



NORTH EAST SURREY COLLEGE OF TECHNOLOGY (NECOT)

ACCESS AGREEMENT

2018-2019

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.

In 2018-19 the College will spend 17% 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 2018-19. The Agreement articulates with the College Equality and Diversity Improvement Plan.

Student Profile

In 2016-2017 there were approximately 400 students studying both full time and part-time Higher Education programmes. The College works with Kingston University, the University of Greenwich, the University of Surrey (on 'teach out') and, from 2016/7, the University of West London. It is also an approved Edexcel Centre with Pearson.

Our provision ranges from Foundation Year to Masters level programmes and includes Higher National Certificates and Diplomas, Foundation Degrees, Honours Degrees (including three Level 6 Progression (Top-up) awards), Integrated Masters and Master of Science.

Higher education students at NESCOL reflect the following characteristics: -

- 53% are female; 47% are male
- 29% are from ethnic minority groups.
- 12% had a declared disability or identified learning support need
- 68% are studying on a part-time basis
- 43% of students are from Surrey; 14% from Greater London; 13% from the South East
- 24% are from low-income backgrounds

Fees 2018-2019

For new entrants for the academic year 2018-19, we propose to charge differentiated fees for HNC/D; Foundation Degree and Honours degree programmes.

Annual Fees for programmes:

FULL-TIME ANNUAL TUITION FOR 2018/19			
18/19 18/20	Computing & Systems Development	BTEC Higher National (HNC) / HND	£5,300
18/20	Performing Arts / Creative Media Production / Music Production	BTEC Higher National Diploma (HND)	£6,300
18/19	Collaborative Theatre	BA (Hons) (Top-up)	£7,100
18/19	Computing	BSc (Hons) (Top-up)	£7,100
18/19	Education & Training	Certificate of Education	£7,100
18/19	Education & Training	Professional Graduate Certificate	£7,100
18/20	Healthcare Science	Foundation Degree	£6,600
17/21	Osteopathic Medicine	BOst	£8,500
17/21	Osteopathic Medicine	Integrated Masters Degree, MOst	£8,500
18/19	Psychodynamic Counselling	Diploma of Higher Education	£7,100
18/19	Science	Foundation Year	£6,100
18/20	Sports Therapy	Foundation Degree	£6,900
18/19	Sports Therapy	BSc (Hons) Top-Up	£7,100
18/20	Animal Management	Foundation Degree	£6,600
18/20	Play Specialism	Foundation Degree	£5,000
18/19	Education Studies	BA (top-up)	£7,100

FULL-TIME ANNUAL TUITION FOR 2018/19			
18/19	Education Support	Foundation Degree	£6,600
18/19 18/20	Business	BTEC Higher National (HNC) / HND	£5,300
18/19	Osteopathy	BSc (Hons) (Top-up)	£4,500

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 £4,500.

Nescot's Performance Across the Student Lifecycle

Nescot consistently recruits a diverse student population, which we feel enhances the educational experience that we offer. Using Polar 2 datasets published by HEFCE, 23.6% of NESCOT undergraduate students are drawn from low HE participation neighbourhoods compared to 21.8% for all FE colleges offering higher education provision. This compares to 11.6% for all English universities¹ 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. The retention of HE student has increased in recent years and Retention and achievement figures for students from all widening participation backgrounds have in 2015/16 was above 90%.

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.

NESCOT is withdrawing its 'Progression Bursary' with effect from 2017-18. This is because evidence from focused survey and group work with past students has shown that it is not a major motivating factor for progression to higher education programmes at the College.

Responding to OFFA's Priorities for 2018/19

NESCOT notes OFFA's guidance on strategic priorities for institutions' access agreements in 2018/19. The following narrative describes NESCOT's response to the guidance.

¹ See <http://www.hefce.ac.uk/analysis/yp/POLAR/>

OFFA STRATEGIC PRIORITIES 2018/19	NESCOT RESPONSE
<p>Increase your work to raise attainment in schools and colleges for those from disadvantaged and under-represented groups, including through outreach and/or strategic relationships</p>	<p>The College has strengthened its strategic relationships with schools through membership of local schools' Governing Bodies For example, the Chair of NESCOT is the Vice Chair of a secondary school that attracts students from outside the area from more disadvantaged neighbourhoods.</p> <p>The outreach and careers team is being strengthened at NESCOT and, particularly in the context of the Lord Baker amendment to the Technical and Further Education Bill, it will have an increased role in explaining the multiplicity of routes into higher education through vocational pathways and higher-level apprenticeships.</p> <p>As a General Further Education College that does not offer A level provision, NESCOT already works with large numbers of students with lower levels of attainment. Over 500 students are re-taking their GCSE English and Maths courses having not achieved at least a Grade C at secondary school. In this context the sponsorship of schools is not considered to be strategically appropriate to a vocational GFE nor feasible. NESCOT is a member of an NCOP bid that has a focus on raising student attainment in schools where there are lower levels of progression to higher education and we will be active in this project raising awareness of the range of pathways into higher level study including higher apprenticeships.</p> <p>We will measure, evaluate and monitor the impact of these activities as follows: -</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Growth in HE students numbers at NESCOL. The targets for these are set out in NESCOL's Curriculum Plan and Academic Strategy. • Growth in Higher apprenticeships. The targets for these are set-out in NESCOL Curriculum Plan and Academic Strategy. • Growth in apprenticeship numbers. The targets for these are set-out in NESCOL Curriculum Plan and Academic Strategy. • Increased internal progression from Level 3 to NESCOL HE provision. • An increase in the number of Schools Liaison visits undertaken by the College IAG and related teams. • Raising GCSE English and Mathematics achievement rates for students undertaking resits as part of the condition of funding requirement. <p>The Senior Management Team and Curriculum and Quality Committee of the Corporation will review the effectiveness of these strategies through KPI monitoring reports and regular reports submitted to the Committee.</p>
<p>Further increase your investment in access activity, in order to accelerate progress in the participation of higher education entrants from under-represented and disadvantaged groups</p>	<p>NESCOL will continue to work with students at level 2 and level 3 to encourage progression to higher education study. Over 90% of NESCOL's higher education provision is from students progressing to HNC/Ds and Foundation Degrees with the opportunity for top-up to degrees.</p> <p>NESCOL delivers vocational programmes and does not offer A levels. The qualification profile of NESCOL entrants tends to be lower than than of local school 6th forms and Sixth Form Colleges. Over 60% of NESCOL's FE students are drawn not from Surrey, whose schools perform well in terms of GCSEs and A level achievement, but from neighbouring London boroughs with less high-performing schools and more mixed communities. NESCOL prioritises 1) the achievement of the very best outcomes for all of</p>

	<p>its students; and 2) embedding a culture of aspiration and progression to the next level which includes higher education study, whether that be a traditional university, at an FEC such as NESCOL or via an apprenticeship. 30% of NESCOL's level 3 students progress to HE.</p>
<p>Ensure complementarity between your access agreement plans and the National Collaborative Outreach Programme and Opportunity Areas</p>	<p>NESCOL is a partner member of the National Collaborative Outreach Project based at the University of Surrey with Royal Holloway London, University of the Creative Arts, Surrey County Council, Guildford College, Farnborough College of Technology. It is already working closely with the project to deliver outreach activities that reflect the distinctiveness of the HE in FE offer. For example, in the summer term 2017 it will be offering an outreach event for targeted students with BAE about higher apprenticeships.</p> <p>NESCOL expects that there will be closer linkage through the NCOP project in 2017-18 and beyond to raise awareness of the variety of pathways in HE which, where this is based on 'learn while you learn' routes, will be of particular interest to under-represented communities. Of equal importance will be messages around aspirations to higher attainment through these routes i.e. employers expect high achievement at the point of entry and not see the routes as a second class pathway.</p>
<p>Ensure your expenditure is informed by evidence, supported by appropriate evaluation and is targeted where you most need to improve</p>	<p>Wherever possible and within the context of its distinctive access work, NESCOL will embed a robust evaluative framework into its activities. An example of this has been the review of the Progression bursary where feedback from students identified that it was not a key motivator which has led to resources being re-directed.</p>
<p>Evaluate your financial support to determine its impact</p>	<p>See above.</p>
<p>Improve your understanding of the challenges faced by different groups of students when accessing and studying at your institution, including multiple dimensions of disadvantage</p>	<p>The analysis of achievement and participation gaps is an integral part of NESCOL E&D and quality improvement strategies. The Governing Body receive 'gap analysis' reports on a scheduled basis. Through the Catalyst fund project (led by Kingston University) of which it is a member, NESCOL will be exploring</p>

	innovative models of assessment to ensure that assessment meets the needs of all students whilst remaining rigorous.
Consider how you can enhance support for: white males from socio-economically disadvantaged backgrounds	We plan to give this area particular emphasis through the linkage with our NCOP work, specifically promoting apprenticeship routes into higher education as this can be seen as an attractive route for this under-represented group.
Black and minority ethnic (BME) students , where you identify disparities in access, student success and/or progression at your institution	<p>NESCOT's work on the Catalyst fund project will focus on issues of differential student success and assessment modalities. With the bid partners we will explore factors that impact upon differential student success with NESCOT's student body.</p> <p>NESCOT's Access Agreement has specific targets for BME student recruitment, which in the context of NESCOT HE offer is impacted directly by issues of internal progression. The College's personal tutorial system is centrally concerned with student progress, raising attainment and supporting progression to the next level including higher education.</p>
Students with disabilities , particularly those with mental health issues, specific learning difficulties and/or who are on the autistic spectrum	<p>NESCOT, like other providers, has identified increasing numbers of students who are experiencing mental health issues. The College's safeguarding and welfare team have close links with specialist external agencies for referrals. The College has two counsellors and a College nurse and this team has been increased in size recently in response to growing need.</p> <p>In the monitoring of its Access Agreement for 2015/16 it was noted that there had been an apparent fall in the number of students with disabilities on HE programmes. This is an area of focus so that the College can understand the reasons for any apparent under-reporting or other issues. The College's Preparation for Life and Work (PflAW) team is part of a project looking at student progression.</p>

Mature and part-time learners	Outreach activities linked to NCOP will emphasise the part time route into higher education.
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Outreach Activities

The College works closely with skills development partnerships such as the Employment and Skills Board which brings together businesses, schools, local authorities, colleges, universities, Third sector organisations and other stakeholders across Surrey to focus on key LEP priorities including the development of new flexible and innovative progression pathways to higher level skills. Following the Surrey Area Review in 2016, the 4 General FE Colleges in Surrey are collaborating on the development of joint activities to develop, promote and integrate higher education provision across the County. This will include the development of a common HE prospectus for Surrey.

The College will seek, as far as possible, to ensure that access-related expenditure previously funded by the Student Opportunity Fund remains in place.

In 2018-2019 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:

- Individuals from lower socio-economic groups or from neighbourhoods where higher education participation is low
- Work with students at schools and colleges from disadvantaged backgrounds to raise their attainment. This will particularly focus on internal progression but it will also link with the HEON National Collaborative Outreach Programme (NCOP) led by the University of Surrey, of which NESOCOT is a member.
- Some ethnic groups or sub-groups, including white males from economically disadvantaged backgrounds. This is given particular emphasis through NESOCOT's participation in a Catalyst fund project led by Kingston University examining strategies to narrow the gap in attainment in higher education for students from a range of ethnic backgrounds
- Disabled people
- Mature and part-time learners
- Care leavers
- Carers
- Estranged young people and students

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
- Linking with HEON and its NCOP project to work with students from neighbourhoods with low levels of participation in higher education to deliver curriculum tasters and masterclasses.
- Providing enhanced Information Advice and Guidance and deploying NESCOL's team of qualified careers advisors through outreach to promote the range of routes into higher education including higher and degree apprenticeships, vocationally-specific HE and part time options.
- Jointly marketing HE programmes, where appropriate with other providers to local areas with low HE participation

The College has recently appointed a number Events and Social Media Co-ordinator – part funded by the NCOP project – part of whose role is to work with schools, stakeholders and communities to facilitate progression of under-represented groups. This role and those of the wider IAG team and schools liaison teams are evaluated in terms of performance and impact.

Curriculum Development

NESCOT has continued to embed its widening participation strategy through the development of increased progression pathways from level 2 and level 3 programmes to higher education programmes at level 4 and above. Examples of this in the past 12 months have been the new Foundation Degree in Animal Management (Kingston University), the Foundation Degree in Healthcare Play Specialisms (University of West London) and the BA Collaborative Theatre (Top-up – Kingston University).

Retention and Success Activities

Continuation rates for higher education courses at NESCOL have risen from 79% in 2012/13 to 92% in 2015/16. 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

At the time of writing NESCOT is awaiting its Quality Review Visit (scheduled for September 2017). The most recent College QAA IQER (2012) 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 (the Employer Hub). 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 and beyond. 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 (note that NESOT is a partner in a 'Catalyst' project with Kington University, UCL, University of Greenwich, Univeristy of Wolverhampton, De Montfort Univeristy, University of Hertfordshire).
7. Increase the number of students increasing their GCSE English and Maths resit attainment by one grade to 50% by 2019/19 thus providing access to Level 3/HE progression.
8. Increase the percentage of students entering graduate level employment or higher level study (including progression to Degree top-up) from 71.2% to 75% by 2019/20.
9. We will work as close partners in the University of Surrey-led HEON NCOP project.
10. We will deliver at least two collaborative outreach events focusing on higher level apprenticeships with employers and the partner institutions in the HEON NCOP project in 2017/18 academic year.

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 Teaching and Learning and Academic Development and Strategy Group (TALADS). The group comprises 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 TALADS to monitor progress and to determine any new actions that may be recommended..

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 TALADS 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.

Student Consultation

A senior student representative attends TALADS 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.

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