

New College Stamford Access Agreement 2017-18

1.0 Introduction

This document sets out New College Stamford's tuition fees and strategy on how to sustain and improve access, student success and progression among people from under represented and disadvantaged groups.

New College Stamford is a Further Education College located on the edge of Lincolnshire, bordering four counties. To the east are the Lincolnshire and Cambridgeshire fens where according to POLAR3 data there is a very low level of HE participation. For over 20 years the College has offered Higher Education provision and has worked with a range of organisations. As such it has operated highly successful HE strategies based on growing provision and widening opportunities to a range of people. The college currently has about 1830 full-time 16-18 FE students. It currently has 284 Higher Education students on mainly full time programmes of Higher National Diplomas and Foundation Degrees. The College also works with 2 Performing Arts Schools, which deliver HND programmes in partnership with the College.

In October 2015 the College was reviewed through QAA's Higher Education Review. The review found that the College met all UK expectations and that good practice was evident in the effective academic and pastoral support arrangements which enable student progress and achievement. We intend to build upon this success and ensure this confidence is maintained and becomes stronger.

The College's Higher Education strategic plan identifies six key themes as priorities:

- **Growth:** To increase participation in Higher Education and promote widening participation amongst under represented groups.
- **Employability:** To embed employability and personal development throughout the student experience.
- **Excellence:** To deliver excellent teaching and learning opportunities supported by relevant scholarly activity.
- **Innovation:** To provide an innovative and dynamic HE experience relevant to the 21st Century.
- **Support:** To strive to provide support to students and to enhance the student experience.
- **Governance:** To develop the management and governance of Higher Education.

The two themes that are principally pertinent to this access agreement are Growth and Support, both of which relate to widening participation and the focus of the 2015 Higher Education White Paper to increase access and success in higher education participation for those from disadvantaged and under-represented groups.

We will achieve these aims by:

- Developing new and existing partnerships to enable us to develop new programmes meeting local needs.
- Developing access opportunities to enable outreach activities to under represented groups.
- Working collaboratively with other providers and stakeholders to promote the benefits of Higher Education study.

- Review the marketing strategy to target feeder groups and schools more effectively.
- Develop activities to support students in their transition into Higher Education.
- Provide access to personalised academic support for all HE students.

In order to fulfil these agendas the college recognises that we will need to invest in the development of Higher Education at the College.

2.0 Level of Fees

We propose to continue to charge the following tuition fees for full time students:

Higher National Diplomas and Foundation Degrees - £6500

Two groups of full time Foundation Degrees students only attend for one afternoon and evening a week and we do not intend to increase their fee to over £6000.

In 2017/18 we anticipate that we will have about 160 students who will pay a fee of £6500. Thus the total income above the fee limit will be £80000.

We do not intend to increase the fees for part time students to more than £4500

3.0 Recruitment

The table below shows the recruitment data for Higher Education students according to priority group.

Priority Group		2014-15	2015-16	National (HESA) 2014-15
Gender	Female	58%	59%	56%
	Male	42%	41%	44%
Age Group Start	Under 19	19%	21%	80%
	19-25	56%	60%	
	25+	25%	19%	20%
Ethnicity	All other ethnic groups	8%	7%	20%
	White British	92%	93%	78%
Learning Difficulty or Disability	LLDD – Yes	15%	17%	7%
	LLDD – No	85%	83%	93%
POLAR 3 Recruitment of young people in the start year from different participation areas)1 = lowest	1	11%	12%	11%
	2	11%	14%	
	3	26%	27%	
	4	23%	19%	
	5	26%	26%	

3.1 Key Points:

- The gender gap is higher than the national position.
- Age Group is in line with national position

- Ethnicity gap is far higher than the national position although Stamford is located in a predominantly white rural location and therefore this is to be expected.
- Recruitment of students with learning difficulties or disabilities is significantly higher than the national position. New College Stamford has been commended by QAA on the support it provides to all students both pastorally and academically and invests significant resources to this.
- Recruitment from low participation areas of the Polar 3 indicates the College is above national position.

We intend to spend 30% of the extra income to increase marketing activity to increase the number of applicants from under-represented students.

We currently produce a HE prospectus which is distributed to all the local schools with 6th forms and some targeted HE marketing. We hold cross-College open evenings and a dedicated HE open evening each year as well as HE evenings for the parents of students who intend to apply to HE. The College invests time in visiting local schools and colleges and has visited 8 feeder schools / colleges in 2015/16. However through discussions with teachers and careers advisors we understand there are still misconceptions about studying Higher Education at an FE College. Responding to this we have recently held an event informing careers advisors of what HE in FE constitutes and the advantages of studying locally. We wish to continue to invest time in sending staff out to visit local schools and colleges and are creating a new role in the marketing department dedicated to school liaison, events and widening participation. This role will focus on engaging with schools and organisations particularly within quintiles 1 & 2 of the Polar 3 Maps. This work will be one of the key areas we will be targeting our resource to promote outreach activities.

We are working closely with Boston and Grantham College as active members of the Lincolnshire Outreach network. We are holding a collaborative event focusing on Creative and Performing Arts to promote these Higher Education programmes offered by all three Colleges. We have also collaborated with virtual schools to promote HE to care leavers.

Working with Bishop Grosseteste University, we are currently investigating the opportunities to develop Level 6 programmes in each of our curriculum areas. Although these discussions are at early stages, it is our intention to be able to offer progression from level 2 – level 6 in each curriculum area within the next 3 years.

Students progressing from our own Level 3 programmes continue to be our main recruitment pool and it is important that we continue to meet their needs, many of these come from Quintile 1 & 2 from the Polar 3 maps. We offer a range of taster sessions for internal candidates and will be promoting this further in 2017/18 by holding 2 dedicated HE taster days per year which respond to learner needs and promotes the benefits of Higher Education.

4.0 Student Success

The table below shows the performance data for Higher Education students according to priority group.

Priority Group		Student Success Rate 2014-15	Student Success Rate expected end of 2015-16
Total – all HE Programmes		74.7	76.1
Gender	Female	74.2	75.6
	Male	76.5	76.7
Ethnicity	All Other Ethnic Groups	85.7	83.3
	White British	74.2	75.4
Learning Difficulty or Disability	LLDD – Yes	75.0	74.1
	LLDD – No	75.0	86.4

4.1 Key Points

- Overall Student success is lower than the College target and is largely due to non-completion rates.
- Gender Gap in success rates is minimal with males outperforming females by 1%
- Non white British students are outperforming White British by 8%
- Success rates for students with learning difficulty of disability has been steady over last 2 years, although there has been a significant improvement of success rates for those students without LLDD in last 12 months.

We recognise at the College that non-completion rates of all students needs to be higher and are therefore planning to spend 50 of our activity expenditure from higher fee income to support students through their studies.

We understand that completion is closely linked to attendance. Thus we have introduced a new attendance strategy and policy which means students, lecturers and management are working closely together to improve attendance and ultimately retention rates across the HE programmes at the College.

In 2013 the College recognised that more work needed to be done to support students, particularly those from non-traditional backgrounds, in academic writing. In response to this a new study support post was created and this coach has worked with many non-traditional students across the provision. This appointment has been a great success with feedback from students, QAA and validating universities all commending the impact this role has had on student success. Building on this success we will develop this service further to allocate more time to the role and extending it to support Level 3 students progressing onto Higher Education. This is to be delivered as part of formal bridging programmes to be delivered to all new HE students commencing Level 4 study at the College and will particularly benefit those from non-traditional HE backgrounds.

In 2015 we introduced a new Alumni Association to support the progression of students leaving the College. Alumni are invited back to talk to groups about their progress and method of

transition from education to employment. The College recognises the value of this and in 2015 formalised the process by the establishment of a College alumni association. All students completing their studies in 2015 were invited to join the association. The College is committed to supporting alumni after they complete their studies and membership entitles them to ongoing career advice provided by the College.

5.0 Targets and Milestones

The targets set in the Access Agreement Resource Plan will be monitored annually by Academic Board to ascertain whether we have recruited additional students from the targeted areas and monthly to ascertain whether we have continued to retain students.

6.0 Equality and Diversity

The college is fully committed to equality and diversity and successfully meets targets to recruit and retain students from the full range of protected characteristics across both its FE and HE courses. This access agreement is deliberately designed to provide fair access to higher education courses for applicants from low participation neighbourhoods and thus from lower socio-economic groups. We will monitor applicant and student demographic information within the general monitoring process of this agreement.

7.0 Provision of information to students

Information about the fees we charge are communicated to prospective students in the prospectus and on the website. Information about financial support available to HE students is contained in programme handbooks and students are informed about it at induction.

8.0 Consultation with Students

We have consulted with the college HE student representative and HE student course representatives at the HE Student Forum and they are fully in agreement with the strategy.

