

Access and Participation Statement 2025-26

1. Introduction and strategic aim

1.1 Context

In this Access and Participation Statement 2025-26 (APS), City of Portsmouth College (COPC) will demonstrate its commitment to providing all higher education students with high-quality academic support based on mutual respect irrespective of age, disability, race, ethnicity, religion, gender or sexual orientation. By promoting equality of opportunity for everyone, the College will show that diversity is central to our ambitions and interacts precisely with our strategic objectives. COPC is determined to offer an inclusive learning environment, where students are always able to pursue their interests and realise their ambitions, where their needs and well-being are catered for and where everyone is treated with respect and dignity.

At City of Portsmouth College, we are shaping the future of the city by unlocking the potential of our students at all levels. We believe that every learner should be able to achieve their aspirations, whatever their background or abilities, and see success in higher education as a crucial element in securing this objective. Pioneering, positive and progressive, we're constantly evolving our teaching and expanding our excellent business connections, in a welcoming community where all our students are empowered and supported to achieve their very best. We dream bigger and go further for every student.

The College seeks to provide effective access to all prospective higher education learners and to offer participation on quality programmes that encourage success and positive progression. In working towards this aim, COPC will be actively improving social mobility for people of our area. The Social Mobility Commission states the following: *"Social mobility is about an individual's ability to build a good life for themselves, regardless of their background. The more social mobility there is, the less someone's destination in life depends on where they start out. It is not just about the prospects of those at the bottom of society, but about fairness at every level; it is about whether your background holds you back. Social mobility is an issue for the majority."*

Whilst currently the amount of HE provision is relatively small, it nonetheless represents an important part of the College curriculum and is designed to meet employer and educational needs, both locally and nationally. With the implementation of further T level strands, which actively prepare students for study at the higher levels and ambitious capital development plans to transform facilities, COPC is well-placed to see its higher education provision expand in support of the wider economy.

To increase the profile of higher education at COPC, whilst also ensuring its sustainability and economic viability, the College will work to widen the diversity and number of HE students over coming years, with a special focus on employer-led provision to support increased local demand. Securing the appropriate funding for the extension of HE programmes will also guarantee that sufficient resources and suitably qualified teaching staff are available to promote success.

COPC is committed to growing our higher education offer by promoting access and participation and widening the range of courses available and making sure that infrastructure and delivery continue to be of the highest standard and can provide an excellent student experience.

The HE curriculum will be carefully extended each year through a robust curriculum planning process, with a relentless focus on delivering a cost-effective and dynamic curriculum. The College aims for sustained growth in HE learner numbers and appropriate investment will be

made to facilitate an enhanced experience for our students and the wider stakeholders we serve.

1.2 The Higher Education Landscape

There have been many developments in Higher Education over recent years, including the broadening jurisdiction of the Office for Students, as the statutory regulatory body, and a series of parliamentary reports that have cast a spotlight on the significant skills gap that the country faces.

Against this background, the UK Government has sought to promote higher technical skills by involving further education colleges in the delivery of Level 4/5 qualifications; the Institute for Apprenticeships and Technical Education (IfATE) has overseen fundamental changes in Apprenticeships and a network of Institutes of Technology (IoTs) has been established across the country. This is now being taken to the next stage, following the creation of Skills England, the instigation of Technical Excellence Colleges, and the planned launch of the Lifelong Learning Entitlement (LLE) in 2026-27, which will bring loan arrangements for all Level 4+ provision under one organisational and funding umbrella.

These numerous national reforms have made the HE landscape more fluid and competitive than ever before and the situation has been compounded by the financial restrictions placed on universities through the substantial decline in income from international students. As a result, providers have been obliged to become more responsive to the needs of employers and the regional economy, as well as to the expectations of students. The scale of Higher Education provision at colleges locally continues to respond to this evolving situation, whilst also reflecting the challenge of real-terms budgetary cuts.

Consideration of the college-based programmes available across the area offers an insight into the competition in the market and the potential areas of opportunity. It is hoped that through establishing its credentials as a high-quality provider, COPC can make a major contribution to the HE landscape in the Solent region, whilst at the same time diversifying participation in line with the city's demographics and addressing the skills needs identified by local business and political leaders.

1.3 Vision, Mission and Values

COPC is fully committed to widening participation in higher education amongst all underrepresented groups, whilst providing excellent career focused learning that prepares our students to succeed at work and in life.

Vision:

The College of choice for the city of Portsmouth region

Mission:

Shaping our city's future by unlocking the potential of our learners

Strategic objectives

1. Inspirational, aspirational and inclusive place to work and learn
2. Responsive and relevant curriculum offer (*beacon of sustainability*)
3. High quality teaching, learning and assessment (*embracing digital technology*)
4. Trusted partner for the communities we serve
5. Stabilised and sustainable finances

Values

Be Collaborative

Be Aspirational

Be Respectful

Be Empowered

Be Supportive

1.4 HE Strategy

City of Portsmouth College's wide-ranging Strategic Plan 2022-2026 details the high-level strategic goals of the College and is complemented by detailed documents outlining objectives in specific educational areas, including the HE Strategy, in which promoting access and participation features strongly. The purpose of the HE Strategy is to set the context and provide direction for HE within the college.

Rationale:

- To ensure that the HE curriculum offered by City of Portsmouth College is fit for purpose, meets local, regional and national needs and is current, flexible and responsive
- To shape the development of this curriculum offer and ensure that the opportunities for the people of Portsmouth to engage in higher-level study continue to improve and diversify
- To communicate these curriculum goals to staff, governors and the wider community

Aims:

The general aims for higher education at City of Portsmouth College are:

- to promote a diverse and stimulating range of programmes, which cater for different backgrounds, learning styles, and student interests
- to enable all learners to realise their potential as educated citizens and to overcome any barriers they may encounter to completing their education
- to provide a high-quality learning experience through clearly structured, flexible programmes with teaching based on scholarship, research and innovative pedagogy
- to offer study options that are recognised and valued by employers, national training organisations, professional bodies, universities and other higher education providers
- to assist all students, including those from underrepresented groups, to derive the maximum benefit from learning through personal academic reviews, tutorials, and pastoral support
- to encourage flexibility, knowledge, skills and motivation as a basis for progression into higher-level employment, graduate or postgraduate studies
- to support the local and national economy by providing relevant higher-level technical and professional qualifications, thereby helping to bridge the skills gap
- to develop individual skills and abilities, including learning from private study and producing academic solutions within given timescales, both individually and when working with others
- to ensure all learners receive the relevant, high-quality feedback that will encourage them to analyse and reflect on their strengths and weaknesses

Delivery Objectives:

In seeking to deliver effective and valuable higher education, the College's objectives for HE are:

- to develop full and part-time higher-level courses in areas where the College has proven strengths and there is evidence of demand
- to work independently and through partnerships to create programmes for high and medium priority sectors in response to local learner and employer needs
- to ensure high quality provision through effective quality assurance and enhancement
- to provide ongoing CPD to well-qualified staff, including encouraging scholarly activity
- to offer a distinctive HE student ethos, learning environment and personalised support
- to pursue a determined policy of widening participation to enable students from the most diverse range of backgrounds to access higher education

The broader objectives included in the over-arching Strategic Plan for the College also have relevance for the development of higher education, its association with local employers, and the ambition to ensure access, success and progression for all in the wider Portsmouth community.

A responsive and relevant curriculum offer

We will:

- a. Deliver a curriculum that attracts and engages with a diverse student population
- b. Offer a strong careers education programme that enables students to progress successfully
- c. Create forward thinking and cost-effective provision that develops skills and reflects industry and socio-economic priorities
- d. Work with employers of all sizes and types to plan an inclusive and progressive curriculum, with clear ladders of progression that meets workforce development needs.

High quality teaching, learning and assessment

We will:

- a. Deliver a high-quality learning experience for all our students so they successfully progress and achieve their next steps
- b. Develop the tutorial and enrichment programme to support our students' broader learning and development
- c. Develop strong links with employers to source high-quality and meaningful work experience and industrial placements that benefit our students and local businesses
- d. Expand E-learning technologies

Trusted partner for the communities we serve

We will:

- a. Build and extend external relationships and stakeholder engagement
- b. Work in partnership with our local community to support the delivery of impartial information, advice and guidance
- c. Work in partnership with a range of key stakeholders to deliver relevant specialist provision that meets the needs of students and the local area
- d. Maximise opportunities for our students and the college to engage with and support our local communities, adding value and realising potential.

1.5 Partnership with the University of Portsmouth

Universities across the Solent area – Southampton, Winchester, Chichester, Portsmouth and Southampton Solent – all work closely with further education colleges and make a valuable contribution to the knowledge base of the regional community. Within this local context, City of Portsmouth College is proud to provide the study opportunities that are of such importance to the local economy and to closing the skills gap; it is for this reason that COPC has specifically elected to pursue the strategic aim of rebuilding and expanding its HE offer, and it is assisted in this objective by close collaboration with the city's principle higher education provider, the University of Portsmouth (UoP).

City of Portsmouth College has a developing relationship with the University at a very high level. The common strategic direction of the two institutions is overseen by the Higher Education Partnership Group (HEPG), which includes senior colleagues from both parties. HEPG monitors quality assurance processes and feeds into some of the governing body's key committees, including Learning and Quality (L&Q) and Finance and Resources (F&R).

1.6 Portsmouth Demographics

All figures are taken from the 2021 Census:

- Portsmouth is the most densely populated city in the UK with a population estimated at 208,100.
- 140,400 people aged 18-64 years were recorded as being resident in the city.
- Portsmouth has a high proportion of young people (18-24) compared to the average for England due to the city's University and colleges (11.3% of Portsmouth's population against 6.1% nationally) and it is expected to increase by an additional 16% by 2030.
- The city's working age adult population (18-64) is expected to increase by 1% before 2030; however, this is mostly accounted for by the rise in the younger age group, as there is an estimated decrease of 14% for residents aged 50-59 years.
- By 2043, 19% of Portsmouth's population is expected to be aged 65+, compared to 14% in 2021.
- In 2021, 15.7% (32,800) of the city's total population were from Black, Asian and minority ethnic communities (BAME), with Portsmouth South being the most ethnically diverse of the city's localities (North, Central and South) with 22% of the population belonging to BAME groups.
- 25% of students at Portsmouth schools (primary + secondary) were of non-White British ethnicity, whilst in Portsmouth South, this figure rises to 33%.
- 19.6% of the population of Portsmouth and 25% of school-age students have a declared disability.

1.7 Labour Market Conditions

With a population of more than 1.25 million and over 42,000 businesses, the Solent area is an internationally recognised key economic hub anchored around the Isle of Wight, the two cities of Portsmouth and Southampton, the New Forest, the M27 corridor and the Solent waterway.

The City of Portsmouth itself has a job density of 0.86 (i.e. a job for 86 of every 100 residents) and the economic output is £5.7BN Gross Value Added (GVA). The majority of GVA comes from aerospace and defence, marine and maritime, digital media, advanced engineering and the visitor economy; however, from a much lower base creative industries have seen the fastest growth at 10% per annum. The Solent region is now home to a wide range of creative and cultural industries and the sector is expanding rapidly with an additional 10,000 jobs created over the last five years.

The area also has strengths in electronics, business and professional services, manufacturing, construction, infrastructure development, education, health, and the arts. The demand for skills is further driven by the proximity of Portsmouth and Southampton Docks and the numerous Ministry of Defence installations, as well as the region being a popular tourist and holiday destination.

The situation in the Portsmouth regional jobs market can be referred to as an "inverted pyramid" with fewer low skilled entry level roles now available, increasing volumes as the qualification level rises, and a large number of higher-level jobs left unfilled, due to a skills deficit that leaves the majority of employers finding it hard to recruit to well-paid positions (*Solent LEP skills plan review 2022*).

In 2023, the Chief Executive of Hampshire Chamber of Commerce stated, "*For Hampshire companies, the difficulty in recruiting highly skilled staff is a growing issue. Six out of ten local firms are currently operating below capacity with staff shortages.*"

Nonetheless, against this backdrop of skills shortages, significant development opportunities exist in the area. The Portsmouth Gateway Cluster, part of the government approved Solent Freeport, will provide multiple business opportunities, when it is located on a 43-hectare site owned by Portsmouth City Council and enjoys the benefits of excellent transport connections with Portsmouth International Port. In total, over the next 25 years, these projects have the capacity to create over 30,000 new highly skilled jobs and generate an additional £3.6BN GVA.

1.8 Learner Expectations

Higher education students who join programmes at City of Portsmouth College can expect the following:

Recruitment

- Applications are welcomed from all students irrespective of background
- The College maintains low-cost programmes so that the local community and employers have access to affordable higher education
- COPC provides information and promotes its HE opportunities to potential students, through open events, in progression discussions with its internal student population, on the College website and in other forms of social media
- Progression routes are clearly mapped from internal vocational programmes and a range of Access to HE qualifications also exist to support those who are returning to education
- The College provides comprehensive information, advice and guidance (IAG), which is quality assured through Matrix on annual basis

Student support

- To ensure a smooth transition into higher education, all new students attend an HE induction programme, which introduces them to matters such as academic regulations, welfare support, and College resources, as well as giving the opportunity to identify any support required
- The College offers students structured study skills support, tutorial sessions and smaller group sizes in order to create a more personalised approach to learning
- The Student Support team offers a comprehensive range of information, support and advice to help students reach their potential, whilst also overseeing the availability of pastoral, practical and academic support tailored to the needs of our students

Curriculum

- The Curriculum is highly responsive, focuses on inclusion and offers a variety of vocational, professional and technical programmes that meet the needs of businesses and the regional community and that maximise opportunities for progression into employment
- Teaching and Learning is of high quality, fostering an inclusive learning environment and eliciting the best performance from students unfamiliar with the expectations of HE
- Emphasis is placed on workplace skills, making sure that our graduates leave equipped with the employable skills and attributes to take their place in the world of work

1.9 College Commitment

City of Portsmouth College is committed to:

- creating an inclusive learning and working environment
- proactively promoting and celebrating equality of opportunity and inclusion
- ensuring that all publicity reflects the diversity of the student body
- having fair and appropriate systems for student recruitment
- embedding tutorial programmes at all levels that foster good relations

2. Risks to equality of opportunity

2.1 Presentation of risks

With respect to HE provision at City of Portsmouth College, a total of 7 risks to equality of opportunity that together cover each stage of the academic lifecycle have been identified through careful data analysis. The potential risks, as presented below under the headings of 'Access', 'Success / On Course' and 'Progression', vary in their current severity and are being addressed through policy development and the clearly articulated objectives of approval submissions related to future delivery.

2.2 Access

2.2.1 COPC Risk 1: Gender Balance

Students may not have equal opportunity to develop the skills and knowledge associated with specific areas of the HE curriculum irrespective of gender, as numbers on courses often demonstrate a gender imbalance.

- i. Whether in schools, at College or more widely in society, it would appear that young people are not being sufficiently exposed to the full range of employment opportunities. Stereotypical perceptions are reinforced restricting curriculum choice and denying appropriate access to all career paths.

2.2.2 COPC Risk 2: Representation of students with disabilities and/or learning difficulties

Students with disabilities and learning difficulties may not have equal opportunity to access HE programmes in particular areas of the curriculum in comparison to their representation in the wider community.

- i. Students with disabilities and learning difficulties require the appropriate support and guidance throughout their statutory education in order that they might feel able to develop similar ambitions to other learners and make informed decisions about their futures.
- ii. Equally, they should be presented with sufficient higher education opportunities, in terms of both the range of programmes and the assistance provided, to see HE as a natural destination and to feel warmly encouraged into higher-level study.

2.2.3 COPC Risk 3: Representation of students from ethnic minorities

Students from Black, Asian and minority ethnic groups may not have equal opportunity to develop the skills, knowledge and personal confidence required for HE compared to their representation in local communities.

- i. As a signatory of the Race Equality Charter, the University of Portsmouth recognises that:
 - in UK society, racism manifests itself in everyday situations, processes and behaviours
 - UK higher education cannot reach its full potential unless it can benefit from the talents of the whole population and until individuals from all ethnic backgrounds can prosper equally
 - to address racial inequalities, which are a significant issue within UK higher education, it is important that solutions are aimed at achieving long-term institutional culture change
 - staff and students from different ethnic backgrounds have varying experiences of HE
- ii. It may be inferred from the lower percentages of minority ethnic students on COPC higher education programmes than that found in the general population or even on other non-HE courses at the College that young people from these communities in the city do not see this higher-level study as applicable to them, nor are they encouraged to have this expectation throughout their schooling.

2.2.4 COPC Risk 4: Representation of students from low participation and/or deprived areas

Students may not have equal opportunity to go to university, because they originate from the more deprived areas of the city or there is no history of higher education in their families, but College should offer a pathway.

- i. City of Portsmouth College predominantly provides higher education opportunities to local people; over the past seven years, there were only very few instances of students

- with postcodes outside Portsmouth and the immediate surrounding area enrolling on HE courses at COPC.
- ii. This is reflected in the high proportion of learners on L4/5 courses from POLAR 4 Quintile 1-2 and IMD Quintile 1-2.
 - iii. COPC should be proud of the contribution it makes to widening participation in the city, with on many programmes the majority of students actually being drawn from areas, where there is next to no tradition of higher-level study (POLAR 4 Q1)
 - iv. IMD recognises Portsmouth South as the most deprived area in the whole of Hampshire.
 - v. The generally high proportion of students from low participation and/or deprived areas makes a vital contribution to equality of opportunity in the city and must be upheld during the development of higher education at COPC, if the full potential of Portsmouth citizens is to be realised and social stigmas to educational advancement are to be eliminated.

2.3 Success / On Course

2.3.1 COPC Risk 5: Continuation and Completion [PTS_1]

Students may not have equal opportunity to access the support necessary in order to remain on their chosen programmes, to progress effectively through their studies and experience success in higher education.

- i. Individual support and guidance is a crucial issue in terms of helping college-based HE learners, many of whom may be vulnerable or lacking in self-belief, to know success on their programmes and is often seen as a benefit of the more personalised approach possible in the college environment.
- ii. Mental health is a problem that disproportionately impacts on continuation and completion, and it is very clearly becoming ever more prevalent across society and education.

2.3.2 COPC Risk 6: Learning Resources [PTS_2]

Students may not have equal opportunity to access the level and range of educational resources required to perform well on a higher education programme, and which fundamentally enhance the student experience.

- i. Highly positive responses to surveys and learner voice activities from FdSc Computing students reflect the state-of-the-art facilities they enjoy on their programme.
- ii. The need to have high-quality resources that are readily available for use by students is a prerequisite of effective HE provision.

2.4 Progression

2.4.1 COPC Risk 7: Destinations [PTS_3]

Students may not have equal opportunity to progress to an outcome they consider to be a positive reflection of their higher education experience.

2.5 Student Characteristics

In the above investigation of risk, a wide range of student characteristics were considered, including gender, ethnicity, declared disability or learning difficulty, no parental experience of higher education (POLAR4) and socio-economic background (IMD).

Even though the number of care leavers is increasing year-on-year within the city of Portsmouth, isolating valuable information on their movement through all stages of education remains difficult. The University of Portsmouth has, however, introduced a Care Leaver Covenant to address this matter at a national level. As the City of Portsmouth College continues to evolve its policies and record systems, increased attention is rightly being paid to other student groups.

3. Objectives and Intervention Strategies

3.1 Addressing Identified Risks

To address the observed inequalities associated with each identified risk, objectives are set out below as ambitious, clearly-defined, outcomes-based, numerical targets designed to secure continuous improvement.

3.1.1 COPC Risk 1: Gender Balance

Students may not have equal opportunity to develop the skills and knowledge associated with specific areas of the HE curriculum irrespective of gender, as numbers on courses often demonstrate a gender imbalance.

Objective:

- i. To overcome any expectation amongst students and those in a position of influence that certain higher education disciplines are the reserve of particular genders.
- ii. No programme has >70% of single gender.

Intervention Strategy:

Activity	Inputs	Outcomes
a) Cross-city engagement Targeted marketing to banish the view that professions are domain of specific genders; combined with a long-term action to change perceptions, incl. non-binary/trans community – led by events and focused school liaison (primary + secondary) featuring former students as role models who have made enhanced their lives	Staffing time in school liaison + marketing – cost of organising and staging multiple events (<i>some could be in collaboration with UoP</i>)	No programme has >70% of single gender Increased confidence amongst learners of their value on all programmes, irrespective of gender
b) Capital investment Redevelopment will create facilities to attract females to male dominated course and vice versa	Significant cost to build facilities to address gender imbalance	Modern, innovative and industry-specific learning environment to attract all students
c) Employer engagement Sector expertise supports mixed-gender employment	Time for engagement with local business	Fewer preconceptions of gender-specific roles
d) Data Focus on gender split at offer stage + differentiated achievement highlighted	Data developer – increased time available to HE (<i>possibility of UoP collaboration</i>)	Capacity to question data helps identify areas for improvement

3.1.2 COPC Risk 2: Representation of students with disabilities and/or learning difficulties

Students with disabilities and learning difficulties may not have equal opportunity to access HE programmes in particular areas of the curriculum in comparison to their representation in the wider community.

Objective:

- i. To increase the proportion of learners with disabilities and/or learning difficulties on COPC higher education programmes, such that it aligns effectively with the city's population.

- ii. All HE courses have >25% representation from students with disabilities and/or learning difficulties.

Intervention Strategy:

Activity	Inputs	Outcomes
<p>a) Cross-city engagement Targeted marketing with suitable imagery to stress the opportunities adapted facilities, suitable resources and effective support offer to those with disabilities and/or learning difficulties to succeed in high-level study;</p>	<p>Staffing time in school liaison + marketing – cost of organising and staging multiple events (<i>some could be in collaboration with UoP</i>)</p>	<p>At least 25% of students on all HE programmes have disabilities and/or learning difficulties</p> <p>Increased confidence amongst learners with disabilities and/or learning difficulties of their value on all HE programmes</p>
<p>b) Personal and financial support Funding to conduct required diagnostics (in-house or medical) and identification of support needs (ISN) Bursaries to assist with challenges faced by students with disabilities and/or learning difficulties All prospective learners also need careful IAG on student funding and financial help</p>	<p>Cost of bursary – <i>bursaries exist but for HE should be above level for other provision and set against more diverse criteria</i></p> <p>Tutor time to provide positive enrolment incl. awareness of bursaries</p>	<p>If personal and financial support can be provided in an equitable fashion, this could improve access for students with disabilities and/or learning difficulties</p>
<p>c) Capital investment Redevelopment to create accessible facilities for students with disabilities and/or learning difficulties</p>	<p>Making facilities fully accessible will add to significant cost of redevelopment</p>	<p>Disability-friendly learning environment accessible to all</p>
<p>d) IT remote access and flexible delivery The accessibility of College HE is increased for students with disabilities and/or learning difficulties by readily available IT devices to assist remote and flexible learning as required</p>	<p>IT hardware costs and staff training – <i>included in Digital Strategy, but specific needs of HE require full attention</i></p>	<p>Effective IT access combined with flexibility deliberately designed into programmes would enable students with particular challenges to sustain their presence on the course</p>
<p>e) Data Detailed data on students with accessibility issues – differentiating disabilities and learning difficulties</p>	<p>Data developer – increased time available to HE (<i>possibility of UoP collaboration</i>)</p>	<p>Capacity to question data helps identify areas for improvement</p>

3.1.3 COPC Risk 3: Representation of students from ethnic minorities

Students from Black, Asian and minority ethnic groups may not have equal opportunity to develop the skills, knowledge and personal confidence required for HE compared to their representation in local communities.

Objective:

- i. To increase the proportion of learners from Black, Asian and minority ethnic groups on COPC higher education programmes, such that it aligns effectively with the city's population.
- ii. All HE programmes have >25% representation from BAME groups.

Intervention Strategy:

Activity	Inputs	Outcomes
a) Cross-city engagement Targeted marketing with suitable imagery to stress the opportunities diverse representation and effective support offer to those from BAME communities;	Staffing time in school liaison + marketing – cost of organising and staging multiple events (<i>some could be in collaboration with UoP</i>)	At least 25% of students on all HE programmes are from BAME communities Increased confidence amongst learners of all ethnic backgrounds
b) Personal and financial support Bursaries to support access and assist with challenges faced by students from BAME communities / IAG to clarify student funding (see PTA_2)	Cost of bursary – <i>bursaries exist but for HE should be higher and with diverse criteria</i> Tutor time to provide positive enrolment incl. awareness of bursaries	If personal and financial support can be provided in an equitable fashion, this could improve access for students from BAME communities
c) Employer engagement Direct sector-specific activity with inclusive businesses and those companies based within ethnic communities to foster applications and employment	Time for engagement with local business	Uptake of higher education amongst BAME communities reflects Portsmouth population
d) Data Detailed ethnicity data with non-White breakdown	Data developer – increased time available to HE (<i>possibility of UoP collaboration</i>)	Capacity to question data helps identify ethnic groups where access is problematic

3.1.4 COPC Risk 4: Representation of students from low participation and/or deprived areas

Students may not have equal opportunity to go to university, because they originate from the more deprived areas of the city or there is no history of higher education in their families, but College should offer a pathway.

Objective:

- i. To consolidate and extend the proportion of learners from low participation and/or deprived areas on HE programmes, such that the College effectively supports the city's population.
- ii. All HE programmes have at least 50% representation from POLAR 4 Q1-2 households, whilst IMD Q5 accounts for <20% of student numbers.

Intervention Strategy:

Activity	Inputs	Outcomes
a) Cross-city engagement Marketing targeted on specific areas of the city to stress opportunities focused induction and effective support offer to those from low participation and/or deprived; combined with a long-term campaign to change perceptions in this group about their educational worth and capabilities.	Staffing time in school liaison + marketing – cost of organising and staging multiple events (<i>some could be in collaboration with UoP</i>)	Strong recruitment record from low participation and/or deprived areas maintained and improved At least 50% of students on all HE programmes from POLAR 4 Q1 households Increased confidence amongst learners from all backgrounds of their value on HE programmes <20% of students from IMD Q5 postcodes
b) Personal and financial support Bursaries to support access and assist with challenges faced by students from areas of deprivation and/or low participation in HE IAG to clarify student funding.	Cost of bursary – <i>bursaries exist but for HE should be above level for other provision and set against more diverse criteria</i> Tutor time to provide positive enrolment incl. awareness of bursaries	If support can be provided in an equitable fashion, this could encourage students whose families are in financial difficulties or have no tradition of HE study to view this as a route to improving their life chances
c) IT remote access and flexible delivery <i>College to provide IT devices otherwise which may be unavailable</i>	IT hardware costs and staff training – <i>included in Digital Strategy, but specific needs of HE require full attention</i>	Effective IT access could enable students with particular challenges to succeed on HE programmes
d) Data Detailed data on home postcodes aligned with POLAR/IMD information to guide access policies	Data developer – increased time available to HE (<i>possibility of UoP collaboration</i>)	Capacity to question data helps identify areas of city where access is problematic

3.1.5 COPC Risk 5: Continuation and Completion

Students may not have equal opportunity to access the support necessary in order to remain on their chosen programmes, to progress effectively through their studies and experience success in higher education.

Objective:

- To decrease the proportion of students who do not successfully complete COPC HE programmes, by providing academic and personal support that improves retention and outcomes.
- Continuation, retention and pass rates are >90% across all HE courses, with >75% distinction/merit as applicable.

Intervention Strategy:

Activity	Inputs	Outcomes
a) Academic support Ensuring that sufficient time is built into programmes to allow for effective personal tutorial (individual 1-2-1 support, group tutorials on relevant topics and seminar discussions)	Tutor time – staffing cost to offer necessary time allocation <i>Good academic support is already an asset of COPC HE courses, but needs to be intensified and individualised</i>	More effective academic support would lead to Increased continuation, retention + pass-rates in line with objective
b) Personal and financial support Bursaries to target those for whom travel to College or childcare make non-continuation more likely IAG to clarify funding.	Cost of bursary – <i>bursaries exist but for HE should be above level for other provision</i> Nursery facilities in College's investment plans could greatly assist with this situation	If personal and financial support can be provided in an equitable fashion, this would assist vulnerable learners to remain on programme and succeed rather than dropping out
c) IT remote access and flexible delivery The attractiveness of College HE is increased by flexible approaches to T+L and reliable IT infrastructure	IT hardware costs and staff training – <i>included in Digital Strategy, but specific needs of HE require full attention</i>	Effective IT access combined with flexibility deliberately designed into programmes would enable students with particular challenges to sustain their presence on the course
d) Data Clearer focus on FT/PT split to allow for inclusive picture of retention + attainment	Data developer – increased time available to HE (<i>possibility of UoP collaboration</i>)	Complex data that can be questioned in diverse contexts helps identify areas for improvement

3.1.6 COPC Risk 6: Learning Resources [PTS_2]

Students may not have equal opportunity to access the level and range of educational resources required to perform well on a higher education programme, and which fundamentally enhance the student experience.

Objective:

- i. To improve the availability of learning resources and facilities that support access, success and progression and significantly enhance the student experience.
- ii. Student surveys show >85% agreement that learning resources have effectively supported HE study across all programmes and/or are +5% above sector average.

Intervention Strategy:

Activity	Inputs	Outcomes
a) Digital strategy Wide-ranging and inclusive strategy to place technology at the heart of HE provides equity of accessibility <i>Plan developed – needs full application to HE</i>	1FTE coaching lead for College with dedicated time for HE Devices made available to all HE students Implementation of required hardware + software packages	Students feel empowered to make maximum use of education technology with readily available resources >85% agreement and/or +5% above sector average: learning resources have effectively supported HE
b) Collaborative support <i>Development of links with UoP faculties – use of VR/AR/AI facilities + lecturer expertise</i>	<i>Negotiation of costed partnership agreement</i> Costs related to vital staff development time	Deep / mutually supportive partnership between city's University + College assists learning on joint HE courses
c) Capital investment Major redevelopment of an existing building on COPC campus to provide a 'Technical and Higher Education Centre of Excellence' with all necessary resources	Significant cost of plans sourced from diverse funding streams to support expansion of HE + T-Level provision	COPC will bring together innovative programmes that offer an exceptional learning experience for all and enable positive progression on to quality higher education

3.1.7 COPC Risk 7: Destinations

Students may not have equal opportunity to progress to an outcome they consider to be a positive reflection of their higher education experience.

Objective:

- i. To identify accurately against national benchmarks that students across all HE programmes have been successfully supported to engage in further study and/or obtain higher-level employment.
- ii. From a 75%+ response rate, at least >65% of all graduates are shown to have continued onto further study and/or obtained higher-level employment within 18 months as an average.

Intervention Strategy:

Activity	Inputs	Outcomes
a) Careers advice Focused, aspirational careers guidance for all HE learners creating a plan to achieve in line with life ambitions	Staffing costs for tutor time (advice in personal tutorial) and specialised careers advisors (<i>incl. University collaboration</i>)	Greater proportion of graduates in post-HE roles Concentration on study outcomes can overlook the positive advantages of HE and ongoing opportunities
b) Employer engagement Expertise in relevant sectors and higher levels of employment and positive promotion with local companies	Training for Curriculum APs / Sales + Marketing Time for relevant engagement with local growth business	>65% of graduates shown to be in valid further study and/or higher-level employment positions

Activity	Inputs	Outcomes
c) Progression mapping Development from individualised plans into identifiable pathways into professions/study	Combination of above with tutors, curriculum teams + business support developing pathways	Clearer appreciation amongst HE learners of progression possibilities
d) Data Creation of internal HE destinations process to overcome ineffective GO data collection	Significant time cost to contact former students	Accurate understanding of current progression allows for improvement strategies

4. Whole Provider Approach

4.1 Strategic Context

City of Portsmouth College demonstrates its full engagement with the Equality Act 2010 through the core values set out in the COPC Equity, Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy. By establishing a clear vision for the entire College community, the policy underlines a commitment to inclusion, eliminating inequalities, advancing opportunity and fostering good relations. In this way, the College aims to make a positive difference to the lives of all, treating everyone with dignity and respect and recognising the worth of each and every individual.

The College believes that the following key objectives are fundamental to the successful implementation of the principles of Equality, Diversity and Inclusion:

- building a diverse workforce that creates positive role models and enriches our community
- creating an inclusive learning and working environment
- taking proactive steps to promote equality of opportunity and inclusion
- enabling everyone to participate actively in learning
- celebrating our diverse and inclusive community both internally and externally
- establishing staff and student groups to support our promotion of equality, diversity and inclusion
- producing publicity that truly reflects the diversity and needs of the local community
- operating fair and appropriate systems for the recruitment and selection of students and staff

City of Portsmouth College works closely with all schools in the city of Portsmouth to promote the benefits of college education across each of its campuses and to raise aspirations amongst learners of all abilities and backgrounds. The College enjoys a sustained and productive relationship with both primary and secondary schools and will need to develop this liaison activity in order to achieve the targets outlined above.

As a keen contributor to the local NNCO project, COPC has participated in many activities aimed promoting HE and at closing the gap for students at risk of not reaching recognised attainment levels. The Southern Universities Network (SUN) has made focused advice and guidance available to students at schools across the Solent area, using skills workshops, mentoring and other interventions designed to build confidence and self-esteem. SUN has been successful in reaching its target audience and has increased the readiness of young people locally to seize the opportunities higher-level study can provide.

In its strategic approach to the issues identified, COPC intends to maintain its involvement in these activities, whilst seeking to expand their positive outcomes through continued collaboration and community engagement. The study support and individualised advice on offer will prepare students more effectively for HE and so impact directly on efforts to improve continuation across all programmes.

4.2 Monitoring progress against delivery of the plan

As we put these plans into operation, it is of course essential to monitor performance carefully and assess the progress being made towards our strategic goals. Through close analysis of the evidence at our disposal, monitoring and evaluation becomes the consistent process, by which the desired continuous improvement might best be achieved. A diverse range of data and accompanying planning procedures indicate when issues arise and helps determine the most effective means of addressing them.

The College SAR will be a pivotal tool in the monitoring cycle, with contributions relevant to HE from all curriculum areas. It features information related to all HE courses and serves throughout the year as a vehicle to determine priorities, guide developments and provide a context for staff training.

The Deputy CEO and Deputy Principal Curriculum and Quality leads the College's quality assurance processes, alongside the Director of Quality, consisting of detailed data collection and analysis and regular reviews of all areas of the College. Learning walks combine with developmental observations allowing colleagues to share scholarship with each other and help to determine the focus of professional training and support.

Curriculum and business managers also meet regularly to review information from these procedures and help decide strategic direction. Progress towards targets will be closely scrutinised by these management groups, as well as by the Governors through termly Learning & Quality and Finance & Resources committee meetings and directly by the Principal at HE Strategy within senior management discussions.

In addition to the College's effective management structure, student consultation and learner voice is an everyday occurrence for higher education programmes at COPC. This is the opportunity for the student body in all its diversity to engage with developments on an ongoing basis. The open relationship that COPC HE has with its students means that they will quickly raise issues and identify weaknesses, if they determine that insufficient progress is being made towards the plan's objectives.

Crucially, there is the rigorous monitoring applied by the University of Portsmouth as our main delivery partner. The University's Associate Pro Vice-Chancellor (Education Partnerships) sits on the College's Higher Education Partnership Group to deal with all quality and developmental issues related to COPC provision.

Monitoring is embedded across the organisation; all senior managers and governors have been appraised of the changes to be implemented through these commitments and their positive implications for the College. There is also an increasing HE presence in discussions at all levels and a genuine recognition of its role in meeting the College mission.

4.3 Student consultation

Learner voice is taken extremely seriously at COPC, including for HE students, with multiple opportunities existing for learners to express their opinions and contribute to programme improvement. These activities are carefully structured into a coherent quality cycle that stretches across the academic year with various surveys (internal and external as applies), programme committees, HE Forum meetings, review discussions and formal Boards of Study. Each of these can allow for effective consultation with students regarding the design, implementation and evaluation of activities.

Across all programmes, course representatives are elected to put forward student views and their influence on developments is widely appreciated. Consultation with these programme reps has, for example, exposed the repeatedly expressed opinion that course tutors at the College are approachable at any time to deal with concerns and support achievement.

In the case of higher education, these processes have highlighted particular issues that the College seeks to develop further as it extends HE provision:

- To ensure full participation in all student voice activities
- To consult widely and engage students directly in programme monitoring and course development
- To extend the use of learning walks to obtain additional observational and informal feedback
- To facilitate learner voice activities that accurately reflect views through diverse contributions
- To demonstrate responsiveness to student comments as part of continuous improvement
- To foster a sense of belonging to an HE student body (including through the creation of a dedicated HE study and recreational space within the capital development at the College)
- To secure high levels of student satisfaction on all courses

The purpose of such detailed and regular student consultation is to ensure that learners of all backgrounds can access and enjoy their studies and achieve to their fullest potential. Gathering student views also provides confidence that COPC is offering the best possible service and high-quality provision to its HE learners. As the College seeks to introduce new programmes within the expansion of higher education, students will continue to be thoroughly involved.

4.4 Provision of information to students

Details of all higher education courses delivered or planned at COPC are to be found on the College website, which is currently undergoing significant improvement as City of Portsmouth College reinforces its presence in the local community and promotes the diverse elements of its curriculum.

As the number of HE programmes increases, the website will continue to provide clear descriptions of each higher-level course and the diverse range of information a prospective student might require, including:

- general advice, online application forms and clearly defined fee structures
- the duration, weighting and credits available for each core and optional module
- approaches to teaching and learning, including the balance of lectures, seminars etc.
- assessment schedules (exams, coursework, practical) to assist students in planning workload
- details of work placement expectations and support with employability
- expectations, including the anticipated independent study time required

Policies of importance to current and prospective students are accessible during the application and enrolment process and throughout teaching programmes.

All policies related to HE are:

- i) readily accessible, transparent, unambiguous and written in plain language;
- ii) clear, accurate and comprehensive;
- iii) specially developed to align with requirements of partner awarding bodies;
- iv) regularly reviewed and updated for national developments;

At the point of offer, COPC will give all applicants the HE Student Contract, as well as providing them with the Student Protection Plan to make them aware of their rights and the support measures in place.