

Access and Participation Statement

City of Wolverhampton College is committed to widening participation and values the range of experience and diversity of its higher education and is reflected in our mission *“to equip people in Wolverhampton and beyond with the skills to succeed and excel”*.

We are a large further education provider situated on three sites across Wolverhampton and has a natural catchment area that includes part of the Black Country. Most of these areas are ranked as some of the most deprived areas in England (Wolverhampton 14th, Dudley 90th, Sandwell 10th and Birmingham 6th).

One of the College’s strategic objectives is *“to increase participation in education, training and skills development”*, in particular with higher level qualifications. A regional issue is the number of people with level 4 qualifications or above being below the national average of 32.9%.

It is against this backdrop that the College is seeking to provide greater access to higher education. This will provide young people and adults with the technical and personal skills they need to gain employment, to progress their careers and thus contribute to the City’s economic, social and cultural development.

What this means in practice is that we aim to:

- Provide opportunities for seamless progression for students who might otherwise not be able to successfully access higher education due to a range of barriers including social and emotional, cost and financial implications or lack of support.
- Raise aspirations by providing opportunities for students to study higher education in a learning environment that is supportive and inclusive.
- Provide students with a range of educational opportunities which enables them to develop the knowledge, behaviour and skills required to progress to higher level skilled employment.
- Develop relationships with local and regional businesses with the purpose of introducing Higher Apprenticeship pathways in order to support skills shortages.

Examples of how this strategy is being implemented at City of Wolverhampton College include the following:

- The College maintains low cost entry points to higher education so that the local community and employers have access to affordable higher education.
- The College provides information and promotes its higher level opportunities to potential students in the workplace, through open events, through progression talks to its internal student population, in adult learning publications, on the College website and in other forms of social media – aiming to reach the widest audience by the use of many different media.
- The College offers students smaller group sizes in order to create a more personalised approach to learning.
- The College has developed its work with local employers to actively engage with them and promote its higher level offer. This has enabled employees to have access routes to our higher education provision and supports to develop skills to enable career progression within the company.

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- The College delivers progression and higher education talks to its Level 3 students and actively provides support for UCAS applications and accessing financial information through its Student Services team.
- The College participates in activities with the Aspire to HE programme to encourage students to become more aspirational regarding progression to higher education, whether internally or externally.
- Applications are welcomed from all students irrespective of background. The College aims to place applicants on appropriate courses and provides appropriate support to enable students to succeed.
- The College operates a fair admissions policy with clear entry criteria for its programmes/courses.
- The College ensures that students are not discriminated against during the admissions process or during their time at the College. Where students do not meet the entry criteria, the College supports the student in identifying a suitable alternative programme of study that will enable access to higher education in the future.
- To aid retention, and ensure students have a smooth transition into higher education, the College operates a dedicated HE induction programme which introduces students to aspects such as academic regulations, college and university resources (where applicable to the course), welfare support, and gives the opportunity to identify support required.