

North East Surrey College of Technology (NESCOT)

Access Agreement

2017-2018

Summary

This Access Agreement sets out how North East Surrey College of Technology (Nescot) plans to widen access to Higher Education for students from under-represented groups and support such students whilst on a programme.

The Agreement has been developed in accordance with the College's Equality and Diversity Policy and Action Plan designed to meet the requirements of the Equality Act 2010. Regular monitoring of the Access Agreement and Student Opportunity Allocation will be undertaken by the Higher Education Curriculum Management Group Steering group which will report to the Senior Management Team.

In 2017-18 the College will spend 26% of Higher Fee income above the basic fee on access, student success and progression measures and financial support to underpin its commitment to widening participation.

Context

The College firmly locates Higher Education, both prescribed and non-prescribed, at the core of its mission. It is linked to its other provision; Further Education; and Employer Engagement. Higher Education supports the College's Mission and Strategic Goals. The College's mission statement and related vision and goals are as follows:

Mission

'To inspire our students to be the best that they can be'.

Vision

- Recognised as one of the top colleges of Further and Higher Education in England
- Maintaining a sustainable financial platform for continued success
- Achieving exceptional levels of student success
- Exciting students with the quality of our teaching and our learning programmes
- Innovative in our working methods, our approach to learning and our use of technologies
- Providing an inspirational learning environment and learning resources
- Recognised for our sheer professionalism
- Creating a great place to work, with high levels of staff participation and satisfaction
- Engaging with the community as a trusted partner organisation
- Exceptionally well engaged with local and regional employers
- Expanding where we can and with care

Values

At Nescot our key values and beliefs are:

- We put students' success and wellbeing at the heart of everything we do
- We have high expectations and aim for excellence
- We are collaborative, striving to positively engage our students, staff and partners
- We are committed to sharing good practice, entrepreneurship and innovation
- We celebrate diversity and challenge bigotry
- We are ethical and inclusive

Strategic Goals

- An outstanding learning experience for all of our students
- Financial stability
- A curriculum for employability, creativity and innovation
- Meaningful collaborative engagement with our students and staff
- A highly professional workforce, skilled and adept
- Dynamic and sustainable support services and infrastructure
- Continuous engagement with employers, partners and the local community
- A 21st-century learning environment
- Sustainable international partnerships

Nescot is a diverse institution that respects and celebrates differences in race, disability, gender, age, gender identity, sexual orientation, faith and religious beliefs, background or personal circumstance. We work to ensure that everyone feels valued and included in the college community and is enabled to achieve their full potential.

The Access Agreement sets out how the college intends to widen access to Higher Education and support student success during 2017-18. The Agreement articulates with the College Equality and Diversity Improvement Plan.

Student Profile

In 2015-2016 there were approximately 400 students studying both full time and part-time Higher Education programmes. Our provision ranges from Higher National Certificates and Diplomas to Foundation Degrees, Honours Degrees (including three Level 6 Progression (Top-up) awards), Integrated Masters and Masters of Science .The College is an Associate College of Kingston University, an Associated Institution of University of Surrey and Associated Institution of the University of Greenwich. The College also delivers one collaborative Foundation Degree and one franchise Foundation Degree with Kingston University. The College is also an approved Edexcel Centre with Pearson.

Of new entrants to the college in 2015-2016:

- 48% were 25 and over.
- 27% were from ethnic minority groups.
- 7% had a declared disability or identified learning support need.
- 31% were studying on a part-time basis
- 25% were from low-income backgrounds

Fees 2017-2018

For new entrants for the academic year 2017-18, we propose to charge differentiated fees for HNC/D; Foundation Degree and Honours degree programmes.

Annual Fees for programmes:

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| • BTEC HNC/HND Full-Time (1-2 years) | £5,300 per year |
| • BTEC HNC/HND Full-Time (Creative Media, Performing Arts and Music Production) (1-2 years) | £6,300 per year |
| • Foundation Degrees Full-Time (2 years) | £6,600 per year |
| • Foundation Degree Sports Therapy (2 years) | £6,900 per year |
| • Diploma in Psychodynamic Counselling Full-Time (2 years) | £7,100 per year |
| • Foundation Year Full-Time (1 year) | £6,100 per year |
| • Top Up Degrees Full-Time (1 year) | £7,100 per year |
| • BOst Osteopathic Medicine /
MOst Osteopathic Medicine Full-Time (4 years) | £8,100 per year |
| • Certificate in Education / Professional Graduate
Certificate in Education Full-Time (1 year) | £7,100 per year |

All full-time fees will be notified to applicants on the UCAS website and will form part of the Key Information Set. In addition, the College will also inform Student Finance England.

The College will display fee information on the College website.

No part-time student will pay more than £6,935 (the maximum part-time fee cap) in any academic year.

Nescot's Performance Across the Student Lifecycle

A key value for our College is celebrating diversity. Through our outreach activities and community engagement, Nescot consistently recruits a diverse student population, which we feel enhances the educational experience that we offer. In 2015-16, 79% of the students enrolled on our higher education programmes were from widening participation backgrounds. The College has effective mechanisms for supporting these student groups to access higher education, realise their potential, both academic and personal, and support them to progress in their chosen careers. Retention and achievement figures for students from all widening participation backgrounds have remained in excess of 80% between 2012 and 2016. Details of the strategies implemented by the College to support student access, success and progression are outlined below.

Strategies to Increase Student Access, Success and Progression

Financial Support for Students

Students who face unexpected financial hardship whilst on their programme can apply to the college Higher Education Hardship fund for additional support. Household income and expenditure is taken into consideration along the lines of the previous Access to Learning Fund.

Outreach Activities

The College works closely with networks including the Epsom and Ewell 14-19 partnership to promote HE provision through Steering and Development Groups.

The College is involved in a successful joint marketing campaign for the Early Years foundation degree, a franchised programme delivered jointly with Kingston University.

In 2017-2018 we plan to spend tuition fee income above the basic fee on outreach activities that focus on the widening participation of under-represented groups including;

- People from lower socio-economic groups or from neighbourhoods where higher education participation is low
- People from low-income backgrounds (household income of up to £42,875)
- Some ethnic groups or sub-groups, including white males from economically disadvantaged backgrounds
- Disabled people
- Mature and part-time learners
- Care leavers
- Carers
- Estranged young people and students
- Students from gypsy and Traveller communities
- Refugees

Outreach activities will include:

- Working with further education students within the college at all levels to promote progression options to vocational HE study including Higher Level Apprenticeships.
- Working with relevant local partnerships to raise aspiration, motivation and achievement amongst key groups
- Providing internal progression events
- Providing 1:1 support for college students researching HE opportunities, completing UCAS applications and appropriate confirming HE progression routes
- Providing 1:1 support for college students to develop their CV, undertake job searches, developing their interview techniques and networking skills
- Providing enhanced 1:1 IAG for late applicants to HE and enhanced on-programme support

- Strengthening of progression routes from feeder schools into Further Education and vocationally-relevant Higher Education
- Providing HE fairs and associated taster activities to promote awareness of HE opportunities in local schools and colleges
- Engaging with local HEIs through Compact arrangements to facilitate progression routes for college Level 3 students
- Providing enhanced Information Advice and Guidance, including financial matters, at open evening events in local schools, colleges and careers fairs
- Exploring the development of links with local primary schools to promote awareness, raise aspiration and promote attainment.
- Jointly marketing HE programmes, where appropriate with other providers to local areas with low HE participation

The College has appointed staff that share responsibilities for internal and external engagement to facilitate progression of under-represented groups. The success of these roles in achieving targets will be evaluated in May 2018.

Curriculum Development

During 2013-2014, the College introduced a new Access to Higher Education course in Health and Social Care

In 2014-2015, the College validated two new Foundation Degrees in Healthcare Science and Applied Biological Science. The Foundation Degrees incorporate a validated foundation year at FHEQ level 3 to support recruitment of non-standard entry students.

Retention and Success Activities

Retention across all widening participation groups was 83% in 2014-2015. The college will continue to enhance the support students from widening participation groups receive with the following activities:

- Students who face unexpected financial hardship whilst on their programme can apply to the college Higher Education Hardship fund for additional support. Household income and expenditure is taken into consideration along the lines of the previous Access to Learning Fund.
- Personal Development Planning provides an opportunity to discuss the suitability of the course, review individual support needs and to draw up appropriate support plans.
- Access to diagnostic assessment to identify specific support needs
- Dedicated HE Additional Learner Support (ALS) is available from interview stage (if requested), to Induction and 'on-programme'
- Study skills sessions are delivered as an integral part of the cross-college induction and form part of the extended programme induction.
- Additional on-programme and 1:1 study skills sessions are provided.
- Dedicated HE ALS support is available for students without a disability support assessment.
- Dedicated HE Learner Support with access to a highly qualified team of Learning Support tutors – all available to provide specialist advice and support and supplied to those who cannot obtain DSA
- Students are provided with a 1:1 tutorial entitlement with additional provision arising from needs identified pre- and post-enrolment.

- Close monitoring of attendance patterns and follow-up of unexplained absences by tutors and managers.
- Provision of college health and counselling services.
- Provision of subsidised nursery places.
- Development of the College VLE to support and extend learning opportunities.
- Access to the bespoke HE study room in the LRC with pre-arranged support from volunteers

The most recent College QAA IQER (2012) has already identified a number of strengths in this area, including:

- A comprehensive Learning Support Policy that details formal learning support processes.
- Responsibilities for the identification, management and delivery of academic guidance and pastoral support are clearly delegated through the management structure. This includes academic guidance such as assessment feedback, pastoral support, personal tutorial, and personal development planning.
- All College staff are active in ensuring that students have the support they require to support their learning. Students also access study skills support in the College learning resource centre, on a drop-in or individual basis.
- Students spoke very positively about the range and quality of support they receive.
- Students undertake an extensive two-day induction during which they are introduced to key College policies and procedures and given programme information. Induction provides information on additional learning support, and there are introductory sessions on assignment design, module and unit structures, assessment strategies and use of the virtual learning environment. Students find the induction process very intensive, but useful in preparing them for their studies.
- Students find their tutorials informative and helpful. They also commented on the ease of access to tutors for additional tutorials, which are useful in providing further advice and support.

Progression activities

The College has an established, on-campus employment and employability centre. This innovative facility provides students with practical support finding part-time and full-time employment and delivers workshops and advice on CV preparation, interview techniques, work experience and Apprenticeship placements.

All students are supported to undertake personal and professional development (PDP) to aid their progression during their time at college. Each student is assigned a personal academic and pastoral tutor who is responsible for supporting the PDP process.

The college runs structured UCAS support sessions which provide advice and guidance to students applying for further study. Furthermore, UCAS support sessions are scheduled to assist students to write their personal statements. The Director of Faculty for academic vocational provision co-ordinates all UCAS applications to ensure progression to higher education is maximised both internally and externally.

The college runs an annual Higher Education Opportunities Fair which invites Higher Education Institutions, volunteer and gap year organisations to meet with our students. The fair is an excellent opportunity for students to meet university representatives, discuss further progression opportunities and to gather information about Higher Education Institutions. It is also an

opportunity for students to consider volunteering roles to build their experience and further develop employability skills.

The overall aims of these strategies are to support students in developing their employability skills and improve their prospects of progression to employment and further study.

Setting Targets, Milestones

This Access Agreement sets out the following milestones as a measure of progress for 2017-18. The attached resource plan sets out the milestones for subsequent years. For some milestones such as participation by students from low participation neighbourhoods and students from ethnic minorities the College is already significantly above sector benchmarks. For other benchmarks, including participation from mature students, the college is currently performing well. Given the challenge presented by changes to the funding of undergraduate study, the college will be focussed on maintaining its good performance.

1. Maintain the number of students drawn from disadvantaged post codes forming ILR data returns from (2013-2014 baseline of 20%)
2. Maintain the percentage of HE students entering from ethnic minority backgrounds and retain this proportion throughout the student lifecycle.(20-25%).
3. Increase the percentage of students with disability/learning difficulties entering on HE courses (2014-2015 baseline of 9%)
4. Increase the number of internal Level 3 students progressing to higher education to 70 in 2016/17 (2014-2015 baseline of 64) and to 100 by 2019-20.
5. Increase the number of male students entering HE programmes by 6% in 2016-17 (2015-16 baseline 42%) and maintain a balanced gender profile throughout the student lifecycle
6. Improve retention of students from disadvantaged post codes from 70% (2013-14 baseline) to 85% by 2019-20

Evaluation

The Access Agreement has been prepared with the involvement and agreement of the Senior Management Team (SMT) of the college by the Vice Principal for Higher Education.

The monitoring of the overall HE strategy, including the implementation of the Access Agreement, is undertaken by the HE Curriculum Management Group (HECMG). The group is made up of managers delivering the HE curriculum and those for overseeing quality and student services. The group is chaired by the Vice Principal for Higher Education who reports on its activities to SMT. At key points in the year, the Vice Principal for Higher Education will produce a report to HECMG to monitor progress and to determine any new actions that may be recommended. Members of HECMG will request further information and judge whether objectives will be met. No further resources are required to accommodate this requirement.

The College has a Student Council providing student representation to debate a range of issues. Reports on the implementation of the Access Agreement will be prepared and presented by the Vice Principal for Higher Education. The students will be provided with an opportunity to reflect upon the strategies being implemented and to make recommendations on new approaches to meet the terms of the Access Agreement.

Evidence from the evaluation will be used by HECMG and SMT to review the Access Agreement implementation. This will be used to shape policy decisions about strategies to widening participation and to achieve equality and diversity.

The College will evaluate the following interventions for their success.

- The uptake and impact of the NSP as a tool in widening participation
- The impact of each of the outreach activities in terms of widening participation to HE
- Analysis of retention and success for male and non-white ethnic minority students as part of the annual Higher Education Curriculum Area Report.

Student Consultation

There are plans to consult on this Agreement at the Higher Education Council which takes place after the submission date for this Agreement. A senior student representative attends HE CMG as a full member and will continue to contribute to the review and evaluation of the agreement.

Equality and Diversity

The College has taken due regard to equality and diversity by undertaking an equality impact assessment. The assessment considered the evidence of the possible equality implications of the new Access Agreement. The college protocol has been followed. The review considered any areas of concern, possible differential impacts, or areas of potential or actual inequality. The equality impact assessment also considered whether the Agreement had the potential to promote equality, create good relations between different groups, engender positive attitudes, and to encourage participation.

Provision of information to prospective students

The College is committed to publishing clear information on fees and financial support available to students. The College Website will be used as the primary source of information to prospective students. Information about the Access Agreement will be published together with details of financial support available. The staff providing information, advice and guidance, including admissions tutors will be provided with information about the Access Agreement and the various sources of financial and other sources of support. The College is committed to providing timely information as required to UCAS and the SLC.