

Boston College
Access and Participation Plan
2020-21 to 2024-25



Boston College Access and participation plan 2020-21 to 2024-25

Boston College places widening participation (WP) and social inclusion at the heart of its mission, exemplified by our commitment to being a brilliant college for all students, enabling the achievement of outstanding academic and career outcomes. The College's main recruitment areas are Boston, South Holland and East Lindsey which are characterised by a low skill, low wage economy, with high levels of deprivation and rural poverty. Boston and its surrounding areas are higher education "cold spots" and there is clear demand for higher level skills cited in the Strategic Economic Plan for Greater Lincolnshire (Greater Lincolnshire Local Enterprise Partnership). It is our imperative to be a driver of social mobility and improve access regionally, to ensure that background and geographical area has no profound impact on the ability to access, succeed in, and progress from higher education.

As the main provider of further education locally, the College creates a market for Higher Education (HE) through its wide portfolio of level 3 programmes. As well as the traditional 'Advanced' (A) level and Business and Technology Education Council (BTEC) programmes, there is the highly successful Access to Higher Education course for mature students and the advanced apprenticeships in areas such as Supporting Teaching and Learning in Schools (STLS) which may be an alternative route into teaching. A significant proportion of the College's HE students are adults "returning to learning" and are non-traditional entrants with vocational experience as opposed to academic qualification. This plan articulates our strategic ambition to build on our well established and accessible programmes to deliver sustained improvement across all phases of the student lifecycle.

1. Assessment of performance

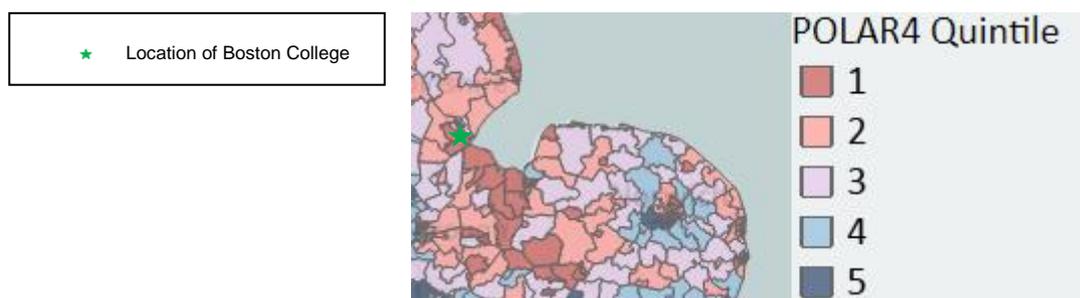
1.1 Higher education participation, household income, or socioeconomic status

Access

The College is situated within an area of high deprivation and Office for Students (OfS) data demonstrates that 29% of students are from deprived areas classified as Quintile 1, and over the last 5 years the number of Quintile 1 students has averaged 33.4% against a sector average over the same time period of 11.6%, demonstrating that the college enables access for students from Low Participation Neighbourhoods. Boston College has more POLAR4 Quintile 1 students compared to the population and no students from POLAR4 Quintile 4 or 5. 69% of students are from deprived areas in Quintile 1 or 2. Use of the "POLAR and Gaps postcode look-up" identifies POLAR4 young participation as Quintile 2 overall, with Adult HE qualification participation as Quintile 1 overall.

During the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE) visit to the College, on 28th November 2017, assessors noted that "*Students tend to come from local areas with low levels of HE participation, and therefore require more support to access, participate and succeed at HE level study*".

Figure 1: POLAR4 data by postcode look up and College Ward



Ward	POLAR4 Quintile	Young participation rate
South Holland 002	1	21%
South Holland 002	1	22%
Boston 007	1	23%
East Lindsey 017	2	24%
East Lindsey 013	2	26%
South Holland 001	2	27%
Boston 001	2	27%
Boston 006	2	27%
East Lindsey 018	2	29%
Overall	2	25%

Figure 2: Extract from student numbers by priority group Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF) year 4 Contextual data

		Full-time		Part-time		Total	
		Headcount	%	Headcount	%	Headcount	%
Local students	Yes	90	62%	5	50%	95	61%
	No	55	38%	5	50%	60	39%
POLAR	1	20	30%	0	0%	20	29%
	2	30	39%	0	100%	30	40%
	3	25	31%	0	0%	25	31%
	4	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%
	5	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%
National Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) (English, Scottish, Welsh or Northern Ireland)	1	25	17%	0	13%	25	17%
	2	50	35%	5	38%	55	35%
	3	40	27%	0	13%	40	26%
	4	30	20%	5	38%	35	21%

Success

Student continuation

Continuation rates at Boston College are high and have improved by 4% over the last 3 years to 92.1%. The TEF year 3 indicator for continuation demonstrates that the college is 0.8% above benchmark. However, OfS data demonstrates a continuation gap in 2016-17 for the Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) quintile 2 which is 8.6% below college data but only 3% below all English HE data. POLAR4 Quintiles 1 and 2 combined also highlight a gap in 2016-17 of 13.6% below college data and also 10.2% below all English HE data.

Figure 3: Boston College Continuation Data 2015/16 to 2017/18

Group	Continuation Rate		
	15/16	16/17	17/18
Total - All HE	88.1%	93.6%	92.1%
IMD Quintile 2	90%	85%	
POLAR4 Quintiles 1 and 2	90%	80%	

No further College level data or other data is currently available on the continuation of under-represented groups given no level 6 provision and a small sample size.

Attainment

Boston College attainment has improved by 7.7% in 3 years. The College was awarded bronze TEF status in June 2018. The panel noted the achievement of good outcomes and very high levels of satisfaction with assessment and feedback, and academic support – both being in the top 10% of absolute performance (2016/17). Overall students are highly positive about the academic support they receive, and overall quality of their learning experience at the College (National Student Survey (NSS) 88% against sector average 83%; Boston College internal survey 92% satisfaction).

Figure 4: Boston College Achievement Rate Data 2015/16 to 2017/18

Group	Achievement Rate		
	15/16	16/17	17/18
Total - All HE	79.8%	79.1%	87.5%

Progression to employment or further study

TEF data demonstrates that progression to highly skilled employment or further study was noted by the panel as being “significantly below the provider benchmark.” Our Destination of Leavers of Higher Education (DLHE) data demonstrates that 93% of students went onto study or work, however too often this is not “highly skilled” given the constraints of rural deprivation and volume of micro-Small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) across Greater Lincolnshire. Moving forward, the College is now working with the University of Derby as a new Higher Education Institute (HEI) partner which will improve progression to highly skilled employment/further study through a broader curriculum offer including further study at level 6 as well as increasing the number of large employers engaged with. Core metrics for “highly skilled employment or further study” in 2017/18 show an improvement from 2016/17, which was -14.8% below benchmark, to -9.7%.

Figure 5: Destination of Leavers of HE (DLHE) January 2018

Total responses	88
Progression summary	
FT Work	20%
PT Work	19%
FT Study	40%
PT Study	13%
Travel	1%
Something else	6%
Unemployed	1%

1.2 Black, Asian and minority ethnic students

Access

Student demographics for ethnicity show under-representation from black, Asian and minority ethnic groups (BAME) at just 4% of enrolments, and this has reduced over time (from 13% in 2015/16). However, 17% of HE students are from a non-British background with English as their second language, due to a high proportion of local residents from migrant families. This is representative of the wider student population as well as the local community and increasing engagement through outreach work with migrant families and our Home Office backed 'Preventing Labour Abuse and Modern Slavery' with the Gangmasters and Labour Abuse (GLAA) are key initiatives to increase enrolments in this area..

Figure 6: Higher Education BAME enrolments and language

Enrolment	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19
% of BAME students enrolled	13%	5%	3%	4%
English first language	89.5%	86.2%	86.2%	83.0%
Non-English first language	10.5%	13.8%	15.4%	17.0%

Success

Student continuation

The continuation rate of white British students has steadily improved over the last 3 years to 93.1%, whereas college data evidences that all other ethnic groups peaked at 100% in 2016-17 but is currently 3.2% lower than White British students. The number of students reflected in this data are low which can skew the proportions year on year, but this gap needs to reduce.

Figure 7: Continuation Rate of BAME students

Group		Continuation Rate		
		15/16	16/17	17/18
Total - All HE		88.1%	93.6%	92.1%
Ethnicity	All Other Ethnic Groups	83.3%	100.0%	88.9%
	White British	89.0%	92.6%	93.1%

No College level data or other data is currently available on the continuation of under-represented groups as level 6 provision only started at Boston College in 2019-20 and the sample size is small.

Attainment

The achievement rate of white British students has improved by 7.3% over the last 3 years to 89%, whereas college data evidences that all other ethnic groups is currently 6.2% lower than White British students. The number of students reflected in this data are low which can skew the proportions year on year, but this gap needs to reduce.

Figure 8: Achievement Rate of BAME students

Group		Achievement Rate		
		15/16	16/17	17/18
Total - All HE		79.8%	79.1%	87.5%
Ethnicity	All Other Ethnic Groups	83.3%	71.4%	82.8%
	White British	81.7%	80.6%	89.0%

Progression to employment or further study

No College level data or other data is currently available on progression to employment or further study by priority group.

1.3 Mature students

Access

There has been a sustained number of mature students enrolling over the last 4 years averaging at 34% of all enrolments, with part-time mode of study a popular option for mature students despite a small sample size. Boston College utilises evening timetables to enable access for mature students. Planned developments within the initial teaching training curriculum expansion, as well as growth at level 6 will further promote access opportunities for mature students.

Figure 9: Higher Education Mature Students enrolments

Enrolment	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19
% of mature students enrolled	34%	39%	33%	31%
Overall HE Enrolments	173	189	176	196

Figure 10: Student numbers by age group TEF year 4 Contextual data

		Full-time		Part-time		Total	
		Headcount	%	Headcount	%	Headcount	%
Age	Under 21	80	52%	0	20%	80	50%
	21 to 30	40	26%	0	20%	40	25%
	Over 30	35	23%	5	60%	40	25%

Success

Student continuation

Continuation for mature students dipped in 2016/17 at 76.8% compared to 93.6% for all HE students. However, this gap is now closed with the continuation rate of mature students 4.7% higher than all students.

Figure 11: Higher Education Continuation rate by age group

Group	Continuation Rate		
	15/16	16/17	17/18
Total - All HE	88.1%	93.6%	92.1%
Mature students	89.4%	76.8%	96.8%

Attainment

The achievement rate of mature students has fluctuated over a three-year trend and now stands 3% lower than that of all students.

Figure 12: Higher Education achievement by age group

Group	Achievement Rate		
	15/16	16/17	17/18
Total - All HE	79.8%	79.1%	87.5%
Mature students	79.7%	84.9%	84.5%

Progression to employment or further study

No College level data or other data is currently available on progression to employment or further study by priority group.

1.4 Disabled students

Access

There has been an increase in enrolments by students declaring a disability from 7% in 2015/16 to 20% in 2018/19.

Figure 13: Higher Education enrolments by students declaring a disability

Enrolment	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19
% of students enrolled declaring a disability	7%	10%	10%	20%
Overall HE Enrolments	173	189	176	196

Success

Student retention

Continuation rates for students declaring a disability are highly positive at 95% and above all HE students.

Figure 14: Higher Education Continuation of students declaring a disability

Group		Continuation Rate		
		15/16	16/17	17/18
Total - All HE		88.1%	93.6%	92.1%
LLDD	Yes	91.7%	86.7%	95.0%
	No	87.6%	94.7%	91.5%

Attainment

The significant gap in achievement seen in 2015/16 (14.7%) has been closed and students with a disability now achieve at a better rate than those without a disability (+7.5%).

Figure 14: Higher Education achievement of students declaring a disability

Group		Achievement Rate		
		15/16	16/17	17/18
Total - All HE		79.8%	79.1%	87.5%
LLDD	Yes	66.7%	72.2%	95.0%
	No	81.4%	80.2%	86.0%

Progression to employment or further study

No College level data or other data is currently available on progression to employment or further study by priority group.

1.5 Care Leavers

No care leavers have entered the College's higher education provision since the College first held direct funding from HEFCE in 2012. The numbers of care leavers joining level 3 programmes at the College in 2017-18, who therefore may be able to progress to HE in 2019/20, is low and has therefore been suppressed. The College will aim to improve participation rates of care leavers in the future.

1.6 Intersections of disadvantage

As a small provider of higher education, effective analysis of intersections of disadvantage is limited. However, the College is aware through looking at its own data and being aware of the challenges its students face, that many students face multiple barriers to access and participation. 69% of HE students are from deprived areas classified as quintile 1 or 2 and c.30% of all college students are from a white non-British background. The College's locality is a "cold spot" for higher education due to the challenges of deprivation and aspiration along with a shortage of highly skilled employment

opportunities. Hence, growing enrolments numbers and improving achievement data is critical in this region.

1.7 Other groups who experience barriers in higher education

Gender

Student demographics for gender show a higher proportion of students are female, 72% compared to 28% male. Additionally, this gap has become wider over time, increasing from a 28% gap in 2015/16 to a 44% gap in 2018/19. This is partly due to the current curriculum offer which has many teacher education programmes within it which tend to be popular with female applicants and is representative of the teaching industry. Current curriculum developments for new HE provision which includes Engineering and Sport will help to attract more male students into HE. The College is always careful to ensure programmes are promoted to ensure gender equality. Staff teaching teams all have an appropriate gender balance. Continuation of male students has decreased over the last three years and, as a result, male students currently achieve less well (79.5% compared to 92.1% for female students) and the College aims to close this gap to less than 4%.

Figure 15: Enrolments by gender

Sex	Fulltime %	Part-time %	Overall
Male	42%	0%	39%
Female	58%	100% (10 students)	61%
Other	0%	0%	0%

2. Strategic aims and objectives

As a provider of HE in Further Education (FE) the College ensures its broader strategic aims carefully align to HE access, participation, student experience, and success. This is summarised below and taken from the College's 2017-2020 Strategic Plan.

College Strategic Aims	Strategic Priorities relevant to HE and Widening Participation
<p>Strategic Aim 1 – To ensure that teaching, learning and assessment are of the highest quality and lead to excellent learner outcomes</p>	<p>1.2 <i>We will continue to improve our achievement rates so that they consistently exceed national averages</i> 1.3 <i>We will increase the amount of outstanding lessons that are delivered</i> 1.10 We will listen to our students and act on feedback received to further improve our provision*</p>
<p>Strategic Aim 2 – To raise aspirations, provide effective support and secure high levels of progression into employment and further or higher education</p>	<p>2.2 <i>We will ensure that our curriculum is relevant and up to date, working with employers to do so</i> 2.3 We will provide students with bespoke, effective and timely support to maximise their chances of success* 2.4 We will ensure that all students receive high quality information, advice and guidance and careers services to maximise progression to employment or higher education*</p>
<p>Strategic Aim 3 – To drive the skills agenda within Lincolnshire, engaging with employers and the community to develop an outstanding reputation for meeting local and regional skills needs</p>	<p>3.1 <i>We will work closely with the Greater Lincolnshire LEP and other organisations to support growth and improve productivity in the local economy</i> 3.8 We will offer our support to local schools to help them to ensure that students are making informed post 16 choices*</p>
<p>Strategic Aim 4 – To develop our business whilst maintaining financial stability</p>	<p>4.3 <i>We will further develop our Higher Education provision offer including the development of degree programmes*</i> 4.4 <i>We will develop our Spalding campus as a HE and adult centre</i> 4.12 <i>We will continually improve our buildings and invest in technology to support effective learning</i></p>
<p>Strategic Aim 5 – To set high expectations for all our staff and foster a culture of continuous improvement and innovation in a supportive environment</p>	<p>5.3 <i>We will establish a reputation as any excellent employer by investing in, developing and valuing our staff</i> 5.6 <i>We will encourage innovation amongst our staff and support them to take risks and, wherever possible, try out new initiatives without fear of failure</i></p>
<p>Strategic Aim 6 – To advance equality, diversity and inclusion so that they are central to our college culture</p>	<p>6.4 <i>We will work to encourage students and staff from under-represented groups to study and work at the College</i> 6.6 We will ensure that everyone has the same opportunities to achieve their full potential by removing barriers to participation in learning*</p>

*Widening Participation focus

2.1 Target groups, aims and objectives

Boston College's targets and associated resource plan reflects our approach and ambitions across the student lifecycle and demonstrates how we intend to reduce our achievement gaps and diversify our student population. The targets set are in the context of our strategic priorities, student mix, geographic location, as well as reflecting national priorities.

Access

Boston College will:

- Improve the young participation rate in low participation neighbourhoods from 25% to 36% in five years, through working with collaborative partnerships including NCOP.
- Increase the number of outreach school assemblies, from 11 to 35, by 2024/25, through increased investment in careers and schools liaison. Assemblies will focus on aspiration raising as well as the signposting of course, careers, and next steps options.
- Increase the number of males in HE by 5% in 3 years through targeted raising aspiration events in schools and internal college progression events, as well as access to academic scholarships.
- Increase the number of BAME students entering Higher Education in line with regional averages through targeted outreach work with community groups and NCOP, as well as access to academic scholarships.
- Increase access for care leavers through working with collaboration partners, including the County Council, to increase the number of enrolments to at least 3% of total enrolments per academic year in the next 4 years.
- Any care leavers on level 3 provision at Boston College invited to coaching sessions with the Academic Achievement Coaches as well as the Careers team.
- Invest in Academic Achievement Coaches to work with level 3 groups to increase progression to degree level courses at Boston College by 10% in 3 years.
- Employ Academic Achievement Coaches who will run 4 HE preparation courses per year by 2023-24.
- Increase the participation rate of adult students in Higher Education including part-time learners from 31% to at least 40% by 2024/25.

Success

Boston College will:

- Remove the 3% gap in non-continuation rates of IMD quintile 2 students and all English HE students, increasing retention over the next 3 years through Academic Achievement Coach targeted support and access to financial support.
- Remove the 10.2% gap in non-continuation rates of POLAR4 Quintile 1 and 2 students and all English HE students, increasing retention over the next 5 years through Academic Achievement Coach targeted support and access to financial support.
- Remove the gap in non-continuation rates between BAME and white students, increasing retention of BAME students in the next 2 years through the introduction of a peer mentoring scheme.
- Remove the gap in achievement rates between BAME and white students, increasing achievement of BAME students in the next 3 years through Academic Achievement Coach targeted support and peer mentoring scheme introduction.
- Remove the gap in achievement rates in young white males, increasing success rates of young white males in the next 4 years through Academic Achievement Coach targeted support and peer mentoring scheme introduction.
- Introduce the role of Academic Achievement coach in September 2019 for lifetime of the access and participation plan in order to support the success and continuation of all of our learners. Specialised training on EDI and study skills will be provided in order to ensure support for priority groups.

Progression

Participation in and progression onto level 6 study Boston College will:

- To improve progression to highly skilled employment or further study for all students to exceed TEF benchmark by 2024-25. This will be achieved through a combination of increasing the level 6 course portfolio, Academic Achievement Coaches running progression workshops with level 5 students, and running employer spotlight sessions to promote career progression.
- Invest in the data required to better understand the progression in priority groups as part of the 2019-2020 application cycle, in addition to the 16.K investment across the lifecycle of the 20/21-24/25 plan.

Boston College commit to collecting progression data for all target groups in the 2020-21 academic year, monitoring the performance of these groups once data is available, in order to enable us the college to set progression targets if gaps are identified in the data collected. Progression reporting will be available by the end of the 2021-2022 academic year.

3. Strategic measures

3.1 Whole provider strategic approach

Overview

Boston College has a mission to transform people's lives through delivering excellence in everything that we do, inspiring our students, the community and region we serve to achieve together. Higher Education is a strategic priority for Boston College and our approach to partnership working, capital investment, curriculum growth and staff development demonstrates the success of our ambitious plans and effectiveness of our strategy in widening participation. Boston College recognises that in order to fully meet the obligations of the access and participation plan and to further identify the areas for improvement, investment in data, particularly on destinations of priority groups, is essential.

The College views the provision of Higher Education (HE) as a vital component in realising its vision, with widening participation being at the heart of the College's FE and HE ethos. As well as maintaining and diversifying the range of income sources available to the College and improving public perceptions of its provision, HE provides a framework within which it can address the local and regional skills agenda and raise the aspirations of both staff and students. The College is well placed geographically to increase access to HE in areas where participation is low. Our strategic partnership with the NCOP Lincolnshire Consortium aims to target low HE participation areas.

Alignment with other strategies

The access and participation plan align with; College Strategic Plan, the College's HE Strategy, the EDI Policy, and the widening access and participation statement.

The College's HE Strategy includes 5 key objectives, as shown below. Objective 2 and 3 are especially aligned to widening access and participation, therefore greater detail has been included within this plan on these objectives.

Objective 1: Expand the College's employer focussed HE provision

Objective 2: Increase HE participation in the South Lincolnshire region

Widening participation, raising aspirations and facilitating progression through FE and into HE will be done by:

- Raising awareness amongst current students and apprentices of the opportunities to progress to HE at Boston College
- Increasing HE marketing and promotional activity and engaging in NCOP Consortium events
- Reviewing delivery models to widen our geographical reach through, for example, the provision of blended/e-learning combined with monthly group seminars
- Extending external recruitment activity to attract:
 - School leavers from local 6th forms
 - Adults who are in employment or on career breaks and needing higher level skills and knowledge to progress
 - Employers who want to support their staff to obtain higher level qualifications, including via the higher/degree apprenticeship route
 - Staff leaving the armed forces and requiring qualifications to secure civilian jobs

Objective 3: To ensure HE students at Boston College have a high quality, affordable learning experience.

The unique selling point of the College's HE courses will continue to be local, affordable, high quality vocational provision. The benefits of the student loan system will be promoted so that prospective students are aware that there are no upfront costs or repayments required until their earnings exceed £21,000 per annum. Key priorities are to:

- Ensure that all HE programmes, current and proposed are of a high quality and offer good value for money
- Provide an excellent HE in FE experience which both challenges and inspires students in an inclusive, engaging and supportive environment
- Increase students' confidence and employability skills whilst developing an ethos of lifelong learning
- Work in partnership with our students to understand their needs, listen to their views and continually enhance their experience, thus helping to secure future levels of recruitment and maximise student retention and achievement rates across our HE provision
- Work in partnership with HEIs and other Lincolnshire colleges to maximise the benefits of collaborative approaches to delivering HE
- Work with employers to ensure that our HE courses will equip students with the skills and knowledge needed for engagement in local, regional, and national job markets

Objective 4: To ensure that the resourcing of HE supports the growth and expansion of high-quality provision

Objective 5: To ensure that there are HE relevant professional development opportunities open to all staff teaching and supporting HE students

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 - Staff leaving the armed forces and requiring qualifications to secure civilian jobs

The College's EDI Policy supports the Public Sector Equality Duty under Section 149 of the Equality Act 2010. The College is fully committed the promotion of EDI and continues to be ambitious when advancing and embedding Equality and Diversity for all students, staff, stakeholders, contractors and visitors and to challenging all forms of discrimination based on the promotion of fundamental British values.

The College is committed to raising awareness of equality and human rights, promoting diversity and combating all forms of inequality, disadvantage, prejudice, unfair discrimination, harassment and mistreatment within our community. The College is committed to ensuring that all forms of prejudice and unfair discrimination are unacceptable and are challenged and that raising awareness of these standards takes a high profile throughout the organisation. All the College's policies and operational procedures aim to project equality of access and opportunity to all sections of our community.

The College is committed to inclusive learning and embedding equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI), in all aspects of the curriculum. We recognise that all students are individuals with individual learning styles and support needs. It will therefore provide a diverse range of learning opportunities to facilitate access and achievement for the whole community. Tracking of progress of all groups of students will be carried out by staff to eliminate achievement gaps. Regular monitoring and data analysis will be used to inform planning and development of the curriculum by Senior Managers, Programme Area Managers, teaching staff and the Quality Team. Any gaps that are identified will be addressed by using a range of inclusive strategies matched to students.

Corporate monitoring of the Equality and Diversity will be the responsibility of the EDI Committee. Programme Areas and departments will be responsible for the local monitoring and implementation of the EDI policy through procedures and practices, reporting through the planning process and to the EDI Committee, as required.

The College's widening access and participation statement focuses on one of the College's key strategic aims - 'to advance equality, diversity and inclusion so that they are central to our College culture'. In order to achieve this, our strategy includes encouraging students and staff from under-represented groups to study and work at the College and ensuring everyone has the same opportunities to achieve their full potential by removing barriers to participation in learning. Recruitment to HE programmes at the College is supported by a number of strands of activity which are designed to widen participation.

- Programmes are designed to facilitate flexible delivery, enabling foundation degree students in work to attend 1 day per week. Full time delivery on higher nationals is also planned so as to cluster activities so that students are not required to attend across a number of days. This means that students are able to work and therefore maintain an income
- The College offers a range of Access to Higher Education Qualifications to support those who are returning to education and need knowledge and skills to facilitate study at a higher level
- The College's careers team introduces the concept of Higher Education during school presentations and taster activities for all ages
- The College is a member of the NCOP Lincolnshire consortium, hosting two area engagement officers and supporting events aimed at widening participation in HE across the county
- Progression routes are mapped from many internal vocational programmes including ones which have not previously attracted Universities and Colleges Admissions Service (UCAS) points such as National Vocational Qualifications (NVQs) and Apprenticeships
- The entry criteria for all higher education programmes at the College include 'non-standard' options to encourage applications from those who have not followed a standard route and may not have UCAS tariff points.

Strategic measures

Outreach work

Boston College currently delivers regionally targeted outreach work across all stages of the student lifecycle. This activity engages over 5,000 students annually from primary school year 5 to adults returning to learning. The focus historically has been on low participation areas, deprivation areas, English a second language students, and adults furthest away from the labour market. The targets in this plan, and improved data, will enable us to address the gaps for BAME students, care leavers, adults in to HE, and to extend our work for young males in low participation areas. It must be noted that significant adult engagement and access work is evidenced over the last 3 years, however regionally starting points for adults are so low, particularly given the high proportion with English as a second language, that direct entry to Access courses can often be challenging. Literacy and numeracy qualifications and support workshop are regularly held to accommodate working adults' shift patterns locally. In addition, we have maximised European Social Funding opportunities and the Career Learning Pilot funding in addition our college funded work.

Table 2: Sample of outreach work

Program	Target Group	Description	Category	Area	Collaborative Partners	Number engaged
Next Steps Event	Year 10 and 11	School children in deprived areas come to college in order to raise aspirations and promote progression options to HE. The event features a range of taster sessions, workshops, and guest lectures.	Aspiration Information, Advice and Guidance (IAG)	Lincs	NCOP 7 regional schools	400
Festival of Learning	Adults returning to learning	To promote a stepping stone offer and access programmes to build the confidence of adults who face multiple barriers to return to learning.	Access IAG	Boston and Spalding	N/A	140
Post-16 Careers/HE	Year 11-13	3 Secondary schools with Sixth Forms event.	Access IAG	Sleaford	3 regional schools	1,200
Careers in STEM initiative	Year groups 10 and 11	Supporting 6 local schools to provide IAG and Industry spotlight talks in engineering hosted in college workshops.	Aspiration IAG Access	Boston and Spalding	Employers 6 local schools	60
Elite 11	Year groups 10 and 11	Schools to compete in sporting challenges ran by college staff, level 3 and HE students, with IAG specialist sessions ran throughout the day by NCOP, to raise aspirations and promote progression in the sport science, health and fitness industry.	Aspiration IAG Access	Lincs	NCOP 11 regional schools	120
Primary Engineer	Primary school teachers and Year 5 and 6	Supporting Boston Borough Council's Primary Engineering programme which is aimed at the teachers of primary school pupils to develop their engineering teaching skills.	Aspiration	Boston	Local schools	50
Pop Up IAG stands	Adults returning to learning	Promotion of course options, coaching sessions, National Citizen Service (NCS) and careers team access targeted at adults.	IAG Access	Boston and Spalding	GLLEP NCS	80
Internal progression events	Level 3 internal students	Targeted sessions for all level 3s with IAG from a range of University partners, our HE and careers team as well as employers.	Progression Access IAG	Boston and Spalding	NCOP University Partners Employers	725

Access (pre 16)

We will increase the number of outreach school assemblies delivered by 24, in low participation neighbourhoods to raise aspirations, signpost course and career options and next steps by 2024-25. We will strengthen our collaborative links with NCOP and work with the LinchHigher Engagement Officers and this activity will be led by the Head of Learner Services who is responsible for the College's Careers Team and our HE Manager. We plan to facilitate at least two additional "*Raising Aspirations & Next Steps*" events per academic year. This will enable year 10 students from across the county to visit college, undertake learning activities, and receive impartial careers advice and guidance about progression options that lead to HE. This activity will be followed up with the school assemblies and progression talks. We will extend our support for the Primary Engineer Program and deliver spotlight sessions with employers in our new £4.2 million Engineering, Manufacturing and Technology Centre increasing the number of primary school children who aspire to HE in STEM subjects locally.

Access (post 16)

Boston College will employ Academic Achievement Coaches who will run at least 4 HE preparation courses per year by 2023-24. The Coaches will form part of the College's "*Aspirations Group*" will lead on improving access to HE for college students post-16. As part of our Tutorial and Careers programme, which links to Gatsby benchmarks, we aim to further strengthen and dedicate more delivery time to HE progression activity delivering 6 HE preparation courses per year by 2023-24. Focused group tutorials and 1:1 reviews will feature throughout the academic year and tackle the perceived barriers to progression to HE. We will work closely with our new HEI partner, University of Derby, to raise aspirations and awareness within our current student body.

We will increase access for care leavers and increase the number of enrolments to at least 3% of total enrolments per academic year, in the next 4 years, ensuring that all level 3 care leavers receive coaching sessions to identify and remove barriers by our Academic Achievement Coaches. Through targeted outreach work with community groups and NCOP as well as academic scholarships we will increase the number of BAME students entering higher education by 10% in 5 years.

We will deliver HE promotional events aimed at both internal and external students post-16, as well as their parents or guardians. The events will include advice about student finance, career progression, and what it means to study at HE level. Input from our established network of employers will underpin the value of higher study in the workplace, and the longer-term benefits to a young person's life chances and opportunities.

Access (adults, community, other)

We will increase the participation rate of adult students in Higher Education including part-time learners from 31% to at least 40% by 2024/25. Through maximising opportunities within our biannual "*Festival of Learning*" to promote and improve participation to HE. This will include clarity and marketing around the opportunities for direct entry for mature students. Careful sign-posting, and use of warm handover information packs, will enable adult students to be better informed about opportunities for HE study within the locality.

Accessibility of the Careers team will be increased with more emphasis on the adult community and increased promotion of lifelong learning. Specific careers advice events will be facilitated in evenings or at weekends, either on the College site or as a "pop-up" facility within the locality. These events will include advice about student finance, career progression, and what it means to study at HE level.

We aim to run at least four HE preparation courses within the academic year which will be free to adults who are considering studying at HE level. These courses would primarily focus on the study skills required, confidence building, and getting prepared for HE study. We will use the Global on-line bite-sized modules to build study skills and enable students to continue further study through a blended learning approach after attending the course.

We will work closely with our new HEI partner, University of Derby, as appropriate on the above activities.

Boston College will use its own funds to set up a peer mentoring scheme and to pump prime the data requirements and Academic Achievement Coach set up in 2019 and beyond.

Hardship funds

The College does not currently offer any bursaries or fee remissions for students. The College's further education students are able to apply for bursary support depending on household income, however this is specific to FE. Therefore, for HE students we will increase the allocation of the College's *BeBrilliant* hardship fund which is currently used for any individuals experiencing hardship that impacts on continuation, achievement, or progression - regardless of household income and outside of the bursary facility. The level of funding we plan to allocate to the *BeBrilliant* HE fund in 2020/21 is £5,000 and we will increase this each year to £12,000. The eligibility criteria would follow the current process the College follows which is as follows; staff members submit applications to the Executive team and Head of Learner Services for consideration, cases are then considered on an individual basis. We plan to apportion £5,000 of the fund specifically for HE for cases of student hardship which impacts on or has the potential to impact on; ability to continue, achieve, or progress within HE learning and studies. We will be commencing this approach in 2019/20 to support our transition to the modest fee increases we are proposing.

Students will be informed about the availability of hardship funds at interview as well as during their induction period. We will ensure this is also articulated on the *HE Noticeboard* on Moodle, our on-line learning platform. We already have significant evidence, and powerful case studies, about the positive impact hardship funds can have for our students on Further Education courses. However, as this will be a new initiative, for HE, we do not currently hold evidence about how hardship funds assist HE students. We will evaluate the impact of this assistance through an annual evaluation report submitted to the Senior Leadership Team by the Head of Learner Services. The report will summarise the outcome of all applications and review the impact of the support afforded for each student. We will ensure the report includes analysis by life-cycle stage and under-represented group.

Fee Waivers

We have allocated £6,000 for fee waivers for the first time formally. Boston College has a track record of waiving fees for exceptional circumstances within its Further Education portfolio, however these fee waivers are in addition to this, and specifically to provide flexibility for priority groups wishing to access HE, where the Careers team identify fees as a significant barrier to access. The careers team will advise students about fee waivers if fees are deemed to be a significant barrier, and the student forms one of the following priority groups; BAME students, disabled students, care leaver students. We do not currently hold evidence about how fee waivers could assist with increasing participation into HE for students from priority groups. However, we will evaluate the impact of this assistance through an annual evaluation report submitted to the Senior Leadership Team by the Head of Learner Services.

Academic Scholarships

Academic Scholarships for students from underrepresented groups (BAME students, care leaver students, disabled students) will be offered for the first time. Students will be informed about the availability of academic scholarships (£250 for full-time and £100 for part-time) at interview and advised about the application process. We do not currently hold evidence about how fee waivers could assist with increasing participation into HE for students from priority groups. However, we will evaluate the impact of this assistance through an annual evaluation report submitted to the Senior Leadership Team by the Head of Learner Services.

Research and evaluation

We will commit 16.5K of investment over the lifecycle of this plan to research and evaluate the effectiveness of financial support and investment in improving access, success, and progression for students. As a smaller provider our cohort would not be large enough to use the statistical tool available. However, we will introduce use of the survey tool and interview tool, so to gain both quantitative and qualitative evidence. This work will be carried out by the MIS Manager and Head of Quality and overseen by the Vice Principal: Curriculum & Quality. We will also conduct further work to better understand the intersections of disadvantage that our students face. A summary of the findings will be reported annually to the Executive Team and will inform decisions regarding any changes required to financial support or activity to further improve access, success, progression. We will maximise opportunities to learn from our HEI partner, University of Derby, about how we can improve and further eliminate any inequality across the student lifecycle.

3.2 Student consultation

Student voice is a critical aspect of the College's procedures and practice, and there are a range of forums, meetings and committee structures to ensure that processes and practice reflects the student voice. HE students are involved in all aspects of student experience and the College actively seeks and uses their views to support with continual monitoring and improvement of provision. The HE Quality Assurance Committee (QAC) has student representation, and a range of quality improvement student forums and surveys are completed during the academic year to ensure we have wider student consultation to understand student experience and develop practice in response to this feedback.

Students positively articulate their experience about evaluation, planning and access. Lecturers adapt assessment methods following student feedback and provide high levels of support ensuring an inclusive approach to learning. Students are involved in the development and curriculum design of new HE provision, through request for feedback and views about module options and core content.

The College's proposed access and participation plan and investment activity was shared with a small group of students in June 2019. Students supported the investment plans outlined and were positive about engaging in a student focus groups to monitor and evaluate the progress of the plan once approved. As a result of consultation with students, additional focus groups, scheduled each semester, will form part of quality improvement activity for academic year 2019/20 onwards.

3.3 Evaluation strategy

To ensure the robustness and rigour of our evaluation strategy we will adopt the PDCA (plan-do-check-act) iterative cycle of continuous improvement which will enable the outcomes of our evaluation to influence practice and inform our strategy. The cycle of PDCA activities will include:

- Plan: HE quality calendar produced annually in July which will include the planned events we will undertake, and from these we will be able to gather the quantitative and qualitative data needed to inform our robust and rigours evaluation cycle.
- Do: The calendar and events will be performed under the leadership of the HE Manager.
- Check: Quarterly HE Performance Monitoring Review panels are held, chaired by the Vice Principal; Curriculum and Quality. The results from the events, surveys and open forums will then be scrutinised through the termly HE Quality Assurance Committee (QAC) meetings, which are chaired by the Vice Principal: Curriculum and Quality. Reports will then be monitored at the Standards Committee (sub-committee of Corporation) and feed up into Corporation.
- Act: HE QAC committee will be responsible for ensuring sufficient access and participation activity is taking place each quarter, to enable year-on-year progress against the planned targets, as laid out in the targets and investment plan. The extent to which progress is made will enable the committee to influence in year decisions as well as to inform the planning of the next cycle of evidence gathering for the subsequent year.

In addition, we will introduce use of OfS' financial support evaluation toolkit to help us understand how students use the financial support offered to them and the impact this has on access, success, or progression. As a smaller provider our cohort would not be large enough to use the statistical tool available. However, we will introduce use of the survey tool and interview tool provided, so to gain both quantitative and qualitative evidence. This work will be carried out by the MIS Manager and Head of Quality and overseen by the Vice Principal: Curriculum & Quality.

The outcomes of our evaluations will inform our strategic measures outlined in section 3.1; Outreach work, Access (pre 16), Access (post 16), Access (adults, community, other), Hardship funds, Fee Waivers, Academic Scholarships particularly focused on investment and impact. The outcomes of our evaluations gathered through surveys, open forums, events or through the financial support evaluation toolkit, will influence planned investment in subsequent years. We will allocate greater investment to the activity which has most impact upon student experience and outcome and reduce or remove investment from activity which is failing to have an impact. This will be articulated through the annual report about HE Performance, which is submitted to the Standards Committee, a sub-committee of the governing body in the Autumn term of the academic year. The outcomes will then also be incorporated into the budget setting process in the spring term of each academic year, to ensure investment forecasts, and planned activity, can be changed or increased as deemed appropriate based on evaluation outcomes gained.

Our activity and evaluation will be shared with our prospective and current student cohort to ensure they are aware of our commitment to continuous improvement and impact this is having upon practice and their learning experience. This will be shared via our website, the *HE Noticeboard* on Moodle, and curriculum Noticeboards. As outlined in section 3.2 (student consultation) we will hold additional focus groups, each semester, as part of quality improvement activity for academic year 2019/20 onwards.

To gain a better insight into the suitability and impact of our planned access and participation work we will gather a combination of both quantitative and qualitative evidence. Students, and potential students, attending a "*Raising Aspirations & Next Steps*" event, an HE preparation course, or an IAG workshop within a "*Festival of Learning*" will complete a short survey which will assess their initial

understanding and views about what it means to study at HE. The survey will be completed prior to, and after the event or workshop, therefore generating evidence on the impact of intervention and activity. We will adhere to GDPR regulations and ethical considerations in the collection, storage, and use of the data gathered. We will widen our engagement, and interactions, with current students beyond the HE Quality Assurance Committee (HE QAC) membership and teaching and learning focus groups, already in place. We will invite attendance at open forums themed specifically on perceived and actual barriers to access and participation.

We will continue work closely with our HEI partners, University of Derby and Bishop Grosseteste University, and LinHigher (NCOP), our collaborative partner for widening participation, to drive improvement across our HE provision. We will develop this work further to seek support, and share best practice, to develop our skills across the organisation so we can better provide activity which will improve all stages of the student lifecycle for priority groups. We will source and secure shadowing work for a senior member of staff with one of our HEIs.

3.4 Monitoring progress against delivery of the plan

Once approved, the College's Access and Participation Plan will be actively monitored, alongside current widening participation activity, through the termly HE QAC meetings, which are chaired by the Vice Principal: Curriculum and Quality. This HE quality committee, which includes student representation, will be responsible for ensuring sufficient activity is taking place in-year to enable year on year progress against planned targets. The annual report on HE Performance, submitted each November to the Standards Committee, a sub-committee of the governing body, will be widened to include annual end of year evaluation of progress made against yearly milestones. This report will review the impact of the investment and activity to date, recommending action(s) to be taken should progress be too slow or declining. This report will also be presented to the governing body at the December full corporation committee meeting. The outcomes of this monitoring activity will be incorporated, by the Director of Finance, into the budget setting process in February so investment forecasts, and planned activity, can be changed or increased as deemed appropriate.

4. Provision of information to students

Sharing information with prospective and current students is important because there is a range of material within the public domain that students can access. The College acknowledges the importance of publishing information that is accurate and reliable. Public information on the College website, and within the brochures helps prospective students to make informed decisions about where, what, when, and how, they will study. This includes information on the fees they will be charged for the duration of the course. Policies are shared with students on the College website, and on the dedicated *HE Noticeboard* on the College's on-line learning platform, Moodle. The College strives to publish information in a timely manner, and to ensure information is accurate, fair, and reasonable.

The College seeks to ensure that prospective, and current students have access to reliable information about HE courses. The Student Protection Plan is an important part of the information that it shares with students. It is accessible for prospective students on the College's website from the point of enquiry, and additionally held on Moodle for students to access once enrolled. It is signposted, along with other relevant HE policies, to all newly enrolled students as part of their induction to College. The College's Student Protection Plan is tracked and reviewed at the HE QAC and presented annually for review at a student forum. It is also reviewed annually as part of the annual review of HE Performance at the Quality and Standards Governors Committee.

Students will be informed about the availability of hardship funds at interview as well as during their induction period. We will ensure this is also articulated on the *HE Noticeboard* on Moodle, our on-line learning platform. The careers team will advise students about fee waivers if fees are deemed to be a significant barrier, and the student forms one of the following priority groups; BAME, care leavers. Students will be informed about the availability of academic scholarships (£250 for full-time and £100 for part-time) at interview and advised about the application process.