

Bedford College Access Agreement Submission for 2018-19

1 Introduction

Bedford College is a large general further education college located in Bedfordshire with five main campuses: Bedford College, Shuttleworth College, Tresham College and The Bedford Sixth Form College. The College's Higher Education provision is located within the main Bedford town campus, Kettering campus, Corby Campus and its Land Based provision at Shuttleworth campus, approximately 8 miles from Bedford. During 2016/17 Bedford College had 11,164 funded students and 533 staff serving the local communities around Bedford. HE provision represents approximately 13.4% (£4,028,000) of the College's annual turnover of approximately £30,000,000. Our ambition is to grow Higher Education by 10% in 2018-19 and 30% by 2022. Following the merger with Tresham College on the 1st August 2017 the College is now one of the largest General Further Education Colleges in England.

The College offers a broad curriculum from Entry Level to Level 6 across a range of vocational and academic disciplines including classroom based learning, Traineeships, Apprenticeships, Workplace learning, Adult and Community Learning, 14-16 Vocational Courses and Higher Education. The majority of our learners are 16-18 on substantive full time programmes. During 2016/17, 768 students attended Bedford College on full or part time Higher Education Higher National Certificates or Diplomas, Foundation Degrees or Top-Up Degree programmes. These are delivered through partnership arrangements with Pearson, University of Bedfordshire and the University of Northampton.

2 Our customers

Bedford College attracts a fairly local market, with 81% of Higher Education students living within a 17 mile radius of their campus (2016/17). Just over a quarter of students are aged 18 or 19 years old on joining the College, and just over 60% are aged under 24 years old. The 18-23 age market has shown the largest growth over the past three years (23% increase) whilst the market for those aged 24 and over has been declining. This trend in age profile has reflected on the mode of study, with full-time enrolments increasing and part-time enrolments decreasing. 56% of Bedford College students currently study full-time and 44% part-time.

Males outnumber females by a ratio of 3 to 2. Between 65 and 75% of students, depending on the year, are of White British ethnicity. Asian and Black ethnic groups are the next largest groups. Modes of study are split evenly between full and part time with the majority of part-time students studying alongside work

commitments. Most of these students are sponsored by their employer, evidencing that their choice of Study Programme is typically related to their employment.

3 Population and demographics

The College's Bedford & Kempston campus is situated within Bedford Borough, which is in the Milton Keynes & South Midlands growth area, with 8,000 new homes planned by 2021. Much of this residential development is in the parishes of Biddenham, Eastcotts, Great Denham, Renhold, Kempston, Wixams and Wootton, and in Bedford Town Centre around Cauldwell. As a result, the Borough population is expected to grow significantly to approximately 174,700 by 2021. However the number of 16-18 year olds (estimated at 6,308 in 2015) is expected to decrease to 5,956 by 2020, a decrease of 6%, and then grow to 6,696 by 2025. The 19-23 year old population (estimated at 12,277 in 2015) is also expected to decrease by 3% up to 2020, and continue to decline after this period. It is only the 25-60 year old population that is expected to increase (by 4% by 2020).

The population make-up is similar in Central Bedfordshire, where Shuttleworth College is situated, with a 3% decline among the 16-18 population, 7% decline among the 19-23 population and 4% growth among the 24-60 population by 2020. Luton and Milton Keynes, towns from where the College also attracts students, has a slightly more positive population forecast for the 16-18 population, with a 1% decline in Luton and a 2% increase in Milton Keynes. The other age groups are a similar profile to Bedford Borough. The 16-18 population in Corby and Kettering is expected to grow significantly by 2026.

Bedford Borough has an ethnically diverse population. The 2011 Census indicated that 28.5% of the population was from minority ethnic groups (BME), compared to 20.2% nationally. The main BME groups are White Other (including Italian and Polish communities), and Indian, with substantial populations of Black African, Black Caribbean, Bangladeshi, Pakistani, White Irish, mixed White and Black Caribbean. The BME population is concentrated in Bedford and Kempston, with particularly large BME communities in Queens Park and Cauldwell wards, followed by Castle, Kingsbrook, Harpur, Kempston Central & East, Kempston South, Goldington and Kempston North. The languages most commonly spoken as a main language are Polish, Panjabi, Bengali and Italian.

4 Bedford College's Strategic Plan 2021

This Agreement supports the College's Vision and Strategic Plan for Higher Education, period 2016-2021 which outlines our clear commitment to widening participation and increasing access to our Higher Education programmes and is aligned to the College Strategic Plan 2021. The Higher Education Strategic Plan builds on the findings of the Higher Education Research commissioned in 2015-16. In addition the Strategic Plan responds to the Higher Education Review January 2016 outcomes, the Higher Education Student Annual Conference recommendations and recent Government White Paper - *Success as a Knowledge Economy: Teaching Excellence, Social Mobility and Student Choice*.

The Higher Education Research provided a detailed understanding of the target market, including intelligence on the qualifications and delivery methods preferred by potential students, and of the College's reputation for Higher Education among relevant groups – applicants, potential applicants, students, employers and their

influencers. This research will provide the framework for growth and improvement. The Higher Education Review acknowledged and confirmed the College's commitment and determination to provide an outstanding student experience and achieve high Levels of successful learning outcomes.

The Strategic Plan, in conjunction with the Operational Plan for Higher Education, will enable us to demonstrate how through the Strategic Aims and Objectives we intend to achieve our Vision, Mission and incorporate our values of student focus, high performance, respect, openness and honesty and maintain our market leadership locally on Higher Education.

4a Our Strategic Aims

Bedford College aims to be one of the best Higher Education within Further Education providers in the county, offering a wide range of courses at Level 4 and above to enable students to progress to Higher Level skills and knowledge in their chosen vocational and academic subject.

4b Our Strategic Objectives to 2021

The Corporation identified and agreed four key objectives for the new plan:

- Educational Leadership
- Educational Sustainability
- Financial Sustainability
- High Quality provision

4c Key Strategic plan performance measure

- Increase Higher Education recruitment by 30% (through breadth of curriculum and internal progression strategy)

4d The QAA's judgements about Bedford College are:

The QAA review team formed the following judgements about the Higher Education provision at Bedford College.

- The maintenance of the academic standards of awards offered on behalf of degree-awarding bodies and other awarding organisation **meets** UK expectations.
- The quality of student learning opportunities **meets** UK expectations.
- The quality of the information about learning opportunities **meets** UK expectations.
- The enhancement of student learning opportunities **meets** UK expectations.

The QAA review team identified the following features of **good practice** at Bedford College.

- The strategic and market-led approach to the development of the provision to meet the needs of local employers and students (Expectation B1).
- The wide range of opportunities to work with employers to enhance student learning (Expectation B4).

4e Strategic Commitment to Access to Higher Education

The College's mission is to support the local and national economy through the promotion, development and delivery of excellent skills training and education and as such promotes itself as a genuine alternative to university through its Higher Education programmes and seeks to promote social inclusion and personal advancement in the local communities.

The College has ambitious growth targets in response to LEP priority areas for high Level skills and the need to develop opportunities for Higher Level study to support the local community and economy. New provision will focus on the development of a Business School, Engineering Centre and Digital Technologies. To achieve these targets the College needs to attract under-represented groups, particularly those who are mature students, carers, students with disabilities, ethnic minorities and people from non-traditional Higher Education backgrounds.

The College has a higher than usual proportion of students from non-traditional backgrounds and is committed through its mission and values to continue to build on access to Higher Education programmes for these learners. Recent research undertaken by the College to gain an understanding of our target market, knowledge of our current and potential learners and their expectations in meeting a broad range of flexible learning opportunities has informed a strategic commitment to develop our Access to Higher Education programmes and grow our student population by diversifying our teaching activities to include new courses and delivery modes which meet the needs of the broad range of learners the college attracts.

We will achieve this through:

- Aligning our Higher Education provision with our existing Level 3 courses to provide progression opportunities
- Develop our Level 2 and Level 3 Access to Higher Education provision to provide an alternative route to HE for mature students
- Ensure we have an effective widening participation agenda leading to flexible and multiple modes of study
- Ensure high quality assessment allows for meaningful and excellent progress made by all students
- Further developing our HE student support services through a full understanding of the needs of HE students from under-represented groups
- Engaging employers in the development of the curriculum to maximise life chances for graduates and ensure our HE provision is sustainable
- Engage students as partners in aspects of wider College decision making, the development of HE policies and processes and HE provision.
- Continue to develop the broader HE Community within the College to ensure we are meeting the expectations of our students
- Embedding employability in our higher Level programmes to support the ambitions of graduates and access to Higher Education for those already in employment.
- Further develop our collaboration with schools and the local community to raise aspirations and attainment among under-represented groups.

The development of our Access to Higher Education strategy involves all departments with responsibility for student recruitment, academic and pastoral support. Collaborative working by key staff concerned with financial support, access, outreach, success and progression, teaching and learning, marketing and

recruitment ensures that each stage of the 'student journey' is founded on teamwork and positive interactions with all learners.

The QAA HER team (Jan 2016) provided clear evidence of the College's commitment to fair access within B2 of the Quality Code:

"The College adheres to the principles of fair admissions and has appropriate systems in place to ensure an effective admission experience for students from application to offer. Staff are clear about their responsibilities and provide additional support if required. Students are clear about the admissions process both with the support received from staff and the information available to them throughout the process. Students did not present any complaints or issues with the admissions process or procedures, and there are no complaints recorded against admissions decisions."

5 Educational sustainability and quality of student experience

Bedford College's Higher Education Strategy and Operational Plan (which directly links to the College's Strategic Plan) sets out our objectives to maintain educational sustainability and high quality provision:

5a Sustainability

- Offer a full degree at the College/guaranteeing progression to a local university honours programme
- Develop our external partnerships with other Higher Education Institutions
- Explore the potential for Higher Level Apprenticeships and Degree Apprenticeships
- Increase recruitment through improving internal Level 3 progression
- Develop our HE curriculum offer to ensure that we provide courses which employers need and learners want to do
- Review and implement effective and timely strategies for marketing and promotion to external and internal Level 3 students including the increasing prominence of social media
- Increase access to HE for under-represented groups eg white male students
- Review opportunities for awarding powers following recent Government announcements for Colleges providing Higher Education programmes
- Respond to Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) priorities and employer feedback to inform curriculum planning for both full and part time study options

5b High Quality provision

- Improve the quality of existing provision to improve NSS scores and reputation
- Maintain excellent external quality review reports
- Achieve teaching and learning excellence through implementation of the UK Professional Standards Framework for Teaching and Supporting Learning
- Maintain capital investment in supporting Level 6 in existing and in new curriculum areas
- Ensure high levels of satisfaction and innovation in teaching and learning through the embedding of new technologies

- To ensure teaching and support staff involved in the planning, delivery and assessment to Level 6 are qualified up to Masters Level and engage in research and scholarship
- Achieve high levels of student satisfaction above national benchmarks in all curriculum areas (NSS scores)
- Develop the Student Body and Students as Partners initiatives to enhance learner engagement

The College's HE Quality Processes framework, Curriculum Planning and Review processes and HE Student Engagement Strategy ensure robust procedures are in place to monitor progress and achieve our objectives. The 2016 Annual HE Student Conference engaged students in reviewing and developing the College's approach to: HE Community Ethos; Students as Partners; Learner Voice; Student Body; Employer Engagement. The 2017 Annual HE Student conference will focus on reviewing and developing our approach to: teaching and learning; digital technology; study skills resources; HE social and recreational activities. The College ensures that students from a wide variety of backgrounds and under-represented groups from full and part time programmes engage in the development of Higher Education to ensure accessibility by all.

6 Widening participation measures and access

The College strives to ensure fair and equal access to our Higher Education courses and has implemented a number of strategies to increase internal progression from lower level courses and access through a range of flexible learning opportunities to under-represented groups. The recent QAA HER confirmed that the College's approach to recruitment, selection and admission.

Our widening participation agenda is fully embedded within the College Strategic Plan and performance against measures and access is reviewed annually through the Self-Assessment Review process.

7 Promotion of progression to Higher Education programmes

7a Promotion of internal progression

In line with the College's HE Strategic Plan 2016-21 to achieve an increase in internal progression from FE to HE programmes, a Progression Guarantee policy and process has been implemented for 2017/18. Bedford College is committed to ensuring everyone in our community can develop their education and skills to the highest level. If a student successfully completes a full-time Study Programme at Level 3 they will be guaranteed a place on the programme for that subject at the next level. The conditions for students progressing to a Higher Level programme should be managed in accordance with the College HE Progression Guarantee.

The College has been involved in its local NNCO, securing local funding from the consortium to work with local schools to promote progression to Higher Education. To fulfil its widening participation agenda we will campaign in areas with low participation rates in Higher Education particularly targeting those sectors where there are shortages in skilled labour.

Currently less than 10% of students progress from Level 3 to our Higher Education programmes. The target is to increase this to 30% during the timeframe for the Strategic Plan 2016-21. Progression to higher levels of study is an important factor

for students when selecting a Level 3 programme, informing a need for early discussions and experiences of Higher Education while the student is studying at Level 3. Strategies have been implemented to support progression to Higher Education including:

- Presentations on the course content, enhancement activities and progression opportunities
- Talks from Higher Education students of their experiences and achievements
- Visits from employers to reinforce the importance of Higher Level skills and knowledge leading to successful employment
- Taster sessions
- UCAS and finance information
- Information on Fast Track Process to HE

8 Strategy to increase progression from external organisations (Long term outreach activities (schools & communities))

8a Recruitment and outreach

The College's targeting strategy for Higher Education can be segmented into three categories:

- Bedford College students progressing from Level 3 programmes
- School and College leavers
- Adults.

Recruitment activities are targeted around a 17 mile radius of the College campuses which is where over 80% of students live.

8b School and college leavers

Bedford College primarily works with school pupils at Key Stage 4 to promote progression into Higher Education. The activities listed below are undertaken to promote progression to Higher Education to this market:

- Attendance at secondary school/upper school events, UCAS events and university events
- Higher Education information event in June each year which is promoted through schools and direct to prospective students and their parents
- Targeted marketing campaign, which uses a wide range of different activities, such as social media marketing, digital and direct marketing, so that all family groups are reached
- The use of media stories and case studies published through the full range of communication channels
- Sharing of information with local organisations who provide services to schools and young people
- One-to-one independent advice and guidance through the College's careers team
- Campus visits.

It is proposed that this work will continue in 2018-19.

8c Adults and communities

The activities listed below are undertaken to promote progression to Higher Education to this market:

- Attendance at local community events
- Higher Education information event in June each year
- Sharing of information with local organisations who provide services to different adult groups
- Sharing of information with local employers
- Targeted marketing campaign, which uses a wide range of different activities, such as social media marketing, digital and direct marketing, so that all family groups are reached
- The use of media stories and case studies published through the full range of communication channels
- One-to-one independent advice and guidance through the College's Careers Team
- Campus visits.

The College is also growing its number of Access to Higher Education courses, which attracts mature students, to encourage progression.

8d Strategic relationships and work with schools to raise attainment

Over the last decade the College has gained a reputation as a leading provider of education to those under the age of 16 including two successive Ofsted Outstanding grades for that work and the College project managed the setting up of the Bedford Free School. The College's approach to raising attainment pre-16 is through the work of the Bedford College Academies Trust (BCAT). The BCAT mission is to support students to achieve their absolute best whatever their ability or background. BCAT aims to:

1. Work collaboratively to deliver an inclusive and outstanding education to all students, thereby driving up local standards.
2. Maximise social mobility and life chances, through the highest expectations of and aspirations for all students.
3. Encourage and support a range of high performing and distinctive educational establishments for local communities.

As well as BCAT opening two new academies in September 2017 (Wixams Academy and Wixams Trees Academy) Bedford College will work closely to develop an outreach programme with these academies.

9 Improving access for under-represented groups

The Higher Education curriculum has been informed and shaped by student feedback. Our capacity to provide smaller groups provides a familiar, nurturing and personable environment for non-traditional students. A structure of group and one to one tutorials with regular access to tutors through a range of communication tools provides academic support and guidance when it is needed.

9a People from lower socio-economic groups or from neighbourhoods where Higher Education participation is low, including white males from economically disadvantaged backgrounds

Student Services actively works with the local Harpur Trust bursary which offers an undergraduate bursary. The Harpur Trust is aware that a number of able students from lower income families are anxious about the financial commitment involved in university study and intends that the scheme will encourage those students to make the most of their academic potential.

We also work with the Connolly Foundation which offers Apprenticeship students a £500 bursary award for students who are applying for, or currently undertaking, a Bedford College apprenticeship in the Engineering or Construction industries at Advanced or Higher Level, and have secured a place at Bedford College. Apprenticeship students are often on low wages.

9b Disabled students

The College is committed to identifying and applying effective actions to remove any obstacles to their success. Reforms to the Disability Student’s Allowance (from September 2016) has informed a College approach to supporting students with disabilities through the provision of reasonable adjustment for those with assessed needs. The College will continuously monitor and review student accessibility to the Higher Education curriculum to inform its strategy and financial commitment for study support.

The College’s Learning Support team consists of 31 core staff providing specialist support across a range of learning and physical disabilities. The team is a multi-disciplinary team working across both discrete and mainstream provision supporting students across all nine sites of the college, using a mixed model approach of in class and out of class support.

On application all students with an identified learning difficulty and/or disabilities are contacted directly by the team to assess support needs. Thereafter students can either self-refer or be referred by their course team at any time during their programme. In 2015/16 the Bedford team worked with 760 students with identified learning disabilities. Of these 91.8% were retained and 86% achieved. The table below illustrates the number of directly funded HE students with identified disabilities who declared a disability and received support.

Table 1: Students with declared disability who received support (Bedford College not including Tresham College)

YEAR	Female		Male	
	18 TO 21	21+	18 TO 21	21+
14-15	16	8	24	7
15-16	25	24	35	13
16-17	20	21	32	13

Students with specific learning difficulties are supported through the Learning Support Team (see Disabilities) and strengthened through clear channels of communication between learning support specialists and the personal tutor.

Reasonable adjustments are made by course teams where possible to support these students towards successful achievement and progression.

9c Mature students

Part time study modes are available in sixteen curriculum areas. Engagement with students informs modes of attendance and methods of delivery. The VLE has been developed to provide all students with access to all course materials and this has been particularly welcomed by mature part time students who frequently experience barriers to attendance. Pre-arrival Study Skills packages and access to learning resource specialists during their course of study supports individual student development and confidence. The majority of mature students on part time courses are in related employment with many financially supported through their employer. Collaboration with employers and students ensures that study periods and curriculum content are accessible and relevant to support successful outcomes for all.

Research commissioned by the College identified improving job prospects and career related decisions as key factors for progression to Higher Education. A preference in male students to seek employment (Table 2 below) was a factor for non-progression to Higher Education which has driven the College to develop a broader range of part time programmes to provide flexible study options or programmes with work placement as a mandatory element of the course.

Table 2: Plans for the future

Future plan	Number	%
Get a paid job	36	72%
Study full time HE	6	12%
Not sure	12	24

9d Carers

Students in these groups are less likely to apply for Higher Education or are at risk from non-completion. Student Services is working with Carers in Bedfordshire to support the identification of young and adult carers. Drop-ins are offered twice a month at the College and the service is promoted via the Personal Tutors through the tutorials. This is helping the College identify students who are young carers and work at a multi-agency level to ensure they are supported with their studies.

9e Care Leavers and People Estranged from their families

For students aged 16-18, we identify students in care/care leavers and young people estranged from their families through our vulnerable learner bursary. Students are flagged on our Student Services Intuition database and details of key contacts e.g. Social Worker are logged. Personal Tutors are notified of these students so that they can be prioritised for 1:1s and contact can be made to ensure students are supported at a multi-agency level. For students in Care and Care Leavers, the Personal Tutor will support the Personal Education Plan process and LAC Reviews. These students are tracked on a termly basis in terms of attendance, retention and success.

The College believes that these student groups should have opportunities to realise their potential and aspirations and as such provides a flexible approach to learning to accommodate individual needs without compromising quality standards or success. Special arrangements for individual students are managed at curriculum Level with guidance and support from a team of specialists in student services. Curriculum

managers follow College guidance in determining the steps they need to take to ensure consistency across the organisation. These include general actions:

- Initial course information and guidance including discussion of the course timetable
- Identification of the student's caring responsibilities or barriers which may affect attendance, assessment or examinations
- The Course Manager will consider the potential implications of the course elements on the individual's responsibilities as a carer and/or impact on them as a care leaver and contact student services to arrange support
- Agreed flexibilities are confirmed with the student, support staff and the course team
- A personal tutor is assigned who monitors the agreement with the student concerned and makes additional adjustments where required

9f People with mental health problems, Specific Learning Difficulties and/or who are on the autism spectrum.

We offer counselling provision to all students at Bedford College. The service is available 5 days a week, term-time only. The counselling team works flexibly across all campuses and is accessible through face to face appointments, drop-in, telephone, text and email. 225 students accessed the service last academic year and 747 sessions took place. Retention of students accessing counselling was 89% last year and 89.8% the previous academic year. The service is monitored in terms of its accessibility to all students, therefore, drop in slots have been introduced as well as the email and text services so that all cohorts of students can access the service. The access to Counselling rooms at all sites has been improved to ensure that students in wheelchairs are able to easily enter the room.

Mental health in its various forms remains the biggest presenting issue accounts for over half the appointments. This has provided an essential support to keep students in College particularly for students who have significant difficulties but do not meet the high referral thresholds of external services. The counselling service also offers group sessions on stress management, mediation, sleep workshops to support student's wellbeing during their studies and their exam periods. A Fitness to Study Policy was produced and fully implemented in 2016/17, which supports staff to make effective and transparent decisions to support students in their studies. Self-help guides are available online and in Student Services and the LRC which cover a range of mental health issues such as self-harm, anxiety and depression and have been purchased based on the Reading Agency's Books on Prescription list. We have an allocated CAMHS Mental Health Practitioner who offers 0.5 days at Bedford College, Shuttleworth College and the Bedford Sixth Form. This support is aimed at students under the age of 18 and though the Practitioner does not offer direct 1:1 support, is able to provide consultation to staff, training and initial assessments for referral into CAMHS.

9g Black and ethnic minority groups

Bedford College is located within a diversely rich ethnic town and county with large numbers of ethnic students studying at Level 3 and as such makes purposeful approaches to employing staff from BME groups in management, teaching and support roles. We have supported the development of BME staff through the Leadership Programme for BME groups to encourage individuals to aspire and apply for management roles within the organisation. There is very little difference of

attainment between the ethnic groups although retention for the Asian group was significantly lower than others in 2015/16 which has led to intervention strategies on programmes which attract these students eg Music Technology and Computing. The College is committed to engaging in more activity targeted at local communities and schools to encourage these groups to progress to HE and in providing the extra support required to encourage strong retention. Our marketing literature and website information features under-represented groups of students in the promotion of our Higher Education programmes. Students on Higher Education courses who are representative of these groups support internal progression through Higher Education talks to Level 3 students.

The table below illustrates the ethnicity count of students who were studying Higher Education at the College in 2016-17, the number retained and the achievement of these groups compared with White British and White Other. Retention and achievement in some BME groups is lower than we would expect although the pass rate is consistent across all groups. Curriculum areas include measurable targets in their quality improvement plans to address the gaps between BME and White group retention and achievement. Progress in meeting targets is reviewed monthly in Performance Monitoring Meetings.

Table 3: Ethnicity data (Bedford College not including Tresham College)

Ethnicity	Leavers	Ach		Ret		Pass	
		%	Ret	%	Ach	%	
Asian	27	63	20	69	17	85	
Black	30	77	28	88	23	82	
Mixed	23	78	22	81	18	82	
White British	271	81	273	87	219	80	
White Other	24	92	26	93	22	85	
Other/Unknown	4	100	6	100	4	67	
Grand Total	379	80	375	86	303	81	

9h Progression Support

The Careers Team works closely with the Personal Tutor team and the Access students to ensure that students are supported through UCAS and provided with appropriate and timely Information, advice and guidance on their next steps. All students have a minimum tutorial entitlement of 3 1:1's a year where their progress is monitored and SMART targets are set. The Careers team offer drop in service throughout the Autumn term to support students with their application and Personal Statements.

All full-time students are allocated a Personal Tutor who support students academically and pastorally, insofar as they monitor students' academic progress, performance and attendance and provide frontline pastoral support where students are facing barriers to their learning. The Tutorial Programme is designed to be bespoke to the cohort of students that the Personal Tutor is supporting with group sessions delivered around study skills (e.g. time management, Plagiarism, referencing), progression (e.g. Introduction to HE, personal statement writing, CV workshops) and general wellbeing. The LRC also offer 1:1 Study Skills support to students and this is promoted through the LRC inductions at the start of the academic year.

With the expansion of HE provision across college, we have further broadened and developed the Careers Service to include appropriate support for our HE students. This includes:

- Working with HE Course Managers to investigate the needs of their HE students
- And as a result of this, provided CMs with a menu of careers sessions suitable for HE students
- Developing the Student Services website to include a careers and opportunities section for HE students
- Produced a leaflet for HE students advertising the Careers Service
- Further developing the careers resources for HE students and making these available for loan in the LRC

10 Improving outcomes

10a Inclusive practice

The College closely monitors teaching and learning practice to ensure inclusivity. The HEFCE Catalyst Fund: 'innovations in teaching and learning' has supported the development of a structured programme of professional development to maximise student retention and success in under-represented groups. Both experienced and inexperienced teachers have access to a range of support mechanisms to enable them to meet the diverse needs of our student cohorts. The Catalyst Fund initiative has supported the commitment to seek successful innovative approaches to addressing differential outcomes for under-represented groups of students, with the aim of closing the attainment and outcome gaps for students and removing systemic inequality. New members of teaching staff attend the Induction activity: HE Teacher Toolkit an intensive day which covers all aspects of Higher Education planning, delivery, assessment and support; are provided with an experienced and qualified HE mentor and from September 2017 have access to a HE Teacher Handbook (a guide to achieving excellence in HE Teaching and Learning).

10b Support for at risk students

The College believes that students are more likely to be retained if they receive the optimum level of support prior to and during their period of study. Students from under-represented groups are more likely to withdraw where they lack the study skills inherent to achievement and success. A pre Higher Education Course Study Pack has been devised to provide face to face workshops on key study skills themes, an opportunity to apply new knowledge and obtain feedback and guidance in areas which will enhance their level of confidence in progressing to Higher Level study. The Fresh Start programme will continue throughout their first year of study with a framework of workshops and one to one study skills support.

10c Data and performance management to reduce achievement gaps

- In-year monitoring of the retention and predicted success by equality factors via Performance Management Meetings with individual programme areas (termly), Quality Information Packs for the senior management team (monthly)
- In-year monitoring of the retention of 'at risk' students: in care, in receipt of free meals and with high needs
- In-year quality interventions in individual programme areas when the attendance, retention and predicted success rates are below target

Retention rates in year two of Higher Education programmes is high (insert as below) but as with many institutions which have significant numbers of under-represented groups retention in year one has been a target for improvement. Initiatives to encourage higher levels of retention in the first year of study include:

- A review of course information to ensure this is detailed and accurate
- Interview and recruitment processes which screen all applicants and provides details of modes of study, timetables, and work related opportunities
- Pre course and in course study skills support
- Structured and welcoming pre-registration Welcome Day where students have a tour, meet the course team and their fellow students in a relaxed and friendly environment
- An induction period with access to personal tutors and introductions to all support service team members
- Tutorial strategy to ensure all students have early and timely tutorials
- Flexible learning opportunities including the development of HE VLE which the College will invest in further to provide flexible e-learning opportunities for students studying on part time programmes and juggling study with employment
- Course teams meet regularly to identify at risk learners and arrange appropriate support which may include: time management, study skills support, financial or welfare support in order to keep the student on track for achievement

Prevention strategies for high risk students are implemented to provide on course support throughout the student's journey. These include:

- Use of targets and attendance data as an early warning system to identify students at risk from non-completion and withdrawal.
- Intervention through one to one support and attendance of study workshops
- Signpost students to the student services team
- Provision of an individualised learning plan

All students are provided with a vocational subject Personal Tutor and a structured tutorial programme. Personal Tutors work closely with the learning support, study skills support and student services team to ensure timely, relevant and effective intervention and support. Table 3 below illustrates the retention and achievement of under-represented groups of students in 2016-17. Curriculum areas monitor and report on effective actions taken to remove gaps in retention and attainment in monthly performance monitoring meetings, quality improvement plan termly updates and a full review in the annual self-assessment review.

Table 4 Retention and Achievement of under-represented groups of students (Bedford College not including Tresham College)

Column Labels															
Ethnicity	13/14			14/15			15/16			Achieved Ach%					
	Leavers	Retained	Ret%	Leavers	Retained	Ret%	Leavers	Retained	Ret%						
* Asian	39	28	71.8%	23	59.0%	28	18	64.3%	14	50.0%	28	18	64.3%	17	60.7%
* Black	44	33	75.0%	27	61.4%	55	40	72.7%	31	56.4%	34	28	82.4%	23	67.6%
* Mixed	14	11	78.6%	10	71.4%	18	13	72.2%	12	66.7%	27	20	74.1%	20	74.1%
* White British	265	215	81.1%	209	78.9%	281	211	75.1%	194	69.0%	313	267	85.3%	243	77.6%
* White Other	23	22	95.7%	21	91.3%	34	27	79.4%	26	76.5%	29	25	86.2%	25	86.2%
* Other/Not provided	13	9	69.2%	8	61.5%	22	19	86.4%	18	81.8%	6	6	100.0%	4	66.7%
Grand Total	398	318	79.9%	298	74.9%	438	328	74.9%	295	67.4%	437	364	83.3%	332	76.0%

Column Labels															
Gender	13/14			14/15			15/16			Achieved Ach%					
	Leavers	Retained	Ret%	Leavers	Retained	Ret%	Leavers	Retained	Ret%						
F	176	145	82.4%	139	79.0%	198	141	71.2%	133	67.2%	168	146	86.9%	133	79.2%
M	222	173	77.9%	159	71.6%	240	187	77.9%	162	67.5%	269	218	81.0%	199	74.0%
Grand Total	398	318	79.9%	298	74.9%	438	328	74.9%	295	67.4%	437	364	83.3%	332	76.0%

Column Labels															
Disability	13/14			14/15			15/16			Achieved Ach%					
	Leavers	Retained	Ret%	Leavers	Retained	Ret%	Leavers	Retained	Ret%						
Has difficulty/disability/health proble	33	23	69.7%	22	66.7%	31	19	61.3%	19	61.3%	53	46	86.8%	43	81.1%
No difficulty/disability/health proble	357	289	81.0%	271	75.9%	391	300	76.7%	267	68.3%	382	316	82.7%	287	75.1%
No information provided by the learn	8	6	75.0%	5	62.5%	16	9	56.3%	9	56.3%	2	2	100.0%	2	100.0%
Grand Total	398	318	79.9%	298	74.9%	438	328	74.9%	295	67.4%	437	364	83.3%	332	76.0%

11 Employability and post Higher Education Progression

We are aware that a key enabler of post Higher Education employment is in gaining relevant and high quality work experience. On Study Programmes where this is not an inherent part of the curriculum, students are provided with enhancement opportunities through regular contact with employers. These opportunities are informed by students through our student engagement strategy and a requirement for teaching staff to secure industry contact and feedback on course content, method of delivery and inclusion of employability skills within teaching and learning. Student Services provide advice for students seeking additional employment experience or in preparing for employment.

The January 2016 QAA HER team stated their findings on the theme of 'employability':

"The College has a strategic focus on employability which is highlighted in the College Strategy for Working with Employers. The College has developed strong links with local employers which have contributed to embedding employability skills and opportunities in much of the College's Higher Education provision. Opportunities for students include work experience, work placements and live briefs and there are Higher Apprenticeship schemes available to College students with local employers. The College recently commissioned a research report which touched on how employability informs student decision making when it comes to choosing courses."

12 Cross College commitment to Equality and Diversity

Bedford College is committed to the advancement and promotion of equality and diversity. We aim to provide learning and working environment which values individuals equally. As an organisation, we are aware that discrimination exists in many forms. We encourage all our staff and students to ensure that their behaviour is

not discriminatory and does not make any person feel uncomfortable. The College will not tolerate harassment, bullying, victimisation or discrimination, and has procedures in place to deal with, and provide support for, individuals involved in such incidents.

The College's Strategic Plan 2021 highlights our commitment to promote social inclusion and personal advancement within the local communities we serve, and that we seek to achieve a high quality learning experience for every student.

Bedford College has a Single Equality Scheme that sets out its equality priorities to 2018 and the manner in which it assesses its performance in this area. The four priorities are as follows:

Priority 1: To develop an effective and diverse workforce that is representative of the communities we serve

Priority 2: To integrate the promotion of equality and diversity, and the elimination of discrimination and harassment in our working practices so that we meet our legal obligations as required under the Equality Act 2010

Priority 3: To embed fully equality and diversity in teaching, learning, assessment, tutorials and enrichment activities, and maintain high achievement of all students (full-time, part-time, HE, FE, work-based learning)

Priority 4: To incorporate fully equality and diversity in our Apprenticeship, Traineeship and Work Placement provision

Each of the priorities is underpinned by specific and timely actions outlined in our Single Equality Scheme Action Plan which is reviewed every half term. The impact of the Single Equality Scheme Action Plan is monitored by the College's Equality and Diversity Group which is chaired by the Principal and has cross-college representation.

The Equality and Diversity Annual Report, which demonstrates how the College is meeting the public sector equality duties and our progress on the objectives in the Single Equality Scheme, is scrutinised by the College's Board of Governors at a full Board meeting and recommendations are made for further development.

13 Monitoring and Evaluation

The College's Higher Education Steering Group Committee monitors the progress against targets and milestones set out in the Higher Education Quality Improvement Plan and Higher Education Marketing Plan. The Higher Education Quality Procedures incorporate the close monitoring of: applications, recruitment, progression, access, retention, success and curriculum development. We continue to appoint and develop staff who have responsibility for the monitoring and support of students from low participation backgrounds, particularly POLAR3 to remove barriers to participation and progression.

In addition the Executive monitor and review progress against wider college targets and milestones including Higher Education through a monthly performance monitoring activity.

The Governing Body monitors and reviews progress through the Quality & Standards Committee which meets termly. The Higher Education Steering Committee will have responsibility for the monitoring of the Access Agreement through inclusion within the College's HE Quality Process structure and report their findings to the Executive and Governing Body through the Quality & Standards Committee.

14 Expenditure on additional access measures

The College commits to expenditure to support progression to Higher Education. This budget is decentralised to curriculum areas which are expected to evidence support for students from under-represented groups and promotion of their Higher Education programmes to further education students on Level 3 or equivalent programmes.

It is expected that at least 50% of this expenditure will be aimed at promoting higher level courses at under-represented groups to encourage progression to Higher Education from low participation backgrounds in the communities we serve. We will also extend our offer to include those with weaker GCSE scores, adults, white males, people from BME communities and those from lower quintile wards.

There are several pockets of significant deprivation affecting many residents in Bedford and Kempston towns. Harpur, Cauldwell and Castle are the 0-10% most deprived areas in England, whilst Kingsbrook, Goldington and Kempston North are among the 10-20% most deprived areas. Corby has high levels of deprivation and is ranked 57th for deprivation (rank of average score) in England.

Almost 20% of children in the Borough are raised in income deprived households, with the following wards much higher: Kingsbrook, Goldington, Cauldwell, Queens Park, Kempston West, Castle, Kempston North, Eastcotts and Harpur.

The Marketing Department promotes Higher Education programmes through a variety of strategies which are not limited to the following:

- Higher Education prospectus which is distributed to all local schools, Sixth Forms and community centres
- Social media including Twitter, face book, YouTube
- College website including detailed course information, student case studies and student success stories
- Open Days which include specific HE recruitment events
- School Career Events with talks by HE information and guidance specialists
- Clearing events to provide advice and guidance on courses, finance, welfare and study support
- Targeted marketing to employers to support Higher Level skills development in the local economy
- Undertaking research with local and regional employers and Level 3 students to ensure that curriculum development supports demand and opens up new study areas to bridge higher Level skills gaps in the economy.
- Analyse data to enable us to target learners and schools from postcodes associated with income deprivation, educational deprivation and low participation in Higher Education.
- Celebrating success of under-represented groups through the achievement of employer and college sponsored awards

We will continue to support the success of our Higher Education students through the provision of study skills support learning packages accessible on line and through

coaching activities delivered in a timely manner to keep students active in their learning, particularly for under-represented groups.

15 Fees

Bedford College proposes the following tuition fees for full time students who are receiving tuition and support for more than 12 hours a week starting in September 2018-19:

HNC/HND £5750 per annum
Foundation Degree £6250 per annum

Part time fees vary from £5750 to £6250 full-time equivalent

Our proposed full time and part time HNC/HND fees remain below the fee cap.

16 Financial hardship

In case of exceptional financial hardship additional funds are available for existing students through our Student Services department. This is allocated on a case by case basis to students who are at risk of withdrawal or non-completion due to financial issues. A maximum of £10,000 is available across the organisation. The effectiveness of this financial support is monitored and a full evaluation is prepared annually.

Following the merger of Bedford and Tresham Colleges in all cases continuing students will receive bursary support as advertised at the time they accepted their offer of a place.

17 Consultation

The actions included within this Access agreement are informed by externally commissioned research. This research included focus groups with both students and employers. Information/feedback was also obtained from our Student Rep Conference in April 2017.

18 Publication of information

The College publishes all information regarding its Higher Education provision, support and fees on its website and in the Higher Education prospectus. Our fees are transparent and informed by consultation with students and employers to minimise barriers to participation and progression. Detailed information is included in letters containing offers to students in line with the College's Information Processes for Higher Education. The Higher Education offer process is managed by specialist teams who have direct links with UCAS and the SLC and it is the responsibility of these teams to ensure that information within the Access Agreement and fee information is regularly checked for accuracy and updated accordingly.

Table 7 - Targets and milestones

Institution name: Bedford College

Institution UKPRN: 10000610

Validation checks:

1. All mandatory cells within a row in Table 7a must be complete - rows must have a reference number, lifecycle stage, target type, they must be classified as collaborative or not, they must have a baseline year and baseline data entered, and they must contain milestones up to and including 2020-21.
2. All mandatory cells within a row in Table 7b must be complete - rows must have a reference number, lifecycle stage, target type, they must be classified as collaborative or not, and they must have a baseline year, baseline data, and yearly milestones entered.

Notes

These tables have been pre-populated using the information you provided to us in your 2017-18 access agreement data.

For detail of our expectations and requirements on targets, see our online guidance (hyperlink: <https://www.offa.org.uk/universities-and-colleges/guidance/targets-milestones-access-agreement/>)

To complete the table:

- Please ensure that for each target you select a: lifecycle stage; main target type; data source, whether it is collaborative or not, and a baseline year.
- Reference numbers will autopopulate for each target.
- Each individual target must be self-contained, within one row of the table below.
- Any changes made to pre-filled targets and milestones will be highlighted with blue text - you should provide a reason for any changes in Column N if blue text is highlighted.
- Any new targets will be highlighted with green text and must be entered on a separate row.
- Do not overwrite an old target with a new one.
- If you wish to give some contextual detail about your targets, please include this within the commentary box beneath Table 7b.

Please do not leave any blank lines in between targets.

Table 7a - Statistical targets and milestones relating to your applicants, entrants or student body

Reference number	Stage of the lifecycle (drop-down menu)	Main target type (drop-down menu)	Target type (drop-down menu)	Description (500 characters maximum)	Is this a collaborative target? (drop-down menu)	Baseline year (drop-down menu)	Baseline data	Yearly milestones (numeric where possible, however you may use text)					Commentary on your milestones/targets or textual description where numerical description is not appropriate (500 characters maximum)
								2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22	
T16a_01	Access	Other (please give details in Description column)	Other statistic - State School (please give details in the next column)	Increase internal progression of the College's vocational Further Education students to our own Higher Education provision to 30% by 2022.	No	2015-16	10%	10%	15%	20%	25%	30%	
T16a_02	Access	Other (please give details in Description column)	Other statistic - Mature (please give details in the next column)	Develop additional Access to Higher Education programmes (and pre-Access programmes) at the College, increasing the number of enrolled students on Access to Higher Education programmes at the College increasing the number of adult learners who wish to access Higher education provision by 30%	No	2016-17	156	179	180	190	200	207	
T16a_03	Student success	Ethnicity	Other statistic - Ethnicity (please give details in the next column)	Improve retention of Asian students on our Higher Education courses where there is a retention gap	No	2015-16	17%	13%	12%	10%	8%	5%	Baseline data is 2015-16 achievement gap
T16a_04	Progression	Other (please give details in Description column)	Other statistic - Progression to employment or further study (please give details in the next column)	Increase progression opportunities for students completing Level 3 programmes, HNDs and Foundation Degrees so that each programme (both full time and part time) has a clear progression route. This target is part of action plans with each of our validating HEIs.	Yes	2016-17	75%	75%	78%	80%	82%	85%	Baseline data refers to the number of Level 3 programmes with clear and agreed progression routes and progression guarantees already in place
T16a_05	Student success	Other (please give details in Description column)	Other statistic - Completion/Non continuation (please give details in the next column)	Higher education programmes to meet retention targets	No	2015-16	88%	89%	90%	90%	90%	90%	
T16a_06	Access	Other (please give details in Description column)	Other statistic - Applications (please give details in the next column)	Increase progression from The Bedford Sixth Form to the College's Higher Education provision	No	2015-16	0%	2%	4%	6%	8%	10%	Baseline data- Proportion of those progressing to Higher Education progressing to Bedford College programmes

Notes

Alongside applicant and entrant targets, we encourage you to provide targets around outreach and student success work (including collaborative work where appropriate) or other initiatives to illustrate your progress towards increasing access, student success and progression. These should be measurable outcomes-based targets and should focus on the number of beneficiaries reached by a particular activity/programme or the number of schools worked with, and what the outcomes were, rather than simply recording the nature/number of activities.

Table 7b - Other milestones and targets.

Reference Number	Select stage of the lifecycle	Main target type (drop-down menu)	Target type (drop-down menu)	Description (500 characters maximum)	Is this a collaborative target?	Baseline year	Baseline data	Yearly milestones (numeric where possible, however you may use text)					Commentary on your milestones/targets or textual description where numerical description is not appropriate (500 characters maximum)
								2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22	
T16b_01	Access	Attainment raising	Other statistic - Applications (please give details in the next column)	Develop a long term outreach programme with academies within the Bedford College Academies Trust (BCAT)	Yes	Other (please give details in Description column)	0	1	1	1	1	1	We plan to agree an outreach programme once the Academies open on 1/9/2017. BCAT aims to work collaboratively to deliver an inclusive and outstanding education to all students, thereby driving up local standards and attainment. This programme will be designed to support BCAT's aim of raising local attainment.

Optional commentary on milestones.

This box is character-limited to 1000 characters; however, we are happy for you to upload additional 'supporting information' as a separate Word/pdf document.