

Higher Education Quality & Strategy 2022-23

Introduction	2
The College Purpose and Values	2
Strategic Aims.....	3
Context and Rationale for the College's HE Provision	4
Economy and Labour Market.....	5
The Black Country Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP)	5
Higher Education in the Black Country	6
Level 3 students preferred universities:	7
Current Position and Developments	7
Quality and Standards.....	7
Curriculum Development.....	8
Resourcing.....	8
Continuous Professional Development and Scholarly Activity	9
Recruitment, retention and progression into and through HE.....	9

Introduction

Halesowen College has been delivering Higher Education (HE) programmes for over 16 years. The College operates on three sites; with HE delivered on two of these. The provision is delivered in partnership with one Higher Education Institution (HEI) currently – University of Worcester and Pearson.

Our HE provision is aimed at students who are local and who wish to access excellent vocational expertise, but who may otherwise not access higher level study. By providing full and part time provision and higher level apprenticeships, we ensure a flexible offer which is responsive to regional and business needs as well as their employees. We will also ensure our Further Education (FE) students are aware of our offer and that it can provide them with an appropriate progression route.

Whilst we are ambitious for our students, we want far more than the acquisition of qualifications. Becoming qualified is, of course, highly important, but is only part of the Halesowen offer. We believe that studying Higher Education at Halesowen College will also develop wider skills, becoming active citizens, making a vital contribution to the wider community and developing skills vital to the rejuvenation and progression of local industries.

We believe that in joining the College we can enrich students' lives, increase their choices and improve their chances of success in an increasingly competitive world. Our aim is for them to leave College better qualified, more independent, creative, entrepreneurial and productive. This will help them to become the first choice for employers and universities.

These aspirations will be achieved by this plan which sets out how Halesowen College will respond to the challenges to make sure the needs of students, staff, businesses and communities are met.

The College Purpose and Values

Halesowen College is a lively, ambitious and highly inclusive tertiary college, providing a broad and extremely supportive education to young people from across the West Midlands and an increasing range of vocational Higher Education courses, Apprenticeships and training for adults.

Halesowen College's stated purpose:

"To provide the exceptional education, training and support that will transform life chances and equip our community to flourish in a changing world".

The College's headline values:

- Actively ambitious
- Seriously supportive
- Innately inclusive
- Caring community

HE programmes are career focused and are designed to provide students with the skills, aptitudes and knowledge required for work. The College believes that there is a need to build students' employability skills to enable them to be successful in the current and future global economic environment which will require adaptable, resilient and skilled individuals who can generate new opportunities.

The College offers HE programmes in partnership with the University of Worcester. Pearson approved HNCs and HNDs are also delivered in a range of subjects (See Table 1).

Staff delivering on HE are experienced in their vocational fields as well as academically qualified and professionally trained practitioners. Teaching is based on small-medium sized groups rather than large scale lectures and there is an emphasis on high levels of personalised learning and support leading to high pass rates.

Table 1 - College HE Programmes

With Pearson	In partnership with University of Worcester
HNC Animal Management	FdA Early Years
HND Animal Management	FdA Learning Support
HNC Applied Sciences	Diploma in Education & Training
HND Applied Sciences	
HNC Business	
HND Business	
HNC Cloud Computing	
HND Cloud Computing	
HNC Computing	
HND Computing	
HNC Construction and the Built Environment	
HNC Creative Media Production	
HND Creative Media Production	
HNC Engineering	
HNC Art & Design (Photography)	
HND Art & Design (Photography)	
HNC Sport & Exercise Science	
HND Sport & Exercise Science	
Level 5 Therapeutic Counselling	

Strategic Aims

The College's Strategic Aims are to offer:

- a broad, inclusive, responsive and purposeful curriculum
- exceptional teaching, learning and outcomes
- learning environments that make a difference
- a truly diverse, empowered, supportive and accountable community
- sound finances to allow investment and keep us ahead of the game
- a reputation as the go-to college

Context and Rationale for the College's HE Provision

Halesowen College is situated in the Black Country, primarily serving the boroughs of Dudley and Sandwell, but also more widely, West Birmingham.

The Black Country is home to 1.26 million people across the four local authority areas of Dudley, Sandwell, Walsall and Wolverhampton. It is an area that has a long industrial past and embraces its demographic diversity as a key component of the area's character and strength.

Data				
	Dudley	Sandwell	Black Country	England
Gender Male	49%	49.6%	49.3%	49.4%
Gender Female	51%	50.4%	50.7%	50.6%
Age 0-15	19.3%	22.6%	21.2%	19.2%
Age 16-24	9.8%	10.6%	10.4%	10.7%
Age 25-29	31.3%	34.5%	33%	33.1%
Age 50-56	19.2%	17.2%	18%	18.8%
Age 65+	20.3%	15%	17.4%	18.2%

Dudley has an older age demographic than average which is partly explainable due to the fact that young people leave the area to study at university and do not return. Whilst the vast majority of residents in Dudley are of white ethnic origin (90%) there is greater diversity in Sandwell where 69.9% are White British and 19.2% Asian.

The Black Country is the second most deprived Integrated Care Sector in the country. Nationally, 20% of the population lives in the most deprived quintile. Locally, each of the areas is above the national average:

- Dudley – 28%
- Sandwell – 60%

There are similar of a higher number of people in the Black Country than the national average, with disabilities (physical, mental health, learning disability, autism) and people from excluded groups (homeless, vulnerable migrants, Gypsies and travellers, sex workers).

Economy and Labour Market

In the Black Country area there were approximately 446,000 jobs in 2021. Since 2020, the number of jobs in the Black Country increased by 2.3% and nationally there was a 3.1% increase. The increase was predominantly in part time jobs. In 2021, the Black Country had a higher proportion of jobs than the national proportion in five sectors, these were:

- Advanced manufacturing (13.8% vs 9.8%)
- Environmental technologies (1.6% vs 1.1%)
- Health and wellbeing (18.8% vs 15.2%)
- Retail (19.4% vs 14.4%)
- Transport Technology (6.2% vs 5.2%)

The Gross Value Added (GVA) outlook for the West Midlands is among the weakest across the UK, with a 0.3% contraction expected between 2020 and 2023. The March 2021 Budget included announcement of a Levelling Up fund and within that a list of priority places. Category 1 represents places deemed in most need of investment through this fund. The four Black Country local authorities were all identified as Category 1.

Dudley had a higher proportion of enterprises in six sectors when compared to England, these include:

- Advanced manufacturing (14% vs 12.5%)
- Building technologies (15.6% vs 12.8%)
- Environmental technologies (0.7% vs 0.5%)
- Transport technologies (7.7% vs 4.6%)
- Health (4.6% vs 3.9%)
- Retail (17.7% vs 14.1%)

Dudley also matched the national average in the visitor economy sector.

The Black Country Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP)

The Black Country Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) is the key body determining strategic economic priorities in the region. The LEP is working in collaboration with the West Midlands Combined Authority (WMCA) to develop and deliver the West Midlands Local Industrial Strategy (WM LIS).

The LEPs core economic sectors are:

- Manufacturing (including food and drink)
- Transport technologies (including aerospace); construction (including building technologies)
- Environmental technologies
- Business services

There are 5 regional sector Action Plans that aim to realise LIS priorities:

- Aerospace
- Construction
- Health and Social Care
- Metals and Materials
- Rail Sector

Higher Education in the Black Country

Vector data

Black Country LEPs most popular HE courses year on year

Most popular HE courses:		
2019-20	2018-20	2017-18
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - BTEC Business - FdA Education Studies - BTEC Engineering - BTEC Therapeutic Counselling - Prof Dip Accounting L4 - FD Nursing - BTEC Art & Design - BTEC Computing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - BTEC Business - FD Academic Studies in Education - BTEC Therapeutic Counselling - BTEC Engineering - Prof Dip Accounting - BTEC Computing - Ex Dip Management - BTEC Art & Design 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - FD Academic Studies in Education - FD in Health & Welfare - BTEC Business Studies - BTEC Business - BTEC Mechanical Engineering - BTEC Therapeutic Counselling - Prof Dip Accounting - FD Paramedic Science
<i>2670 total learners in area</i>	<i>2670 total learners in area</i>	<i>3240 total learners in area</i>

Dudley's most popular HE courses year on year

Most popular HE courses:		
2019-20	2018-20	2017-18
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - BTEC Engineering - BTEC Dip in Therapeutic Counselling - BTEC Computing - FD Nursing - Prof Dip Accounting - FD Health and Social Care in Counselling - Literature and Culture - BTEC Sport & Exercise Science - BTEC Business 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - BTEC Therapeutic Counselling - BTEC Engineering - BTEC Construction - DET - BTEC Business - Prof Dip Accounting - FD Health and Social Care in Academic Studies in Education - Cert for Advanced Practitioners in Schools and Colleges - BTEC Civil Engineering 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - FD Academic Studies in Education - FD Health & Welfare - FD Paramedical Science - Cert Early Years - FD Health and Social Care in Paramedic Science - BTEC Building - BTEC Mechanical Engineering - BTEC Business - BTEC Therapeutic Counselling - Prof Dip in Accounting
<i>590 total learners in area</i>	<i>680 total learners in area</i>	<i>950 total learners in area</i>

Level 3 students preferred universities:

** Using October 2021 UCAS report*

- 749 UCAS applications
- 633 acceptances (85%)

Most applications to HEI:

- BCU with 455 applications (15%)
- Wolverhampton with 337 applications (11%)
- Worcester with 293 applications (9%)

Most offers to HEIs:

- Wolverhampton with 323 offers (14%)
- BCU with 307 offers (13%)
- Worcester with 265 offers (11%)

Most acceptances to HEIs:

- BCU with 128 acceptances (20%)
- Worcester with 97 acceptances (15%)
- Wolverhampton with 60 acceptances (9%)

Current Position and Developments

HE provision is a key aspect of the College's offer and is recognised in achieving the College's purpose. The responsibility for the management and quality assurance of HE provision lies with the Assistant Principals in partnership with the Deputy Director of Learner Services.

The Strategic HE Committee oversees curriculum areas to maintain academic standards and ensure consistency in the implementation of quality assurance and enhancement systems across the provision. The Interim Principal has overall strategic responsibility for HE.

Quality and Standards

The college is registered with the Office for Students (OfS), as the independent regulator for HE in England.

The College has well-developed quality assurance and enhancement policies, procedures and systems for its HE provision which are under stood and applied by staff. Whilst HE programmes follow the same quality cycle as that for Further Education (FE) programmes, HE activities are aligned to the Academic Infrastructure rather than the standards set out in the Education Inspection Framework (EIF) for FE provision. For example, annual programme reviews and annual self-evaluation reports are structured around the expectations of the HE Quality Code. Internally, policies, procedures and systems are continuously monitored and reviewed.

Quality assurance and enhancement systems at programme level are clearly owned by teachers and managers; student feedback is monitored, evaluated and acted upon; there is clear delineation of roles and responsibilities for monitoring and enhancing quality and the College Staff Development function provides opportunities for continuous professional development (CPD) scholarly activity and research to improve practice and HE staff's skills, knowledge and expertise. The College observation team undertakes teaching and learning observations of all HE staff annually to ensure that students receive high quality teaching and learning opportunities and professional discussion relating to pedagogy can take place.

Over the next year, the College will work with staff to develop a deeper understanding of the Quality Code and undertake a variety of activities to support this, including the sharing of good practice through Faculty Board and targeted learning and development activities.

Curriculum Development

The priorities for curriculum development have been determined through a comprehensive review of existing provision, supported by labour market research. Research has led to the proposed expansion of Health provision. The College will work with the NHS to strengthen its health and social care specialism, not just the care aspect but healthcare management and healthcare science.

Over the next year the College will focus on increasing recruitment to its HE programmes generally.

Resourcing

Resources for existing programmes are allocated as part of the annual curriculum planning process, where new provision is planned; the resources needed to support the programme are reviewed as part of the internal validation process. Hub and IT Services' staff work closely with academic teams to identify, on an annual basis, the wider resources, including learning materials needed to deliver programmes and support learning.

Staffing on HE programmes is reviewed annually as part of the curriculum planning process.

As part of ongoing investment, the College invests in high quality resources. Over the next two years, the College will continue to enhance the scope and range of its current technology to assist practice including mobile technologies and a significantly expanded set of tools to allow uploading of video cast and pod cast material generated by staff and students.

We will make effective use of student voice mechanisms and stakeholder feedback to keep abreast of demands and expectations, as well as responding to innovation in technology and other learning resources.

Continuous Professional Development and Scholarly Activity

All HE staff at the College have relevant industry specific experience and are required to undertake CPD annually to keep abreast, for example: general teaching pedagogy; new technologies to support learning; College and awarding body quality assurance and enhancement arrangements; sector developments. Where teaching staff are not qualified, they are required to become so within three years, the College supports staff in becoming qualified through its teacher education programme.

HE staff are encouraged to attend external conferences and internal training activities to support their continuous development and undertake industrial secondments to keep abreast of working practices.

As well as entitlement to CPD, all HE staff are encouraged to undertake scholarly activity and research. Scholarly activity and research at the College includes:

- Producing internal or external research papers
- Producing or contribution to books and journals
- Presenting papers at conferences
- Studying for Doctorates, Masters' Degrees or specialist higher level qualifications
- Pursuing practitioner, pedagogic or disciplinary research

Recruitment, retention and progression into and through HE

Progression to HE is an important part of the College's strategy to widen participation.

The College provides high levels of support to our HE students, which is particularly important as many of our students are first generation HE. This support includes comprehensive advice and guidance, including financial guidance for students, 1:1 academic and pastoral support, study skills support and small group teaching.

Our widening participation activities have indicated the need to continue to raise the performance and aspirations of young people through continued work with secondary schools and with the College's Level 3 students through targeted interventions. This will be enhanced by our Uniconnect participation via the Aspire and AimHigher partnerships. Particularly important in this, is improving students' GCSE performance in English and Maths. For our HE students, research continues to show that non-completion rates are primarily due to financial and personal issues, including mental health issues.

Our strategies for secondary schools have included "master classes", taster/shadow days and regular communications. All full time FE programmes include English, Maths and tutorials which include study skills.

Reviewed / Approved	By	Date
Reviewed by	Julia Edmunds	06.02.23
Consulted with	Jo Williams	06.02.23
Approved	Yes - SCQC	15.03.23
CLT approved	Yes	07.02.23
Website	No	
Next Review date		01.02.24