applicants don't need a confirmed place and can use their preferred course and change the details later. For students who live elsewhere in the UK further information about financial support can be found on the following government websites:

- Northern Ireland: www.studentfinancenir.co.uk
- Scotland: www.saas.gov.uk
- Wales: www.studentfinancewales.co.uk

Walsall College does not make provision directly for International Students.

Walsall College HE Bursary Funds

Walsall College HE students may also be eligible for one of the following Walsall College Bursary funds:

- **Progression Bursary** (Students progressing from Level 3 to HNC Level 4 within Walsall College) may be eligible for up to £800. Criteria: Successfully achieved Level 3 qualification/Students with household residual incomes up to £24,000;
- **Academic Achievement Award** (Students progressing from Level 3 to HNC Level 4 within Walsall College) and who have achieved either triple distinctions at Level 3 or A 'Level grades AAB) may be eligible for up to £800. Criteria: Successfully achieved Level 3 qualification with triple distinctions (or AAB)/Students with household residual incomes up to £24,000;
- **STEM Bursary** (Students studying Science, Technology, Engineering, Computer and Health subjects may be eligible for up to £800). Criteria: Students with household residual incomes up to £24,000 and students must be enrolled to a course in the above categories;
- **Level 6 Bursary** (Students enrolled to a Level 6 course may be eligible for up to £800). Criteria: Students with household residual incomes up to £24,000 and students must be enrolled to a level 6 course at the College;
- **Student Opportunity Fund** (Any Walsall College HE Student is eligible to apply for this up to £800) Criteria: Students with household residual incomes up to £24,000.

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Details of Bursary Payment Considerations

HE students will be potentially eligible to receive support from only one category of Bursary awards. Payments will be made on a termly basis. Part time Bursary awards (for any bursary) will be paid at 50% that of a full-time award where eligible. Successful applicants for all Bursary awards will receive payment based on:

1. Achieving the required level of attendance;
2. Full payment of tuition fees (either by the student or through Student Finance England).

If students require any support with their application for funding, they can contact our Student Services Team.

Higher Education Disabled Students' Allowances (DSAs)

Higher Education students with a support need can apply for Disabled Students Allowance (DSA) using the following link - <https://www.gov.uk/disabled-students-allowances-dsas/overview>

The support provided is determined by an external assessor, and outlined in the student's individual access report.

The OFFA Agreement

The Office for Fair Access is the independent regulator of fair access to higher education in England. An access agreement sets out a university or college's fee limits and the access measures it intends to put in place e.g. outreach work and financial support. The Access Agreement between Walsall College and the Office for Fair Access (OFFA) covers all full time Home and EU students admitted in the academic year 2018/19. The College's Mission and Strategic Plan outlines a clear commitment to widening and increasing participation in Higher Education, regardless of any potential barriers associated with previous experience, background or any other factors.

[Click here to view our OFFA Access Agreement](#)