

NORTH HERTFORDSHIRE COLLEGE

ACCESS & WIDENING PARTICIPATION STATEMENT 2020-2021

OUR ENGAGEMENT

North Hertfordshire College is a medium sized general further education college. The college is part of the Hart Learning Group which also includes the Hart Schools Trust and Hart Learning and Development, a learning and development business which supports businesses of all sizes to engage with and invest in emerging talent. The Hart Schools Trust is a burgeoning multi-academy trust which sponsors a small number of schools in our local community. The college delivers programmes in 15 subject sector areas and these range from pre-entry to advanced level.



Everything we do at NHC is about helping students get where they want to be in life. That means helping them to develop both the knowledge and skills they need to progress in their chosen occupational area, and the employability skills that we know employers expect of young people when they enter the world of work. This is also the case for adult learners returning to work or aspiring to a change of career.

North Hertfordshire College, in conjunction with its collaborative partner the University of Hertfordshire, is committed to providing an environment for students that actively provides equality of opportunity, freedom from discrimination and values the diversity of all students and prospective students. The Colleges seek to broaden the pool of potential applicants by raising awareness and expectations in line with its commitment to widening participation.

North Hertfordshire College is committed to meeting local and regional needs to widen participation in Higher Education (HE) by under-represented groups such as students from ethnic minorities or socially and economically deprived areas. We acknowledge that increasing access to HE is particularly important given that the percentage of the population with higher level qualifications (young participation rate: 24.6% POLAR3 quintile: 2) in Stevenage and the surrounding area is below the national average and this contributes to increased skills gaps within the local and regional economies.

The college is therefore responsive to the education and training needs of the local community and the county. Opportunities are available to study a broad range of courses, up to degree level in some areas. Vocational courses prepare students for most areas of employment. Significant features of the college's provision includes the opportunities provided for young people and adults with learning difficulties and/or

disabilities through the college's close links with the community and social services. The range and extent of provision for the large number of adult students returning to study is notable.

North Hertfordshire College offers a range of programmes that provide opportunities for those wishing to enter Higher Education. Over the last 25 years, the Access to HE programme at North Hertfordshire College has played a key role within North Hertfordshire and its surrounding areas in widening participation for adult returners wishing to progress to Higher Education. The College has also developed a range of Foundation Degrees, working with the Hertfordshire Higher Education Consortium in association with the University of Hertfordshire, to serve priority occupational areas.

The College's strategies and policies set out clearly our commitment to fair access, including the minimising of barriers for applicants. In addition to setting transparent criteria for entry to programmes, the College welcomes applications from students with non-traditional backgrounds and values work related experience. As part of the admissions process, the College provides comprehensive information, advice and guidance (IAG).

All prospective students including Access to HE students are interviewed to assess their suitability for higher level studies and the chosen programme of study as well as to identify students' support needs, including study skills support. The College actively encourages applications from disadvantaged groups and closely monitors recruitment and enrolment from these groups as well as success rates. Data on performance for equality and diversity indicators are reported to the College's performance boards and SMT. Students from minority ethnic groups are well represented on college courses. There is good provision of English for speakers of other languages.

The College values highly the diversity and range of experience that prospective students contribute to college life. Applications are welcomed from all students irrespective of background. Recruitment and admissions processes aim to match the abilities, aptitude and aspirations of the student to the programme of study. The College is committed to recruitment and admissions processes which are fair, explicit and implemented consistently across its range of provision.

The information on courses provided for prospective students is good and College tutors devote considerable time and energy to organising and marketing open days and attending careers and community events. There is an extensive programme to inform potential students of the range of courses offered. Impartial advice is available from the careers service officers.

Recruitment and induction arrangements for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are effectively co-ordinated and monitored.

The college aims to place all applicants on appropriate courses with the support necessary for them to succeed. The admissions process will encompass a range of services, from the provision of information about programmes and services, through to the point of enrolment and beyond. Statements regarding Information, Access and Guidance are in accordance with the College Charter commitments.

OUR CURRENT ACTIONS

Following events earlier this year, including those that led to greater visibility and awareness of the Black Lives Matter movement, we undertook a review of our work to date on equality, diversity and inclusion. A plan has been produced that allows us to put important foundations in place to take our work forward.

- The plan is centred on ensuring we act in accordance with our two values closely linked to this area of work:
- Respect - we value the contribution that each member of our community makes. We ensure that we are an inclusive, welcoming and open organisation that encourages and values different thinking and perspectives.
- Community - we are committed to building a community where everyone has a voice, feels supported and can thrive. We are committed to being an active and responsible part of our local and wider communities.
- The plan has been reviewed by SMT, our wider management team and through two workshops with members of our Staff Working & Action Group (SWAG). As part of our response to events earlier in the summer, the CEO also met with black colleagues on a 1-2-1 basis to gain feedback and insight from them. We also asked an external representative, who has led organizational activity, to review our plans.
- We are fully aware that for us to make sustainable change and implement initiatives that really make a difference, the plan has to be considered across multiple years and recognise that we will need to be flexible and adaptable in our approach.
- The community and respect action plan is organised into five pillars of activity and actions underneath are then allocated to various members of our organisation to be responsible for.

Pillar 1 – Policy and Intent

- This pillar is centred on ensuring the organisation has the relevant policies in place, acts in accordance with these, understands our internal and external community and knows how it is doing in line with available assessment tools.

Pillar 2 – Professional Development

- This pillar is focused on developing more opportunities for staff to access learning and development on EDI themes.

Pillar 3 – Informing and inspiring

- This theme centres on ways in which we can better promote and raise awareness of discrimination and the protected characteristics that enable colleagues to be informed in their practice and action.

Pillar 4 – Broadening our diversity

- This pillar of activity involves better understanding our internal and external community and then taking positive action to support broadening reach, representation and participation for students and staff.

Pillar 5 – Taking action

- This pillar is focused on immediate action we can take to help us deliver our planned activity.

OUTREACH WORK

The College is also involved in outreach work to engage disadvantaged and under-represented groups in education and training, including participation in Higher Education (HE). We work with schools, community groups and employers to raise awareness of the benefits of Higher Education to individuals, industry and the local economy. There are comprehensive and well-established links with local schools and the careers services. Our access centre provides detailed assessments of students with physical disabilities or sensory impairments. The college has excellent practice in the arrangements for supporting students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities who are studying on mainstream courses.

Amongst the plentiful activities the college regularly organise to encourage widening participation to HE one can list,

- Career and employment fairs to promote employment opportunities and HE progression. For these fairs, in addition to local employers, partner universities such as University of Hertfordshire, Anglia Ruskin, Bedfordshire University, Middlesex and Kings College are invited.
- Progression talks provided by the local HE team to all level 3 students on HE courses available at the college.
- Taster days in which L3 students are invited to attend HE classes
- Talks from university guest speakers as well as admissions tutors
- Dedicated UCAS workshops and tutorials to help students with the application process
- Study skills support through taught sessions and online resources (i.e. English for HE, study and research skills)
- Staff development and we support staff to become HE Academy fellows
- Engagement with school careers events to promote progression opportunities and offer advice and guidance.

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NORTH HERTFORDSHIRE COLLEGE - ACCESS TO HE PROGRAMME – NUMBERS AND DESTINATION

Academic Year (from2000)	20	19	17	16	15	14	13	12	11	10	09	08	07	06	05	04	03	02	01
Number of students	77	74	82	102	79	89	73	71	63	69	60	51	51	55	52	47	39	32	36

Access to HE Destination - HEIs		
University of Hertfordshire	The University of Sheffield	Anglia Ruskin University
Oxford Brookes University	Nottingham University	Sheffield Hallam
Brunel University	Durham University	Wolverhampton
Kings College London	The Open University	Falmouth
Bedfordshire University	The University of Leeds	University of Bangor
Northampton University	The University of Essex	SOAS London
City University London	Buckingham University	St Georges, University of London
London South Bank University	University of Leicester	University of East Anglia
Middlesex University	Kingston University	Goldsmith University
De Montfort University	University of Reading	Norwich University
University of East London	University of Sussex	University of Brighton
London Metropolitan University	University of the West of England	University of Exeter