

Riverside College

Widnes & Runcorn

RIVERSIDE COLLEGE

Access and Participation Plan (2019-20)

August 2018

Institution: Riverside College

1. Purpose of the Access and Participation Plan

This Access and Participation Plan Agreement relates to the setting of fees for students joining Higher Education courses at Riverside College in 2019-20. It outlines the College's commitment to widening participation supported through a student lifestyle approach to access, retention, student success and progress into further study or into employment

The submission of a 2019/20 access and participation plan and the College's commitment to widening participation is underpinned by its vision to "enhance and transform lives".

This agreement seeks to build on the College's experience, success and reputation to ensure that students from a widening participation background are able to have access to an affordable and cost effective higher education curriculum that reflects the needs of the local community, the labour market and personal aspiration.

2. College Vision and Values

Through the excellence of the education we provide, we will enhance and transform lives. We strive to be sector-leading in everything we do.

1. Teaching and learning is our priority and the needs and safety of our students always come first.
2. As members of the College we are partners in the success of the organisation and we are all accountable for our outcomes.
3. High standards are at the heart of all that we do. In our pursuit of excellence we recognise that individually and collectively we can always improve.
4. Within our College community we all treat each other with respect, trust, openness, care and consideration. We celebrate student and staff success.
5. We are an inclusive college where we promote and protect equality and diversity.
6. We work in partnership with employers and other stakeholders so that we can make a positive contribution to local, regional and national economic development.

3. Riverside College's Strategic Aims

Riverside College's strategic aims are:

1. To achieve high **quality** outcomes for our students by prioritising teaching and learning.
2. To continue to improve levels of **efficiency** and remain in outstanding financial health.
3. To maximise opportunities for **growth**.

4. The College Context

Riverside College is a medium-sized general further education college located in Cheshire. It is one of the highest performing colleges nationally. The College serves the towns of Widnes and Runcorn (the borough of Halton), which have a combined population of 126,500 (2015) as well as attracting learners from outside of the borough. Halton is now part of the Liverpool City Region.

Following the recent Area Based Review the College was rated as green for both quality and finances. In 2016 the College moved to a financial rating of Outstanding.

The College offers the following types of provision: 16-18 study programmes; adult learning programmes; apprenticeships; provision for learners with high needs; higher education and traineeships.

The College recruits a large proportion of learners from areas of high social and economic deprivation. According to the Department for Education's index of multiple deprivation, the College is located in the 27th most deprived borough and the 3rd most deprived in the Liverpool City Region. Around 26% of Halton's populace live within the top 10% most deprived areas in the country. According to the Halton Joint Strategic Needs Assessment 2014/2015, 48% of Halton people live in poverty, including 26.5% of children under 16. Many people have been long term unemployed and many have poor health. Nearly 25% of Halton's population are classed as economically inactive and the number of people claiming out of work benefits is higher than the national average. 21% of households are classed as workless (NOMIS 2016). The Borough of Halton has higher than average rates of alcohol related harm, although there is a reduction in alcohol related hospital admissions for under 18s (however admissions for adults remains high).

Whilst recognising that it must have a deep understanding of the Borough's many complex and challenging needs, the College has high ambitions and expectations of all its students, staff, parents and employers. Numerous pro-active strategies are in place to address and support the varied and complex needs of the students it serves.

5. Our Higher Education Student Population

Riverside College is a highly successful Further Education College providing high quality academic, vocational and professional education and training. It currently offers higher national certificates and diplomas, foundation degrees and bachelor degrees across Engineering, Health and Social Care, Counselling, Sport, Computing and IT and Education. The College also offers the Certificate/Post Graduate Certificate in Education.

Riverside College has a long and established relationship with both Staffordshire University and Pearson Edexcel (HNC/HND). In collaboration with Staffordshire University and Pearson, Higher Education has become fundamental to our goal to be a catalyst for change through enabling social inclusion and mobility, lifelong learning and economic growth within the community. Staffordshire University are hugely supportive of the College's Higher Education aspirations and the partnership continues to grow from strength to strength.

Since 2015-16, there has been a continuous growth in our Higher Education provision. Our students are attracted by the geographic proximity of the College and the outstanding value for money of the College's Higher Education provision, including financial incentives (bursaries) for full-time students. We have excellent and proven levels of pastoral and academic support and we offer opportunity to combine work with study; significant factors which contribute towards the development of graduate skills.

The College works at the heart of the community building local aspirations and skills. Its graduates make a contribution to economic growth and social welfare not just in Halton but across neighbouring and regional authorities. Our work with local and national employers continues to enrich and support our students' experiences to equip them with graduate skills and personal attributes needed to succeed in employment and within society.

We have a resolute commitment to placing teaching and learning at the very heart of what we do; resulting in a culture of continuous improvement and enhancement of strategies, systems and procedures, which impact, first and foremost on the student experience.

6. Assessment of Current Performance

In June 2018, the College was awarded TEF silver status. TEF provider metrics indicated that our students achieve excellent outcomes. Part-time student satisfaction with assessment and feedback and academic support are exceptionally high and above benchmark. The level of part-time student satisfaction with teaching and progression rates to employment or further study are consistent with benchmark. We achieve high levels of full-time student satisfaction, and full-time continuation rates are also above benchmark.

In line with the requirements of this Access Plan and Participation Agreement, the College has assessed its current performance against the five “under-represented groups” which are recognised nationally as priority target groups:

Priority 1: Students from areas of low higher education participation, low household income and/or low socio economic status

In Halton, there are 22.3% of residents with higher education qualifications compared with a national average of 37.1%. In addition, the progression of young people to higher education across the Liverpool City Region is variable. In Knowsley, Liverpool and Halton, less than 28% of young residents participate in Higher Education. (Source: HEFCE Polar 3).

The majority of our Higher Education students are consistently drawn from areas of least participation in Higher Education. Our TEF data indicates 65% recruited from POLAR quintiles 1 and 2 in 2015/16 and 63% in 2016/17 (TEF 3 metrics).

The College has an institution-wide approach to supporting widening participation students to ensure that they continue in their studies.

The College has been successful in increasing the number of Higher Education students from a disadvantaged postcode.

Category	2016-17	2017-18	Difference
% of HE students from a disadvantaged postcode	5%	47%	+42%

Our 2017-18 enrolment data indicates that 47% of Riverside College Higher Education students reside in a deprived area postcode. It is, therefore, a continuing target of the college to attract local residents onto its Higher Education provision and in doing so help to increase the number of Halton residents who enter into higher education, and to address this under representation.

The proportion of males and female students changed in 2017/18 with 38% male and 62% female; against 41% male and 59% female in 2016/17. White males from lower socio economic groups are amongst those most underrepresented in higher education nationally and as such it is a target of the college to support white working class boys to progress their study onto full or part-time Higher Education. In 2014-15 and 2016-17, 100% of Higher Education students from a widening participation background were retained and successfully completed their qualification. In 2015-16, there was a slight decline in retention/continuation. However, all successfully completed their programme of study.

Priority 2: Students of particular ethnicities

In terms of ethnicity, our TEF 3 metrics demonstrated that 100% of our full-time students declared their ethnicity as white and 3% of part-time students declared their ethnicity as

'other', which is representative of the local community where approximately 2.2% of the population are drawn from ethnic groups other than white British.

Our 2017-18 enrolment data for both full-time and part-time HE students indicates that 97% of our Higher Education cohort declared their ethnicity as white and 3% declared their ethnicity as 'other'. Over the past 3 academic years (2014 – 2017), 100% of students of particular ethnicities enrolled onto Higher Education programmes at Riverside College have been retained and have successfully completed their qualification.

Equality and Diversity (E & D) in relation to ethnicity is analysed by overall college, curriculum area and type of provision. It should be noted that due to the very low numbers the comparative analysis of this data cannot be considered fully reliable. It does however show that BAME students are in no way disadvantaged whilst at the College.

Priority 3: Mature students

Higher Education cohorts at Riverside College are predominately mature (69% are 21 or over: Source: TEF 3 metrics) with the majority mode of delivery being part-time (78% Source: TEF 3 metrics). A significant majority of our part-time students progress internally from our Level 3 provision.

Whilst continuing to attract mature students to study Higher Education at Riverside College, the College does not consider mature learners to be under represented within its provision. However, in line with Priority 1, the College will continue to implement marketing strategies to promote community re-generation by improving accessibility for non-traditional Level 4 learners into Higher Education programmes

TEF 3 metrics show the College achieving 5.7% above benchmark for continuation for full-time provision, with a positive flag against mature students studying full-time. TEF 3 metrics for part-time continuation show as non-reportable due to the fact that part-time provision was until academic year 16-17 previously indirectly funded through Staffordshire University.

Priority 4: Disabled students

TEF 3 metrics indicated 9% of students with a declared learning difficulty or disability (2016/17); thus showing a slight increase of 2% on 2015/16. Our 2017-18 enrolment data indicates that 14 Riverside College Higher Education students have declared a disability or learning difficulty on enrolment.

Higher Education Students: declared disability (17-18)

Academic Year	Number of HE students with declared disability	Number of students in receipt of DSA
17-18	14	10

Retention/continuation percentage rates for students with a difficulty/disability/health problem who have enrolled onto Higher Education programmes over the past 3 years have in two out of the three years been very slightly lower than for students with no difficulty/disability or health problem. However, those students who have been retained have achieved at the same % rate as students without a difficulty/disability or health problem.

Priority 5: Care leavers

The College captures destination data for care leavers who have progressed into employment or onto University. Achievement rates in 16/17 for looked after children within our further education provision were 96.7% pass and broadly in line with the overall College rate.

Care leavers are an under-represented group within Riverside College's Higher Education provision. A target is, therefore, to address this gap by raising awareness of local HE provision during 1:1 tutorials.

Data for this target group is not statistically significant. The College will commit to have this data in place to perform a thorough assessment for 2020-21.

6.1 Widening Participation

The College is committed to the practice of widening participation to raise aspirations so that anybody who has the potential to benefit from engaging in Higher Education has the opportunity to do so. In addition, this access and participation plan prioritises widening participation, which is supported through a focus on access to Higher Education, student success, and progression onto a higher level course or into employment. The number of students progressing from level 3 programmes has increased in 2017-18. These students wish to stay local for their higher education. They are attracted, not only by the lower course fees, but by the specialist pastoral support services, welfare, counselling and 1:1 support that the College provides for students who experience emotional, mental health and financial barriers. Many of our part-time students have caring responsibilities and to stay close to home for their higher education is important to them.

As outlined earlier, Riverside College's recruitment/catchment area includes areas of high social and economic deprivation, where participation in Higher Education is historically below national averages. In 2017-18, we have seen a significant increase in the number of students enrolling onto a Higher Education programme from a disadvantaged background and we are delighted that our strategic approach to widening participation and accessible curriculum offer is making a positive difference.

Table B: Widening Participation Data: Higher Education (2016-17 and 2017-18)

Category	2016-17	2017-18	Difference
% of HE students from a disadvantaged postcode	5%	47%	+42%
% of HE students - part-time	91%	90%	-1%
% of HE students - full-time	9%	10%	+1%
% of HE students – aged 18	6%	8%	+2%
% of HE students – 19-23 years	29%	27%	-2%
% of HE students – 24 plus	65%	65%	0%
% of HE students - male	41%	38%	-3%
% of HE students - female	59%	62%	+3%

Riverside College continues to set tuition fees for all of its Higher Education programmes at a level, in order to promote progression from Level 3 and to provide a local and value for money Higher Education provision to meet the needs of learners who prefer to work and study closer to home.

In addition, the College has established systems in place to support students to develop personally, professionally and academically. These can be students from a more vocational educational background who may lack confidence to engage in traditional Higher Education or come from backgrounds where there is no history of engagement in Higher Education.

Our student services, academic tutorials, pastoral support and welfare teams will continue to support learners through the transition into Higher Education.

Through our Shaping Futures (NCOP) deliverables we are focused on raising aspirations for Higher Education starting with pupils from as young as Year 9 and Year 10.

We have recently welcomed a community of refugees into study at different levels within Riverside College and, in due course, it is anticipated that the students will be prepared and sufficiently supported to progress onto our Higher Education provision. Our Marketing and Admissions team and Higher Education Ambassador will work closely with this group of learners to make them fully aware of the opportunities that are available to them to progress their studies within College in full or part-time mode of study (eg HNC Engineering, Foundation Degree in Health and Social Care, Foundation Degree in Education)

The College is committed to building further on its strong reputation of inclusivity. At each stage of the student journey, we work in partnership with our students to plan, develop and deliver the best possible student experience and in doing so support the importance of widening participation. The College addresses widening participation at various stages of the student journey: pre-entry, admissions, first term, on programme and progression.

6.2. In Partnership with Employers

The College makes a significant contribution to the local economy and has an important role in supporting local businesses.

At Riverside College, we appreciate the importance of offering qualifications that are relevant to the needs of employers. With this in mind, local employers have been involved in the design of our higher education courses (and most recently, the Foundation Degree in Education, Foundation Degree in Health and Social Care and the Foundation Degree in Counselling Children and Young People).

The College aims to grow its Higher Education provision. It will do this by continuing to respond to external and internal business growth opportunities to achieve wider participation and promote community re-generation, and by improving accessibility for non-traditional Level 4 learners into Higher Education programmes. External and internal stakeholder participation and the student voice of Level 3 learners is captured to evaluate demand for new pathways/programmes, modes of study and flexible on-line delivery options.

Riverside College continues to focus on the delivery of high quality teaching and learning to the community it serves. The Liverpool City Region Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) has given clear guidance on the skills areas which will grow and in response to this, the College continues to make every effort to ensure that our students are prepared with the work-ready, personal skills and knowledge they will need to be successful in employment in growth areas of employment.

The College works closely with local and regional employers and its employer base grows year on year. Work experience forms an integral part of many of our HE courses. Students also develop important skills through work related projects.

6.3 Working in Partnership with Shaping Futures

Riverside College works actively with 'Shaping Futures' to support the most disadvantaged young people to progress into Higher Education.

'Shaping Futures' is Merseyside's consortium for the OfS funded National Collaborative Outreach Programme (NCOP). The programme has been established to raise learner Higher Education aspirations and progression rates within 25 targeted electoral wards in Liverpool City Region, where progression to Higher Education is lower than expected given historic GCSE attainment patterns.

'Shaping Futures' provides impartial Higher Education related activities and progression advice to target learners in 43 priority secondary schools and across partner Further Education/6th Form colleges. This is aligned to Liverpool City Region's Local Enterprise partnership/Combined Authority economic priorities and is designed to complement and add value to the existing widening participation offers of the 12 'Shaping Futures' partner institutions.

For example, two 'Shaping Futures' projects which are adding value locally are: 'Through the Eyes of Boys', an intensive outreach project working to raise HE aspirations amongst young males from lower socio-economic groups; and a pilot programme of attendance at local community events to deliver HE aspiration messages (thereby expanding the scope of local HE outreach, by working together collectively as institutions under the umbrella of 'Shaping Futures').

Riverside College is currently making very good progress against a set of key deliverables for outreach to schools within the priority wards within the region. Through these deliverables we are focused on raising aspirations for Higher Education starting with pupils from as young as Year 9 and Year 10.

We have also been actively involved in exhibiting at local and regional Big Bang events which are delivered in conjunction with MerseySTEM where we have provided taster sessions in Engineering to local schools and colleges. We have also exhibited at the NHS Skills Show in Merseyside and are due to exhibit at the Liverpool City Regional Show in June 2018 (where a focus is on apprenticeships and routes into Higher Education).

6.4 Working in Collaborative Partnership with other Stakeholders to raise Aspiration

Riverside College are a collaborative partner of the Wade Deacon Teaching School Alliance and the Runshaw College Teaching School Alliance.

Through collaborative partnership, the College promotes awareness of its Higher Education opportunities to potential students in local schools. This is through open events held in schools and College, a Higher Education and Apprentice Fair, school assemblies and year group tutorials.

In addition, our teachers have delivered and will continue to deliver subject enhancement sessions to pupils in local secondary schools (eg effective revision skills in Geography and Science) and have supported and will continue to support gifted and talented pupils in Year 10 to develop stretch and challenge questioning and higher order skills of analysis, judgement and evaluation. Our sixth form students have and will continue to offer reading practice and support with maths and science through the Tomorrow's Doctors' and

Tomorrow's Teachers' programme. All of which are designed to develop skills and raise aspiration.

In 2017, Riverside College Counselling Foundation and Degree students and staff partnered with USA charity Sidewalk Talk to create its first UK division and they provided the very first community listening events in the UK during Mental Health Awareness Week 2017 (including working with local residents in community settings).

Sidewalk Talk community listening events involve inviting members of the public to sit with volunteers and talk about anything they choose. Supporting people locally at community sessions and at the One Love Manchester concert provide an invaluable learning opportunity for students as well as making potential students aware of progression routes into Counselling courses at Riverside College at Level 3, 5 and 6. In response to the needs of the community, we have introduced a Foundation Degree in Counselling Children and Young People into our provision for 2018-19.

6.5 Raising Aspiration and Attainment through Pre-Entry Activity

The College provides accurate information and promotes awareness of Higher Education opportunities to potential students in schools, colleges, community groups and workplace, open events, a Higher Education and Apprentice Fair, College website and through social media. We also attend the Merseyside STEM 'Big Bang' network and engage in other outreach activities organised through "Shaping Futures" the Merseyside Network for Collaborative Outreach (of which Riverside College is a member). We exhibited at the Liverpool Regional Show in June 2018 where there was a focus on apprenticeships.

We have a team of Higher Education ambassadors in place who promote Higher Education and progression opportunities both internally and at local community events.

To support students to develop their confidence, skills and knowledge to apply to Higher Education and to make the transition as seamless and as effective as possible, we offer Higher Education focused advice and guidance sessions and progression talks aimed at Level 3 and Access students. We also hold finance workshops for prospective Higher Education students and their parents.

In 2017-18, we held 3 admission open events for Higher Education. Currently, new applications to Higher Education courses for September 2018 start are up by 27 on applications received in May 2017.

Riverside College is committed to ensuring that current and prospective students are provided with clear, concise, timely and accessible information on fees that we will charge and the financial support that we offer.

The College website provides links and signposting to sources of advice and support for students who have a learning difficulty/disability (eg DSA).

6.6 Admissions

The College operates a fair Admissions Policy, which provides clear criteria for entry onto programmes/courses that are best suited to an applicant's ability and aspirations. The College offers unbiased advice and guidance on the College's courses to all prospective students. This may take place over the phone, during events held both at college and out in the community, and during admissions interviews.

The College's Admissions Policy and procedure further establishes the College's commitment to achieving equal opportunities for all of its students. The College is committed to ensuring that the admissions process will be open and transparent and that no individual is subjected to any unlawful discrimination. At all times, the College will consider and adhere to its duty under its commitment to equality, diversity and inclusion in line with the College's Equality and Diversity Policy and Admissions Policy .

As part of our admissions process we provide quality information, advice and guidance about the courses and services we offer to support Higher Education students. We have a dedicated Higher Education Admissions Team and Higher Education ambassadors. Information is available through our prospectus, website, Unistats and through HE progression talks to Riverside College's Level 3 students (full and part-time).

We provide 1:1 advice and guidance to enable students to make informed choices about courses that will support their planned career pathways.

We offer practical information through talks on how to apply for finance for Higher Education qualifications and we provide full and accurate information on how to apply for DSA funding.

All persons responsible for the recruitment and induction of students ensure that the College's admission systems are free from bias and equally accessible to all. The College's admissions systems are designed to examine an individual's capacity and suitability for a particular course. Data relating to age, ethnicity, gender and whether students live in a widening participation area, is used to review applications and admissions and to identify trends that may become established.

The College also recognises the fact that students from financially disadvantaged backgrounds are also statistically at greater risk of not achieving their full educational potential and endeavours to take steps to redress this imbalance, for example through financial support and differentiated curriculum planning and delivery.

6.7 First term

The transition to Higher Education can sometimes be difficult for students, but especially for those with additional needs, with limited family support or caring responsibilities. Standardised and quality assured induction arrangements are central to achieving a successful transition into Higher Education – providing information about academic expectations, college based systems (eg the role and purpose of the HE Learner Voice Forum, end of module surveys), welfare and pastoral support, applying for Disability Support Allowance (DSA) and facilitating the developing of social networking through WAMedu (a secure social network environment for education).

A supported and effective transition has had a positive impact on retention and success on programme. There is a centralised tutorial system in place to support learners initially and throughout the full duration of their programme and there is a dedicated team of professionals who offer pastoral support and guidance, welfare and counselling where there is a need.

In order to establish a sense of belonging amongst new students with their chosen course of study, fellow students and teaching staff, the College arranges visiting speakers, trips and visits to create the relationships and culture which are crucial to retention and future success.

The College has a Teaching and Learning Policy which outlines its strategic and operational approach to supporting students to ensure they reach their full potential in terms of development and achievement.

Within the first term, each Higher Education cohort will appoint at least one student representative who will work in partnership with academic and pastoral tutors to support students to settle into Higher Education and to make continual enhancements to the quality of the provision.

The College is determined to support all of its students to achieve their qualification. Support for learners with disability/a specific learning difficulty is delivered under the protocols of Student Finance, England. Higher Education students are made aware that they will need to apply for a Disabled Students' Allowance to pay for this support. We work closely with students to support them with their application.

6.8 On-programme (duration of the course)

There is a Higher Education Quality Cycle in place which ensures that the quality of teaching, learning and assessment is monitored closely through manager and peer walkthroughs. Attendance, retention, and punctuality are reported on, on a weekly basis and student achievement is tracked through the Higher Education mark book and higher education assessment boards. Amongst other criteria, we monitor student retention data in relation to ethnicity, disability and age.

Any students who are presenting as a 'cause for concern', in relation to attendance, effort or personal issues are discussed by team members where appropriate and also at cause for concern meetings (held with the Pastoral Support Worker for Adults and Higher Education). Timely action is taken and an appropriate intervention is put in place in response to causes for concern. It is the College's policy to track and monitor student achievement and progress through HE Assessment and Academic boards, so that timely interventions can result in improved retention and success. We have developed a broad set of indicators about student engagement, which include not only attendance but also submission of work, engagement with content on our virtual learning environment and access to the College's library resources). Academic and pastoral tutorials, small class sizes and individualised support are essential in retaining students.

Both qualitative and quantitative data is used to evaluate engagement and retention in order to gather evidence of impact for accountability, to assess value for money and to support new developments and the enhancement of the student experience. We use a range of methods to collect evidence to support evaluation of impact including end of module surveys, bi-monthly HE Learner Voice surveys, HE Learner Voice forum, and attendance of Higher Education learner representatives at the Higher Education Learning Community (where the Student Partnership is reviewed and updated annually). We use learner voice feedback to continue to work with our widening participation students to identify activities and interventions to support retention.

To support teaching and learning we will provide opportunities for students to benefit from:

- Study support workshops
- Voluntary work
- Study trips and visits
- Guest speakers
- Engagement with quality assurance through HE Academic boards
- Work based learning activities.

In Riverside College's QAA HER report (2015), good practice was reported in relation to the effective integration of all student support services to enable students to develop their academic, personal and professional potential. Pastoral care is seen a key strength and both academic tutorials and the Pastoral Support Worker for Adults and Higher Education play a valuable role in developing students' confidence, mind-set, resilience and academic ability; supporting them to retain on programme and work towards achieving their goals on graduation. In addition, the TEF Panel (June 2018) commented on Riverside College's institution-wide approach to supporting widening participation students to ensure they continue on study.

6.9 Progression

As students move from Higher Education into employment or from a Level 5 to a Level 6 top-up degree, the College continues to support them to prepare for work and into higher levels of study. We will do this through a focused employability weeks, through work based projects and through careers advice and guidance. We also work with students to develop and progress their academic writing and skills of critical analysis for the next level of study.

The College undertook a survey at the end of 2016-17 to determine the extent to which a student's programme of study and Higher Education experience had impacted their skills across the duration of one academic year. Distance travelled from the start of the academic year to its end was significant across a number of key areas including:

- Thinking critically and analytically (from 29.6% to 79.96% good or better)
- Reading and comprehending academic material (from 39.47% to 89.47% good or better)
- Becoming an independent learner (from 44.63% to 84.62% good or better)
- Working effectively with others (from 56.41% to 87.18% good or better).

The College will introduce additional drop-in Higher Education study skills master classes in 2018-19 at flexible times to meet the needs of both its part-time and full-time provision. Our study skills support will also include blended learning approaches which harness technology but maximise learning outcomes.

In 2018-19, we will introduce two further top-up degrees into our Level 6 portfolio, namely BA (Hons) Education (top-up) and BSc (Hons) Health and Social Care to support progression into higher level study.

7.0 Ambition and Strategy

Paragraphs 7.1 to 7.5 outline Riverside College's Ambition and Strategy to support potential students to have the opportunity to build a good life for themselves and to reach their potential regardless of their background and identity.

7.1 Higher Education Goals

Our Higher Education goals are seamlessly aligned to the College's strategic aims. This has resulted in goals that focus on quality, efficiency and growth:

QUALITY: to use robust quality monitoring systems to measure and enhance the quality of the Higher Education provision.

EFFICIENCY: to ensure the Higher Education courses are delivered with efficiency and provide value for money.

GROWTH: to work with internal and external stakeholders to achieve growth in the Higher Education provision.

7.2 Ambition and Strategy – target groups (2019-20)

Riverside College will be targeting the following under-represented groups as part of its 2019-20 Access and Participation Plan.

Under-represented groups	Target
<p>Priority 1: Students from areas of low higher education participation, low household income and/or low socio economic status</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • to increase the number of Halton /Liverpool City Region residents who enter into higher education. • to continue to provide a local and value for money Higher Education provision to meet the needs of students who for financial reasons prefer to study closer to home. • to increase the number of female students that progress from Level 3 provision to Level 4 in Engineering.
<p>Priority 2: Students of particular ethnicities</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • to continue to analyse recruitment, retention, achievement, and attendance rates by ethnicity to ensure that access opportunities, continuation and pass rates are in line with the overall College rate (including year-on-year improvement) and that students of particular ethnicities are in no way disadvantaged whilst at the College.
<p>Priority 3: Mature students</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • to continue to review delivery models for accessibility and responsiveness to community and employer need. • to evaluate demand for new pathways/programmes, modes of study and flexible delivery options. • to continue to improve accessibility for non-traditional Level 4 learners into Higher Education programmes
<p>Priority 4: Disabled students and students with specific learning difficulties</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • to continue to analyse recruitment, retention, achievement, and attendance rates by disability and by specific learning difficulty to ensure that access opportunities, continuation and pass rates are in line with the overall College rate (including year-on-year improvement) and that students of particular disabilities /learning difficulties are in no way disadvantaged whilst at the College.
<p>Priority 5: Care leavers</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • to increase the number of care leavers who progress from Level 3 study to the Higher Education provision at Riverside College.

Riverside College aim to achieve the targets in the five priority areas above through strategies outlined in paragraphs 7.3 to 7.5 (which cover the different stages of the student life cycle). We are also aware that potential students may fall into one or more of the above categories and could also be carers, estranged from their families or have mental health problems (ie categories of students that fall within the wider definition of underrepresented groups).

7.3 Access: Ambition and Strategy

In order to meet the five priorities highlighted in Section 7.2, Riverside College will continue to build on Access arrangements through the following strategies:

- To promote Riverside College Higher Education provision to under-represented groups in the 5 priority areas (as highlighted in section 7.2) through a programme of targeted events (both off campus, in the community and at Riverside College).
- To promote Riverside College Higher Education provision to other groups of students where there is emerging evidence that barriers to access may exist (including carers, people estranged from their families, refugees and people with mental health problems).
- To increase enrolments from deprived area postcodes through targeted activity in schools within deprived postcodes and to community groups (this will also include the deliverables that we undertake as part of Shaping Futures – NCOP).
- To provide study support on academic writing, exam technique and revision technique to Level 3 students within College to support them to achieve higher grades.
- To work with Year 9 female pupils in collaboration with a regional STEM employer to develop skills/knowledge required for work within Engineering and to support progression onto Higher Education qualifications in Engineering.
- To target Year 9 and above pupils and school leavers to raise awareness of progression pathways and provide activities and taster events (including STEM and Engineering pathways).
- To engage in a programme of events (both off campus and at Riverside College targeted at under-represented groups) which are designed to raise aspiration and ensure that all students have equal opportunity to reach their full potential through access to Higher Education.
- To continue to promote Higher Education through open events, through HE student of the month/HE student of the year/ and through our annual HE graduation ceremony to celebrate the achievement of our HE students. This will further promote the provision to prospective students, parents, their family, partners and employers.
- To continue to widen participation and enhance the quality of information and advice and guidance (IAG) including full and detailed information through Unistats.
- To work in partnership with secondary schools to ensure full transition arrangements are in place for Year 11 students in order to address their individual learning needs and any emerging barriers to learning. This will subsequently support students to develop confidence and achieve university pre-entry qualifications.
- To support gifted and talented pupils in Year 10 (through our prestigious universities programme) to develop through stretch and challenge questioning, higher order skills of analysis, judgement and evaluation. This will occur in the context of a wider and broader perspective to the GCSE curriculum and its aim is to raise attainment.
- To support GCSE pupils in local secondary skills to develop effective revision skills (Geography and Science subjects) and to raise attainment
- To continue to offer reading practice, and support with maths and science through the Tomorrow's Doctors' and Tomorrow's Teachers' programmes (sixth form students working with pupils in secondary schools) to raise aspiration and attainment.

7.4 Success: Ambition and Strategy

In order to meet the five priorities highlighted in Section 7.2, Riverside College will continue to build on its approaches for success through the following strategies:

- To provide a comprehensive Induction programme which includes a 6-week study support tutorial package.
- To capture learner views on Induction programme so that their views can inform any future changes and enhancement of provision.
- To ensure that there is at least one student representative in place for each course and that they are provided with a full description of their role and level of commitment.
- To ensure that students from a range of backgrounds are included in the Higher Education Learner Voice forum.
- To review the Student Partnership Agreement with all new students so that all students and staff are aware of and can respond to needs and expectations.
- To continue to provide 1:1 timely pastoral support for all students and across the 5 priority areas to ensure that they are fully supported to remain on programme.
- To provide responsive and effective pastoral care to all students and across the 5 priority areas (as outlined in section 7.2) in order to develop confidence, and support achievement, personal development and independence.
- To closely monitor engagement within each stage of the student life cycle through attendance, punctuality, commitment and meeting of deadlines.
- To provide 1:1 academic tutorials to enable students to become independent learners as they progress through their programme.
- To monitor the effectiveness of student engagement through end of module evaluations, through HE learner voice questionnaires and through the National Student Survey.
- To monitor retention, attendance, punctuality and engagement on a weekly basis and action timely intervention and support for any 'at risk students' identified in cause for concern meetings.
- To closely monitor engagement, student feedback, employer and external examiner feedback through Assessment and Academic boards (interim curriculum reviews and AMRs).
- To achieve high levels of student satisfaction throughout the student life cycle.
- To provide the best possible experience for our students to ensure positive NSS results.
- To achieve attendance and retention rates of 90% or above by programme.

7.5 Progression: Ambition and Strategy

In order to meet the five priorities highlighted in Section 7.2, Riverside College will continue to develop progression opportunities through the following strategies:

- To support students to develop their independence, team working and communication skills in preparation for employment, promotion or further study (through academic and enhancement activities).
- To develop Level 4 and 5 students as 'scholars' through a programme of study skills workshop sessions in order to support them to progress onto higher level programmes and top-up degree programmes.
- To provide full advice, guidance and support for Level 5 students (part-time and full-time) to progress onto a top-up degree.

- To increase the number of part-time and full-time Level 5 learners students that progress onto Level 6 study.
- To increase the number of learners that progress from part-time HE programmes into post graduate study or employment.
- To develop students' academic and critical writing skills to prepare them for the next level of study.
- To hold targeted HE Careers and Employer event(s) to support students into employment and/or onto Higher Apprenticeship programmes.

It is predicted that progression rates onto top-up degrees from foundation degrees/Level 5 qualifications will continue to grow (especially with the introduction of two newly approved top-up degrees in 2018-19). There is also new opportunity to engage in Higher Apprenticeships and Degree Apprenticeships which will present emerging opportunities for our part-time employed students. All HE students will be invited to attend apprenticeships events in College and regionally where there will be significant employer presence. That aside, progression to highly skilled employment and further study is an area for development as outlined in Riverside College's TEF metrics (January 2017). However, it is hoped that increased access to work experience, careers coaching and increasing employer engagement will help to address this concern.

8. Access, Student Success and Progression Measures

Riverside College has set the following Access, Student Success and Progression Measures in relation to this 2019-20 Access and Participation Plan:

Access Measure

- To increase enrolments (year-on-year) from under-represented groups within the 5 priority areas outlined in Section 7.2 onto both part-time and full-time provision.
- To increase the number of school/college students from disadvantaged postcodes that achieve the entry requirements for a Riverside College HE programme of their choice.
- To increase full-time student numbers by 8 -10%.
- To increase the number of female students who progress from Level 3 to Level 4 provision in Engineering.
- To support gifted and talented students within College through the Tomorrow's Doctors' and Tomorrow's Teachers' programmes to develop skills and knowledge to achieve higher grades and personal attributes for entry to first choice Higher Education provision and/or employment.
- To work with and support Year 10 pupils in schools to develop their reading skills and maths and science competency (sixth form students working with pupils in secondary schools) in order to prepare them to progress into Higher Education.
- To support gifted and talented pupils in Year 10 (through our prestigious universities programme) to develop through stretch and challenge questioning, higher order skills of analysis, judgement and evaluation in order to prepare them to progress into Higher Education.

Student Success Measure

- To achieve 90% or above attendance by course.
- To further increase the levels of part and full-time student satisfaction rates.
- To achieve in-year retention at 91% or above to ensure that continuation metrics remain above benchmark.
- To increase pass rates by 5% on all part-time and full-time HE programmes.

Progression Measures

- To increase the number of part-time and full-time students who progress from Level 5 to Level 6 study (ie onto a top up degree or initial teacher training programme).
- To increase the number of learners that progress from part-time HE programmes into post graduate study or employment.
- To improve progress into employment on part-time programmes.
- To hold targeted HE Careers and Employer event(s) to support students into employment or onto Higher Apprenticeship programmes.

9. Bursaries and Financial Support

The College has seen a recent rise in applications to Higher Education programmes, which has aligned with the growth of the Higher Education provision. The number of applications received from non-traditional route and part-time students is increasing, which indicates that we are successful in attracting and students from previously under-represented groups.

In order to increase and widen participation further on full-time programmes, the College is committed to providing cost effective and more accessible routes into Higher Education (**Access**) and helping full-time students within the first year of their study (**Success**). The College acknowledges that some students are less likely to be able to afford course related equipment, so therefore all first year full-time Higher Education students will receive a £500 bursary towards equipment whilst studying. In 2017-18, 42% of students who received a bursary lived in widening participation postcodes, with others falling into one or more of the 5 underrepresented priority areas).

Payment of the £500 bursary is subject to conditions:

- The student meets a minimum of 90% attendance at the end of term 1 for the first instalment and a minimum of 90% attendance at the end of term 2 for the second instalment. Payment of the final instalment will also be dependent upon 90% attendance in term 3.
- The student complies with all course related deadlines for submission of work.
- The student complies with the College's expectations on conduct and behaviour.

For monitoring and evaluation purposes, Riverside College will undertake a full analysis of students in receipt of bursaries in terms of key performance indicators. This will also inform future planning.

An analysis of retention, attendance, on-going in-year progress and successful outcomes (**Success**) will be presented to the College's Senior Management for continuous monitoring throughout the academic year).

Furthermore, reports on retention, attendance, progress and successful outcomes will be presented to the Higher Education Academic Board during the academic year. These reports will also monitor the impact of financial support of students progressing from Level 3 to Level 4 provision and again from Level 5 to a top-up degree at Level 6 (**Progression**).

Financial support and a hardship fund will be available to assist any emerging students who are struggling financially to remain on programme. The aim of the fund is to relieve financial hardship that might impact on a student's participation at College (such as travel costs), however, there is not automatic entitlement to an award from the fund.

Students who are in receipt of financial support will be requested to complete a formal evaluation during the academic year to determine their reflections on the value of this financial support to them in relation to accessibility to Higher Education, progress on programme, success and progression. In addition, an analysis of attendance, retention, and success and progression statistics will be reviewed systematically to monitor the impact of this support. This information will also inform future planning for financial support arrangements.

Riverside College's overall levels of investment to support access, success and progression are outlined within the accompanying resource plan. The balance between the investments allocated to access, success and progression activities and to financial support reflects the priorities identified through our assessment of performance and priorities to support under-represented groups into Higher Education.

An informal evaluation carried out on bursary provision during 2017-18 within full-time course focus groups showed that students valued the £500 bursary support and they were able to use the monies for the provision of study equipment and towards day-to-day essential living costs.

10. Equality and Diversity

Riverside College is committed to promoting the practice of fairness in all services provided by the College as well as to countering any attitudes and behaviour which deny people opportunities, simply or primarily because of factors considered in the Equality Act 2010 to be protected characteristics.

In line with the duty set out in the Equality Act 2010, the College will take positive steps to advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not. The College also takes positive steps through its provision to foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.

The College also recognises the fact that students from financially disadvantaged backgrounds are also statistically at greater risk of not achieving their full educational potential and will endeavour to take steps to redress this imbalance, eg through the availability of bursaries and hardship fund for specific students that fall into this category. A useful indicator for identifying disadvantaged students is if they live in a Widening Participation area, so the College will use this as a key performance measure. Throughout the student life cycle stages of the Access and Participation plan, the college has considered the impact of its activities on students with protected characteristics, for example, through close analysis of recruitment, retention, achievement and attendance rates by widening participation postcodes, by gender and by ethnicity by learning difficulty/disability. This is to ensure that students who share these characteristics are in no way disadvantaged.

All College marketing materials reflect the College's commitment to equality and diversity and are made available in public places throughout the community. The College's admission systems are free from bias and equally accessible to all. Assumptions that only certain types of person will be able to undertake certain types of learning will be challenged

Through annual monitoring, age, disability, ethnicity, gender and widening participation recruitment data on all programmes is scrutinized and, where appropriate, strategies devised to address imbalance. Teaching materials are audited to ensure there is no discrimination, and to promote equality and diversity wherever possible. Statistics about students on the basis of ethnicity, gender, age and disability are collected as are views of students via

learner voice questionnaires. These are monitored against key College performance indicators and are reported to the Equality and Diversity Action Group, Senior Management Team monitoring and then to the Quality & Standards Committee of the Governing Body.

11. Student Consultation

The College engages with Higher Education student representatives throughout the academic year during 3 Higher Education Learner Voice meetings and with all Higher Education students through individual learner voice survey monkey reviews. In addition, all Higher Education students are required to complete end of module/unit feedback surveys. Student feedback is analysed closely through assessment board and academic board reports. Action plans are created in response to student feedback.

Students are consulted on:

- student satisfaction levels
- curriculum offer and curriculum design
- marketing, promotion of the HE provision, access and induction arrangements
- how prepared students feel for employment and progression into the next level of study
- the usefulness and effectiveness of the academic study skills materials that support both success and progression
- Fee levels and bursaries.

Students who are in receipt of financial support will be requested to complete an evaluation during the academic year to determine their personal reflections on the value of this financial support to them in relation to accessibility to Higher Education, progress on programme, success and progression. This information will also inform future planning for financial support arrangements. The feedback that students have provided to the College during 2016-17 and 2017-18 life cycles has informed the writing of this Access and Participation Plan and the provision of bursary arrangements for 2019-20.

In addition, a forum of Higher Education students has had the opportunity to give informal feedback on the plan and approve it before submission. No changes were recommended.

Students will be involved in the implementation, monitoring and evaluation of this Access and Participation Agreement through the Higher Education Learning Community (to which student representatives are invited), through the Higher Education Learner Voice forum, through student surveys and also through annual monitoring at Academic Board (to which student representatives are invited). As all Higher Education students will be invited to feedback on implementation, content and delivery of this Access and Participation Plan, a full range of student backgrounds will be included.

12. Investment

The following section outlines the total investment, Riverside College will make through the Access and Participation Plan in 2019-20.

Total investment (2019-20)	£25663
Total investment as a proportion of higher fee income	29.5%
Expenditure on Access	£3305
Expenditure on Success	£9500
Expenditure on Progression	£4958

Whilst a formal evaluation of Financial Support to students has not yet been undertaken, the availability of a bursary has been a contributing factor in supporting our full-time students to remain on programme, to succeed and to progress onto the next level of study (as indicated by an increase in applications for our full-time top-up degrees in 2018-19). This was also reflected in the TEF 3 positive flag for continuation for full-time students, and in the 100% retention rate for Year 1 full-time students achieved in 2017-18. The bursary is linked to student attendance, punctuality and achievement and is available to all of our full-time students within their first year of their Higher Education study to support them with their studies. In addition, the College continues to increase, in real terms, its expenditure on access, success and progression activities. All investment is focused on providing a gateway into Higher Education for under-represented groups and to support students to succeed on programme and to progress. To-date, the College's investment activities have been set at an appropriate level and the impact of this has seen an increase in enrolments from students living in disadvantaged post codes and TEF panel recognition for its institutional approach to support widening participation students to ensure that they continue in their studies.

13. Provision of Information

Riverside College will publish course related information on the Higher Education pages of our website (including course offer, award title, course structure (modules/units), entry requirements, fees and availability of bursaries). The College will also publish the Access Agreement and Participation plan on the main College website under its 'Information and Policies' section accessed through the 'About' drop down link. The Access Agreement and Participation Plan will be published within seven days of approval by the Office for Students.

14. Monitoring

The impact of the work we undertake with Shaping Futures is monitored through NCOP project review meetings where progress against deliverables is assessed. The outcomes of this review are subsequently reported to the College's Senior Management Team on a termly basis.

The Access and Participation Plan priorities, milestones and objectives will be continuously monitored through the Quality and Standards Committee of the Board of Governors, through the Higher Education Academic Board, through Higher Education numbers modelling meetings and through Senior Management Team (SMT) monitoring reports.

In relation to the target to increase the number of school/college students from disadvantaged postcodes that achieve the entry requirements for a Riverside College Higher Education programme, the College will monitor recruitment by target post codes and continue to track retention and student satisfaction levels in relation academic and pastoral support.

Reports will be prepared for governors, for HE Academic Board and SMT that will show progress against the targets identified in the Access and Participation Plan (by priority area). Analysis of access, retention, success and progression statistics will be reviewed at SMT level to ensure that milestone targets are being met. If, for any reason, targets in relation to widening participation and opportunities for student are not being met, a robust action plan will be put into place which will be monitored closely by SMT and governors.

Full-time and part-time course fee levels for 2019-20 entrants.

Please enter inflationary statement in the free text box below.

Students will be charged the same fee throughout the duration of their programme. For example if Year 1 full-time fees are £6750 then the subsequent year's fees will be £6750. A part-time student will be charged the same annual course fee throughout the duration of their programme.

Full-time course type:	Additional information:	Course fee:
First degree		£6,750
Foundation degree		£6,750
Foundation year / Year 0		*
HNC / HND		£6,750
CertHE / DipHE		*
Postgraduate ITT		*
Accelerated degree		*
Sandwich year		*
Erasmus and overseas study years		*
Other		*
Franchise full-time course type:	Additional information:	Course fee:
First degree		*
Foundation degree		*
Foundation year / Year 0		*
HNC / HND		*
CertHE / DipHE		*
Postgraduate ITT		*
Accelerated degree		*
Sandwich year		*
Erasmus and overseas study years		*
Other		*
Part-time course type:	Additional information:	Course fee:
First degree		£5,640
Foundation degree	- For Foundation Degree in Education	£5,040
Foundation degree	- For Foundation Degree in Counselling	£4,160
Foundation year / Year 0		*
HNC / HND	- For HNC Engineering	£3,600
CertHE / DipHE		£3,600
Postgraduate ITT		£3,600
Accelerated degree		*
Sandwich year		*
Erasmus and overseas study years		*
Other		*

Table 8a - 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)
								2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23	
T16a_01	Student success	Multiple	HESA T3b - No longer in HE after 1 year & in low participation neighbourhoods (POLAR 3) (Young, full-time, first degree entrants)	To increase retention to 91% and above	No	2015-16	91%	92%	92%	92%	93%		
T16a_02	Access	Socio-economic	Other statistic - Socio-economic (please give details in the next column)	To increase by 5% the number of students from disadvantaged postcodes	No	2015-16	4%	6%	7%	8%	9%		
T16a_03	Access	Multiple	HESA T1c - Low participation neighbourhoods (POLAR3) (Young, full-time, other undergraduate entrants)	To increase full-time student numbers	No	2015-16	52	92	94	106	110		
T16a_04	Access	Multiple	Other statistic - Ethnicity (please give details in the next column)	To increase the number of full-time students that progress from Level 5 to Level 6 study	No	2015-16	10	14	16	18	20		
T16a_05	Progression	Multiple	Other statistic - Progression to employment or further study (please give details in the next column)	To increase by 5% the number of learners that progress from part-time HE programmes into post graduate study or employment.	No	2015-16	70%	72%	73%	74%	75%		

Table 8b - 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)
								2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23	
T16b_01	Student success	Multiple	Management targets	• To develop and signpost HE students to academic study skills resources (which will be available to all full and part-time students through the HE Study Skills Moodle).	No	2015-16	0	1	2	2	2		
T16b_02	Access	Multiple	Management targets	• To hold progression into HE /Apprenticeships events	No	2015-16	0	4	4	4	4		
T16b_03	Access	Socio-economic	Management targets	• To hold a HE Careers and Employer event to support students into employment.	No	2015-16	0	1	2	2	2		
T16b_04	Access	Multiple	Outreach / WP activity (collaborative - please give details in the next column)	To provide Engineering STEM taster sessions at Big Bang Events (STEM) at local schools and colleges to inspire male and females from different backgrounds into Engineering	Yes	2015-16	0	4	4	4	5		
T16b_05	Multiple	Attainment raising	Strategic partnerships (eg formal relationships with schools/colleges/employers)	To support Year 10 students to strengthen answers in GCSE papers. This will occur through stretch and challenge questioning leading to an improvement in pupils' skills in analysis, judgement and evaluation.	No	2015-16	0	2	2	2	2		
T16b_06	Multiple	Attainment raising	Strategic partnerships (eg formal relationships with schools/colleges/employers)	• To support GCSE pupils in local secondary skills to develop effective revision skills (Geography and Science subjects).	No	2015-16	0	4	5	6	6		
T16b_07	Access	Gender	Strategic partnerships (eg formal relationships with schools/colleges/employers)	• To work with Year 9 female pupils in collaboration with a regional STEM employer to develop skills/knowledge required for work within engineering, professions.	No	2015-16	0	2	2	2	2		
T16b_08	Access	Attainment raising	Strategic partnerships (eg formal relationships with schools/colleges/employers)	To increase by 10 the number of school/college students from disadvantaged postcodes that achieve the entry requirements for a Riverside College HE programme of their choice.	No	2016-17	0	4	6	8	10	10	

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.