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A merger between Uxbridge College and Harrow College

# **Access & Participation Statement**

## **2021-2022**

<https://www.uxbridgecollege.ac.uk/college-information/higher-education.html>

## **A) Introduction**

HCUC represents a recent (August 2017) merger involving Harrow College and Uxbridge College. As such, the colleges, whilst retaining their individual identities, now serve the local boroughs of Harrow and Hillingdon and the wider region, encompassing London and the nearby shires (mainly Berkshire, Buckinghamshire and Hertfordshire).

HCUC is a General Further Education college offering its Higher Education (HE) provision in a specified number of selected curriculum areas, in line with local and regional interest and demand. HCUC is an Institute of Technology IoT in partnership with: Brunel University London (Brunel), West London Business, Heathrow and Fujitsu. IoT aims are to develop a prestigious and high-quality employer-led institution delivering higher level technical education with a clear route to high skilled employment.

In relation to its HE provision, HCUC is committed to widening participation and improving access to groups traditionally under-represented at HE level. Prior to merger, both Harrow College and Uxbridge College underwent successful independent and external (QAA led) quality reviews and where this role in widening participation and promotion of diversity of learners was successfully presented.

This 'Access and Participation' Statement is a formal commitment by the College in relation to its HE provision, to continuing its work to widen participation and ensure that its diverse HE intake are supported on their programmes, attain well and successfully progress to higher study or employment.

The Statement provides information from analysis on how well the College is currently addressing access and participation issues in the context of equality, as well as focusing on priority areas identified for further development and improvement. The Statement specifies the project work that the College will undertake in-year to address the priority areas of focus.

## **B) Current situation**

Whilst HCUC's offer is primarily FE in nature, there is a deliberate strategy to also offer a complimentary, albeit limited, set of HE courses, designed to meet local interest and skills need as well as providing alternative progression routes into HE for college learners studying at level 3. The overall aim is to ensure all those with the potential to benefit from higher education have the opportunity to do so. In 2019/20 academic year, 280 learners were enrolled on to HE courses.

The College considers that it offers strong support for its FE and HE learners. Examples of good practice/support:

- i) The College operates a fair admissions policy with clear entry criteria for its courses and values contextual data on learners. Prior qualifications are not in themselves the only basis for acceptance onto a course. In addition the interviewer will look for:
  - personal considerations
  - ability to succeed
  - determination
  - potential

The College also provides opportunities for students to enter higher education with lower tariff point scores than would normally gain them access to university, thereby giving opportunities to develop skills suitable for higher level courses and/or employment.

- ii) HCUC learners benefit from structured tutorial support and smaller group sizes in order to create a more personalised approach to learning. The College is aware that many learners choose to study HE programmes at the College because of the supportive environment and accessibility of its staff. The College has a strong record of good support (both pastoral and academic) for its learners. Student surveys have shown our learners value and rate highly the supportive HE environment created for them.
- iii) The College creates an environment that is welcoming and inclusive. The Learning Support team is on hand to provide initial advice and information for individuals who have an additional support need/disability, including support in applying for DSA (Disabled Students' Allowance). Individuals wishing to study at the College are advised to disclose their disability early in the application process.
- iv) Progression of completers is well supported with the majority of those completing HND's in 19/20 moving on to final year degrees in universities such as Hertfordshire, Middlesex and Portsmouth. This is particularly important to students where financial considerations for total costs of a degree qualification are a known issue.
- v) The College supports students from a wide diversity of backgrounds and ensures effective and specialised support for learners where appropriate. Learners are encouraged through the College's progression activities such as annual Careers Fair and progression interviews, to consider HE as an option
- vi) The College celebrates the rich diversity of all its learners, including its HE learners and the wider community by fostering a culture of inclusion, respectfulness and acceptance of difference, where all students and staff feel highly valued and safe.

### **C) Data Analysis**

The following data sets have been analysed in order to identify areas where the College is performing well and the areas where further action will be beneficial in order to secure improvements in relation to access and participation and to meet national priorities. It should be noted that the relatively small number of the College's HE students, make meaningful comparison with national data and statistical significance difficult.

- Progression to HE from FE courses
- College Achievement data
- Retention and achievement of HE learners by diversity strands
- HE participation rates including those on a low income

From our data analysis, the following areas have been identified as performing well:

The College has been successful in providing relatively low cost, coupled with high quality HE opportunities which assist seamless progression for FE students who might otherwise not be able to successfully access higher education due to a range of barriers, including financial or lack of other types of support. The progression pathways for current Level 3 learners have been carefully constructed and nurtured, resulting in increasing internal progression to the College's HE programmes.

Data below show that for the last three years over 50% of HE learners have progressed from the College's own Level 3 provision. The fluctuations apparent are thought to be the

result of the additional competition for such learners by universities in recent years resulting from the lifting of the learner number cap.

HCUC HE students numbers	16/17		17/18		18/19		19/20		20/21	
	New HNC/HND Starts	%Progressing from 15/16	New HNC/HND Starts	%Progressing from 16/17	New HNC/HND Starts	%Progressing from 17/18	New HNC/HND Starts	%Progressing from 18/19	New HNC/HND Starts	%Progressing from 19/20
Total	201	72.1%	192	58.3%	146	53.4%	127	78.7%	137	62%*

\*in this year progression is from one year courses rather than 2 year programmes.

Student HE achievement rates remain consistently high at 97.39%<sup>1</sup>. Student achievement rates for 2019/20 are 1% above 18/19 and they remain high across most ethnicity groups other than 'Black African' at 86.36%.

Ethnicity profiles of HE enrolments show learners are more diverse than the borough profiles. 72% of the learners are from BAME (Black, Asian and minority ethnic) background, compared to Harrow 53% from BAME and Hillingdon 47%.

Analysis of local data indicates the following are key areas that are performing less well:

- i) Over the last two academic years, 18/19 and 19/20 the College has identified that learners with African and/or Caribbean backgrounds have lower retention rates. African students had retention rate of 80% is now showing at 75.9%, while Caribbean students had retention rates of 92%, but is now improved showing at 100%.
- ii) The college headline retention for all HE learners was 79.7% in 2018/19 and 89.04% – this is much improved.
- iii) Students with self-declared learning difficulties achievement is extremely high at 100%.
- iv) HCUC HE course offer is largely STEM in nature, with the majority of learners in IT and Engineering related courses. HCUC reflects this national trend<sup>2</sup>. The percentage of female learners is at 26%. Importantly, males and females achieve equally well at 97% and 100% respectively though to note, retention for females is higher than males at 94% (males 88%).
- v) Local demographics show that both Harrow and Hillingdon areas have a lower proportion of residents in professional occupations such as managers, directors and senior officers when compared to the London region. HCUC works to engage with students from this local catchment to create opportunity for career progression. This will inform marketing activity in underrepresented areas.

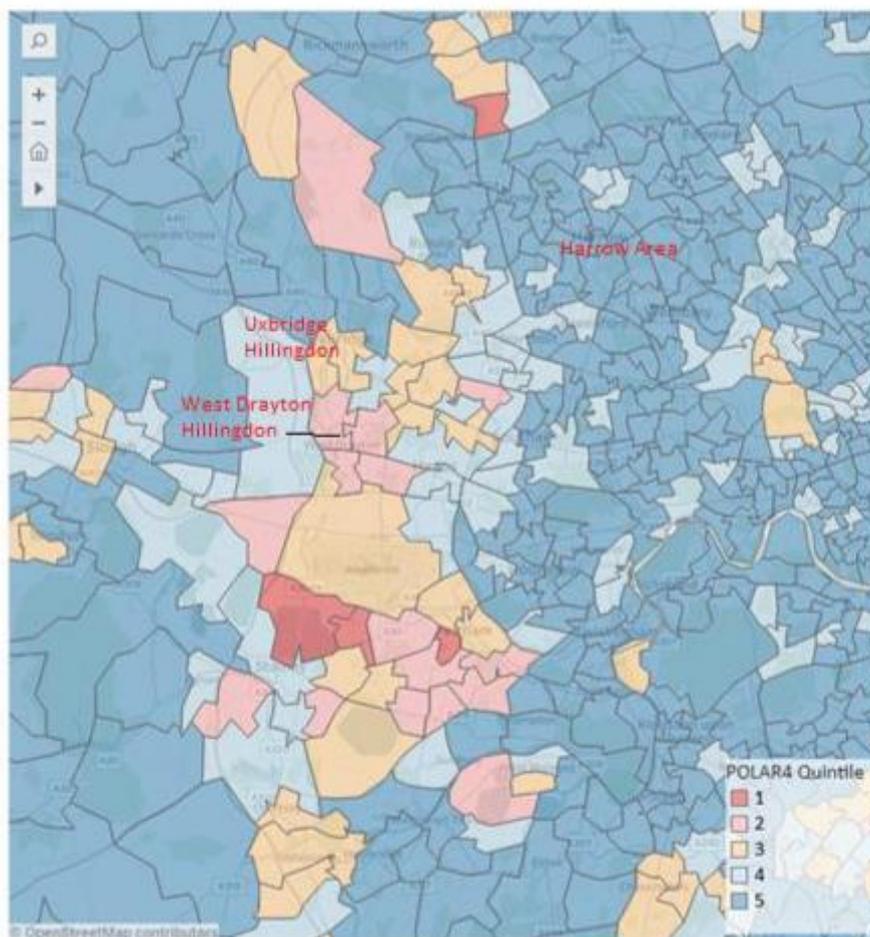
<sup>1</sup> Including teacher training, 96.88% without.

<sup>2</sup> WISE (Women into Science and Engineering) report:

"There is a huge drop off in the number of girls studying core STEM subjects at the age of 16. Just 35% of girls choose maths, physics, computing or a technical vocational qualification compared to 94% of boys. This reduces the number going on to do a degree or level 4 qualification in maths, physics, computer science or engineering" – WISE Nov 2017 ([www.wisecampaign.org.uk/resources/2017/11/from-classroom-to-boardroom-the-stem-pipeline-2017](http://www.wisecampaign.org.uk/resources/2017/11/from-classroom-to-boardroom-the-stem-pipeline-2017))

- vi) The map below shows POLAR4 data from OFS. It shows Hillingdon and Harrow having areas of high level of participation in HE, blue areas. However, as with deprivation, there are pockets of low participation such as West Drayton Area and North Uxbridge (POLAR4 Quintile 2). However, Harrow compared to Hillingdon has no areas below POLAR4 Quintile 4. Again, this will inform marketing activity in underrepresented areas.

This map shows how likely young people are to participate in HE according to where they live and how this varies across the UK.



(<https://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/data-and-analysis/polar-participation-of-local-areas/map-of-young-participation-areas/>)

Department of Education data for Key stage 5 leavers indicates that the progression to HE from the London area is 61%, however Uxbridge and south Ruislip parliamentary constituency has progression to HE rate of 56%, lowest in Hillingdon and Harrow areas.

There are number of factors which impact on the decision to study at higher level, such as views on debt and how debt averse young people are. A study by UCL/Institute of Education supports this assertion<sup>4</sup>. As well as the issue of debt,

<sup>4</sup>“Young people from a working-class background are far more likely than students from other social classes to avoid applying to university because of fear of debt. Debt aversion has increased both among working-class students and those from the squeezed middle-class. But significantly, debt averse attitudes remain much stronger among working-class students than among upper-class students, and more so now than in 2002.” – UCL Institute of Education 2017. (<http://www.ucl.ac.uk/ioe/news-events/news-pub/june-2017/student-loans-deter-poorer-students-from-university>)

given that HCUC operates in a multicultural area, there is anecdotal indication of students not willing to take out loans due to personal reasons and/or beliefs, e.g. lack of Sharia compliant loans.

#### **D) Ambition – key priorities for 2020-2021**

**From the analysis above, HCUC has identified following areas for improvement, for the academic years 2020/21:**

- 1) Further improve the support of 'Black' students so that they are more likely to be retained and achieve. – We expect to improve retention so that it is in line with college HE retention rate.
- 2) Further promote the colleges' HE provision to the diverse range of potential applicants from low income / low participating groups particularly 'White British' and to conduct further analysis to determine whether these learners are performing on par with other learners. Actions to address this if this were the case will be identified.
- 3) To address lower female take up of HE courses by addressing perceptions of females in STEM careers over short, medium and long term. HCUC course offer is STEM in nature, with majority of the learners in IT and Engineering related courses.
- 4) Further promote the colleges' HE provision to the diverse range of potential applicants from mature learner groups (over 25). With a focus on re-skilling as part of the West London Alliance Build and Recover Plan and aims of the IoT.

#### **E) Strategy - HCUC activities and Support for students**

##### Support for Black students

- Students to have regular support meeting with HE tutor to identify early issues which may impact on retention and to have an academic mentoring session
- Include HE in the HCUC 'Black Caribbean; support project, to be monitored at the HCUC Equality & Diversity committees and at the HCUC Higher Education Academic Committee.
- Working with local HE providers and HCUC alumni from similar backgrounds to identify appropriate mentors to provide support to current learners deemed to be at risk

##### Support for learners from low income/low participation areas particularly 'White' ethnicity.

- Develop a bursary offer, which supports learners from low-income families /low participation areas.
- An annual HE progression fair which promotes higher education progression opportunities to the College's level 3 cohort
- Dedicated invitation to parents of learners who are on Free College meals (FCM) to Colleges Options Post Level 3 evening and HE fair; provide support for parents in understanding HE options and how to apply for student finance.

- Conduct further analysis on College data/Student loan data to identify any correlations between White British, socio-economically disadvantaged groups, especially those on maximum student loans and their relative academic performance.

#### Influence positively, perception of STEM with female learners and potential learners

- Enhance positive images around the college and in external college publicity.
- School liaison activities with local secondary schools to promote STEM higher education progression opportunities, especially all girls' schools.
- Deliver in partnership, STEM related taster courses for young learners e.g. the 'BIG BANG' event, the 'Routes into STEM' course in partnership with Industrial Cadets and 'This Girl Can' events. The College will set up systems to stay in contact with and track the progress of these learners over time. Continued links through the IoT with the Brunel University STEM Centre (see below).

#### Support for the colleges' HE provision to the diverse range of potential applicants from mature learner groups (over 25).

- Develop an offer which attracts learners from the mature learner group.
- Focus on areas of growth identified in the West London Build and Recover plan and aims of the IoT. An annual HE progression fair which promotes higher education progression opportunities to Mature learners
- Dedicated invitation to mature groups to provide support in understanding HE options and how to apply for student finance.

Monitoring of the overall Higher Education strategy, including the implementation of this Access and Participation statement actions, is undertaken by the HE Academic Standards Committee/Board and the colleges' Equality and Diversity Committees. Additionally curriculum areas would be expected to address above issues in their QIPs

### **F) Consultation with Students**

The College has well-established and comprehensive Learner Voice arrangements which includes the participation of learners in key cross-college committees, including the Higher Education Academic Standards Committee/Board and Stakeholder and Scrutiny Committees. Higher Education student reps meet regularly and report back to HEASC/HEASB.

The College's Access and Participation Statement has been shared with HE tutor reps and Level 3 students who are considering progressing to HE. The feedback has been incorporated in and helped shape the statement.

### **G) Partnerships and Relationships**

Partnership development at HCUC comprises of number of strands; Employers, local schools, universities and local authorities. Partnerships are developed in order to ensure that Higher Education provision meets the needs of students and helps them progress to further study and/or employment. As stated previously the college is an Institute of

technology with partners: Brunel University London (Brunel), West London Business, Heathrow and Fujitsu.

i) Employers

The College, situated in West London, is within close proximity to a range of employers and industries that relate to its HE provision. Employers have a key role in motivating and raising aspirations as well as ensuring the curriculum is relevant to the industry. For example Heathrow Airport Ltd have provided speakers from BAME backgrounds. Morgan Sindall (Construction) provided female staff during work week. We will continue to develop these links to motivate and support our black and female learners in particular to meet our aims of improving their outcomes.

ii) HE Institutions

The College has held active links with local and national universities, with the view of establishing progression agreements as appropriate. Such agreements will in some cases encompass wider activity in relation to student and staff engagement. Such work has resulted in 65 universities attending the annual HE fair. Uxbridge College works closely with Brunel University as an IoT partner and has particularly close partnership to its STEM Learning Centre, which is dedicated to inspiring young people to study STEM subjects and increasing the number of students, especially women, studying STEM. The College will work with the Learning Centre to develop the work relating to female students engaging in our HE provision.

iii) Other Agencies and HE Networks

The College has been an active partner in the work of the Linking London (which aims to support learners from disadvantaged backgrounds in accessing HE) and NNCO. This work had served to strengthen the links and activity with other FECs and HEIs involved in the network. The College will seek opportunities within the network to collaborate on the area of work relating to low income learners eg by exchanging data on how well those receiving maximum loans are retained and achieve.

## **H) How the Access and Participation Statement will be evaluated and developed**

The College will on an annual basis review the conditions relating to its Access and Participation Statement to ensure they still have relevance. The College will also assess the extent to which key aims and objectives, which have been identified within the Statement, are being met. Progress made will be evaluated and will inform the further development of the Statement going forward.

The following elements will shape the methodology used in evaluation and development:

- Judgements of performance against aims set
- Effectiveness of actions taken and their impact
- Further data analysis, including changing demographics
- Agreed priorities and actions for 2020-21
- Revision of the Statement and updates on the website
- Students and relevant partner agencies to be included in the evaluation processes