

Access and Participation Statement 2023-24

1. Introduction and strategic aim

1.1 Context

In this Access and Participation Statement 2023-24 (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. The plan reaffirms CoPC's determination to be an inclusive learning environment, where students are always able to pursue their interests and realise their ambitions, and where they feel confident that their needs and well-being are suitably catered for and that 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 the people of our area.

The Social Mobility Commission, which is a non-departmental public body advising the DfE on progress towards greater social equality, 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.*"

1.2 College Background

In August 2021, Highbury College and Portsmouth College merged to form City of Portsmouth College. The new organisation is a general further education college in Portsmouth, Hampshire, England, with a total income in 2021-2022 of c£30m. The College has more than 60 years of experience, during which time it has built a strong reputation for academic, technical and professional programmes. It also has close relationships with those working in various industries to ensure it meets the ever-changing needs of employers in the area.

Prior to the merger, the city's main sixth form centre, Portsmouth College, never sought to engage with the delivery of higher education. This aspect of provision remained the preserve of the more vocationally based institution, Highbury College, with a relatively small number of courses available as either progression routes for FE students or through adult learning.

Student numbers and the range of HE programmes available were on the decline as merger came about and Highbury management took the decision to de-register the college. The centrality of higher education to a curriculum expected to speak to the city's population as a whole was, however, immediately obvious to the leadership of the newly merged City of Portsmouth College and removal from the Register was halted.

The intention to step down from HE was replaced by a renewed vigour to provide the higher-level study vital for the success of both the College and the City of Portsmouth. All stakeholders – staff, governors, business partners, local authorities, the city’s University, and, most importantly of all, student representatives – concurred with this vision for CoPC and felt that now was the perfect time to create a fresh start for higher education at City of Portsmouth College and to set an ambitious trajectory toward HE growth, equality of opportunity and improvements in both performance and diversity. Other providers may have more data and a longer track record to call upon; however, CoPC has the vision and determination to implement the actions arising from this plan and hopes in time also to become a full participant in the Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF) process.

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, alongside the introduction of Higher Technical Qualifications (HTQs) across a range of disciplines, 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 in areas such as construction, health, early years, engineering, accountancy, management, teacher training, civil engineering, digital and the creative industries. 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. To implement its plans, the College will need to invest in systems that can support high-quality provision, as well as the estates, within which it can be delivered. This investment is intended to accompany sustained growth in HE learner numbers and should also help to facilitate an enhanced experience for our students and the wider stakeholders we serve.

Well-researched development ambitions and challenging targets can act as a roadmap for improvement and will help guide the College’s path to being a respected provider of higher education for the whole community.

1.3 The Higher Education Landscape

There have been many developments in HE over recent years with the Higher Education Reform Act, the inception of the Office for Students, and a variety of high-level consultative reports, such as the Augar Review, 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, including through the creation of the Institute for Apprenticeships and Technical Education (IfATE) and a national network of Institutes of Technology.

These numerous national reforms have made the landscape for higher education more fluid and competitive than ever before and providers have rightly been obliged to become more responsive to needs of employers and the local economy, as well as to the expectations of students. The scale of higher education provision at colleges in the Solent region continues to respond to this evolving situation, whilst also reflecting the challenge of real-terms budgetary cuts. Consideration of the many college-based programmes available locally offers an insight both into the competition in the market and the potential areas of opportunity.

It is hoped that through establishing its credentials and setting concrete objectives for improvement, CoPC can turn round a situation where HE provision had to a certain degree lapsed pre-merger into one where it makes a major and valued contribution to the higher education landscape on the south coast, 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.

Initially, development will take the form of full HE courses in the traditional sense; the College is fully aware, however, of future changes within the HE sector that are only now beginning to unfold, including the delivery of microcredentials and the increased accessibility of higher-level study on a modularised basis. CoPC is committed to play its part in creating these new opportunities, in line with the instigation of the Lifelong Loan Entitlement (LLE) and alongside other colleges in the Solent region, and such activity will influence the evolution of higher education at the College.

1.4 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 **C**ollaborative

Be **A**spirational

Be **R**espectful

Be **E**mpowered

Be **S**upportive

1.5 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.

1.6 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, rather than decoupling itself from the registration process, 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 College's key groups, including the Governors' Committee for Learning and Quality (L&Q).

Higher education provision at Highbury College had traditionally been based on programmes delivered with Pearson and similar awarding bodies with sector-related expertise, but latterly the evolving partnership with the University has been consolidated through the franchised offer of a Foundation Degree in Computing.

The relationship between CoPC and UoP is also a significant driver with respect to the people of the city and the wider region having the capacity to access higher education. According to the latest figures published by HESA for 2021-22, the University of Portsmouth had 26,500 students, making it the 32nd largest HEI in the UK and amongst the largest 20% nationally. These numbers have also remained fairly steady over recent years.

The University's success in promoting widening participation, social mobility and diversity is reflected in its student profile. The full-time undergraduate population includes a high proportion of students from state schools (96%), Black, Asian & minority ethnic (BAME) students (29%), students from low-income households (30%), and from low-participation neighbourhoods (30%). The University is proud of its longstanding success in supporting access to HE and is constantly working to provide transformational, high-quality educational experiences for its diverse student population.

In terms of the city's college working in lock step with the city's university, UoP's broad ranging achievements bode well for the successful implementation of targets and objectives, as CoPC will be able to supplement its own ambition by relying on the experience and expertise of its University partners. Indeed, the positive outcomes of operating ever more closely together can already be seen.

Due to the traditionally low numbers of HE students at CoPC, there is relatively minimal information available on destinations through Graduate Outcomes (GO); however, review of recent CoPC internal reports offers an intriguing insight into the College's partnership with the University of Portsmouth, which underline the importance of this relationship in extending access and participation in the city:

- Overall, 27.9% of CoPC learners progressing to HE chose the University of Portsmouth (UoP)
- This equates to 18.4% of all students progressing from the former Highbury College and 30.3% of those moving on from Portsmouth College
- Almost a third of learners electing to study at UoP is a good basis, on which to build more wide-ranging collaboration and to see this proportion increase

- The most popular choice amongst UoP courses was Psychology, often combined with either Sociology or Criminology, due to the popularity of this A Level subject at CoPC
- CoPC students progressed to 21 different programmes at UoP across a wide range of faculties
- The vast majority of students progressing to higher education went to universities in the south of England, with Chichester, Winchester, Bournemouth and Southampton being the next most popular destinations; however, UoP welcomed more than three times as many former CoPC students as any of these other local institutions.

The above figures were based on former City of Portsmouth College students identifying HE as their destination in exit surveys, although part of the new growth anticipated through cooperation with the University of Portsmouth would be amongst learners currently in other destination categories, who might be positively advised to consider L4/5 qualifications in future.

1.7 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.

1.8 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 proximity of Portsmouth and Southampton Docks and the Ministry of Defence Support services, as well as the region being a popular tourist and holiday destination with the many businesses this supports, are further factors in the local demand for skills. The area also has strengths in Advanced Engineering and Electronics, Business and Professional Services, Manufacturing, Construction, Infrastructure Projects, Education, Health, Visitor Economy and the Arts. Higher employability skills are required in all these areas.

The Covid-19 pandemic has led to significant disruption in the labour market with retail, hospitality and the creative sector most significantly affected. The long-term impact on the Portsmouth region is not yet clear; however, forecasts show good employer confidence in most sectors, alongside increased recruitment and a sharp decline in the need for redundancies.

The current situation of the Portsmouth region job market can be referred to as an "inverted pyramid" with fewer low skilled entry level jobs, increasing volumes as the qualification level rises and a large volume of high skilled jobs. There is, however, an increasing skills deficit in the market with the majority of employers finding it hard to recruit to skilled occupations (*reference: Solent LEP skills plan review - January 2022*).

Ross McNally, Chief Executive and Executive Chair of Hampshire Chamber of Commerce, recently stated the following on behalf of the businesses his organisation represents:

“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.”

Against this backdrop of skills shortages, significant development opportunities exist in the area that will in future demand higher-level qualifications from the local workforce. 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 benefits from the excellent transport connections of Portsmouth International Port. In total over the next 25 years, the Solent Freeport is expected to create around 32,000 jobs and generate £3.6BN of Gross Value Added (GVA).

1.9 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

1.10 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. Following a brief outline of the statistical basis for these conclusions, the risks are presented below under the headings of 'Access', 'Success / On Course' and 'Progression', with each risk also being related to the Equality of Opportunity Risk Register (EORR) produced by OfS. Whilst not all of the 12 EORR risks are applicable to the CoPC context, as explained below, association with the EORR demonstrates how risks apparent from the data research conducted by the College are in line with issues prevalent across many higher education institutions.

2.2 Statistical Interpretation

The information used to identify objectives and set targets for development come from a variety of local, regional and national sources. Each is valid in its own right and can help to analyse the experience of students on our programmes; however, the very nature of provision at CoPC as a small, yet growing contribution to the HE landscape inevitably leads to a fluctuating and in some instances misleading view.

This issue is summed up by 'NSF Consulting', an international market research company providing specialist services to government agencies to monitor the effectiveness of funding policy and to review performance. In its official documentation, NSF acknowledges that particular care should be taken in making judgements on statistics from small survey samples by stating:

"It is not unreasonable for funding bodies of government programmes to want hard evidence to justify expenditure or make decisions on future spending. Data is a powerful tool in making such assessments; however, it is particularly important to know where limitations may lie. From recent market research and evaluation studies, a number of problems have been highlighted in the use of statistics, including reading significance into minor discrepancies in small sample sizes. When seeing differences across groups or sub-groups, there is a skill in isolating and explaining whether percentage findings are large enough to be meaningful. Small sample sizes can be misleading and drawing accurate conclusions requires caution."

This appraisal of our achievements and the areas, in which we have targets to attain, is nonetheless a genuine, sincere and robust attempt to recount the position as it stands and to show ambition for strategic development throughout the student lifecycle.

2.2 Data Sources

The OfS Access and Participation Dashboard: In previous years, OfS statisticians have confirmed that a cohort size of 15-20 students was used to ensure the accuracy and validity of figures for both subject disciplines and groups of underrepresented students, when creating dashboard statistics. The result of this understandable basis for statistical analysis is that City of Portsmouth College data appears on relatively few of the graphical representations included in the dashboard.

City of Portsmouth College ILR Data: At CoPC, the data available to managers has been functionally developed to meet the expectations of FE. In order to establish an accurate data set with the level of content required to give any conclusions drawn from it sufficient weight, the majority of statistics used to inform this APS from the College's own records have been accumulated over the five years from 2018-19 to 2022-23 and across the varied L4/5 provision that has been available within specific subject disciplines. For example, at different times over this period the following higher-level Engineering courses have been taught, either part-time to adults or full-time to progressing students, and all are included in the cumulative data assembled:

BTEC HND Diploma in General Engineering; BTEC Higher National Certificate in Engineering;
BTEC Higher National Diploma in Engineering; BTEC HNC Diploma in Mechanical Engineering;
BTEC HNC Diploma in Electrical and Electronic Engineering

University of Portsmouth Data: Detailed statistical evidence from all aspects of provision led to the University receiving a TEF Gold Award, demonstrating the quality support and expertise on offer to partner institutions as they seek to develop their own practice. Where available and applicable to the issues being considered, data from the University is represented in this plan to highlight the broader issues impacting HE locally.

TEF Y2: Core Metrics

In 2017, Highbury College participated in TEF Y2. The College gained a Bronze Award, but was not given a grading in subsequent rounds. The following table shows the core metrics, whilst elements of the provider contextual data for the College's HE provision at the time were also used in the development of this APS.

Indicator	FT or PT	All Years	Year		
			1	2	3
The teaching on my course	FT	81.2	86.2	71.9	86.6
Assessment and feedback	FT	79	85.3	71.9	80.7
Academic support	FT	84.7	86.2	78.6	DP
Non-continuation	FT	SUP	28.2	SUP	SUP
Employment/further study	PT	97.9	DP	DP	DP
Highly skilled employ/study	PT	69.3	76.3	76.9	60.3

Additional sources:

The Office for National Statistics (ONS) / The Learning and Work Institute: Youth Opportunity Index / HESA data analysis, including Graduate Outcomes / MiDES Higher Education Report 2023 / Hampshire Intelligence Dashboard 2023 / Hampshire State of Society Report Sept 2020 / Portsmouth Community Survey 2020 /

2.3 Access

2.3.1 CoPC Risk 1: Gender Balance [PTA_1]

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. Engineering: 97.6% male; Construction: 95.2% male; Computing: 88.4% male;
- ii. Business: 82.2% female; Accounting: 76.4% female;
- iii. The situation is more pronounced where there is a gender imbalance in favour of male students.
- iv. The subject discipline with the best gender balance is Education with 41.7% male and 58.3% female.
- v. The curriculum areas and career choices concerned have a traditional gender bias that is not being challenged by recruitment on to these HE programmes.
- vi. In comparison to the figure above, Engineering UK says that female representation throughout the sector currently stands at 16.5% and is growing year on year.
- vii. Whilst proportions differ starkly, across all higher education provision in the time period studied the number of male and female students is relatively even with 51.9% male and 48.1% female.
- viii. Highbury TEF metrics nonetheless demonstrate a noticeable overall imbalance with 73% male and 27% female students and a more significant difference on part-time courses (81%/19%).
- ix. Data is not readily accessible at present on alternative gender identities, transgender learners or sexual orientation, even though this diversity of students is clearly visible within the College.

EORR Risk 1: Knowledge and skills

Students may not have equal opportunity to develop the knowledge and skills required to be accepted onto higher education courses that match their expectations and ambitions

EORR Risk 2: Information and guidance

Students may not have equal opportunity to receive the information and guidance that will enable them to develop ambition and expectations, or to make informed choice about their higher education options

- x. 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.

2.3.2 CoPC Risk 2: Representation of students with disabilities and/or learning difficulties [PTA_2]

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. Low proportions with a declared disability: Education 5.2%; Business 6.9%; Accounting 8.9%;
- ii. 19.6% of the population of Portsmouth and 25% of school-age students have a declared disability.
- iii. The situation in the city's schools is replicated amongst 16-18 learners at CoPC.
- iv. Given the above figures, only Computing 24.7% and Journalism 23.8% show effective progression for students with disabilities into College-based HE.
- v. At just 6%, Highbury TEF metrics are in line with the low proportions found on some courses.
- vi. The OfS Dashboard shows that in 2020-21 the proportion of HE learners at City of Portsmouth College with a declared disability was 14.6%, whilst the overall figure for the period covered by the data associated with this plan was 10.3%.
- vii. According to ONS data for Portsmouth, 75.2% of the population should be considered 'Not disabled' under the Equality Act – i.e. no long term physical or mental health conditions; however, this figure does not include those with learning difficulties, such as dyslexia, so 25% of students being recorded in this category should therefore be seen as a reasonable target for HE programmes at CoPC.
- viii. Data, which easily differentiates CoPC students in terms of the nature or severity of their disability or learning difficulty, is not currently easily discernible.

EORR Risk 1: Knowledge and skills

Students may not have equal opportunity to develop the knowledge and skills required to be accepted onto higher education courses that match their expectations and ambitions

EORR Risk 2: Information and guidance

Students may not have equal opportunity to receive the information and guidance that will enable them to develop ambition and expectations, or to make informed choice about their higher education options

EORR Risk 3: Perception of higher education

Students may not feel able to apply to higher education, or certain types of providers within higher education, despite being qualified

EORR Risk 5: Limited choice of course type and delivery mode

Students may not have equal opportunity to access a sufficiently wide variety of HE course types

- ix. 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.
- x. 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.

2.3.3 CoPC Risk 3: Representation of students from ethnic minorities [PTA_3]

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. White British students on specific HE programmes at CoPC: Engineering 97.6%; Construction 95.2%; Journalism 90.5%; Accounting 89.3%; Business 88.3%;
- ii. The TEF Y2 metrics for Highbury College paint a similar picture with the proportion of White students being 90.5%, when those for whom the ethnicity is unknown are removed from the equation.
- iii. ONS data states that 85.2% of the population covered by the Portsmouth local authority determines their ethnicity to be White.
- iv. 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.
- v. 25% of students at Portsmouth schools (primary + secondary) were of non-White British ethnicity, whilst in Portsmouth South, this figure rises to 33%.
- vi. The proportion of non-White students on 16-18 programmes at CoPC mirrors that in the city as a whole, but this is not currently reflected in HE, suggesting this is not seen as a form of provision open and accessible to learners from diverse backgrounds.

- vii. HE disciplines not mentioned above have numbers of White British students that compare more favourably with figures for the city; however, no courses reach the level of BAME learners present in Portsmouth's educational community.
- viii. Counter to this situation, the full-time undergraduate population at the University of Portsmouth, recruited at a national level, exceeds the proportion of BAME learners in local education with 29% of students coming from Black, Asian and minority ethnic backgrounds.
- ix. The University shows its commitment to Black, Asian and minority ethnic learners by working with the local community to raise aspirations and encourage attainment, by building a culture of openness and trust that allows for difficult conversations about race, and by providing specialised and targeted support to BAME students throughout their period of study.
- x. As a signatory of the Race Equality Charter, UoP 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

EORR Risk 1: Knowledge and skills

Students may not have equal opportunity to develop the knowledge and skills required to be accepted onto higher education courses that match their expectations and ambitions

EORR Risk 2: Information and guidance

Students may not have equal opportunity to receive the information and guidance that will enable them to develop ambition and expectations, or to make informed choice about their higher education options

EORR Risk 3: Perception of higher education

Students may not feel able to apply to higher education, or certain types of providers within higher education, despite being qualified

- xi. 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 by the messages they have received throughout their schooling.
- xii. The exception to this situation is the relatively buoyant student numbers enjoyed by the University; however, these learners are recruited nationally and UoP has a well-established academic and personal support network aimed specifically at this student group.

2.3.4 CoPC Risk 4: Representation of students from low participation and/or deprived areas [PTA_4]

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 five year period reviewed for this plan, 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): Computing 56.5%; Education 55.7%; Accounting 47.2%;
- iv. IMD recognises Portsmouth South as the most deprived area in the whole of Hampshire.
- v. From the city as a whole, only 3% of 15 year olds go on to be engaged in higher education by the age of 19, according to the Youth Opportunity Index issued by the Learning and Work Institute.
- vi. This data gives an accurate picture of the population pool, on which the College depends for its HE students, especially compared to the large majority of universities, who receive applications from across the UK and internationally. A comparison can be drawn with the University of Portsmouth, whose proportion of students from POLAR 4 Q1 stands at just 15.3% across all faculties.

- vii. The OfS Dashboard shows the overall proportion of HE learners at City of Portsmouth College from IMD Q1-2 households in 2020-21 to have been 39.1%, although the gap between IMD Q1 + Q5 is increasing, suggesting that the nature of the cohort is changing and becoming more affluent.
- viii. The Highbury TEF Y2 data showed a total of 46% of students coming from POLAR 4 Q1-2.

EORR Risk 2: Information and guidance

Students may not have equal opportunity to receive the information and guidance that will enable them to develop ambition and expectations, or to make informed choice about their higher education options

EORR Risk 3: Perception of higher education

Students may not feel able to apply to higher education, or certain types of providers within higher education, despite being qualified

- ix. 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.

2.3.5 EORR Risks

The risks to equality of opportunity identified in the EORR for the 'Access' element of the academic lifecycle have been attributed to the CoPC Risks emerging from the College's assessment of performance and are referenced under each of the headings above. Application success rates is not an issue that affects the College's current level of HE provision and, therefore, the only EORR Risk not seen as immediately applicable to the selected risks for this area is as follows:

EORR Risk 4: Application success rates

Students may not be accepted to a higher education course, or may not be accepted to certain types of providers within higher education, despite being qualified

2.4 Success / On Course

2.4.1 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. Consideration of this metric always needs to recognise the important difference between retention, the on-programme loss of students, and continuation, the progression of students from one year of a multi-year programme to the next, although similar issues impact both.
- ii. The following figures relate to retention in particular subject disciplines across the period considered; some appear acceptable (Computing 91.9%; Construction 90.5%;), whilst significant concerns exist in others (Journalism 33.3%; Education 54.3%; Accounting 77.2%; Business 78.5%;)
- iii. The retention problem on HE courses at CoPC is most pronounced in terms of part-time provision and this is particularly noticeable where delivery is mixed; for example, Engineering shows 88.1% retention across all provision, yet 100% for full-time students. Those subject disciplines that are entirely part-time, such as Education and Journalism, have the lowest retention figures.
- iv. Continuation data across two-year programmes (e.g. HND, FdSc) is not readily accessible at present.
- v. The OfS Dashboard does have some information with respect to continuation at CoPC, indicating for example that in 2019-20
 - only 65.7% of students living in IMD Q1 postcodes and 84.2% of learners with disabilities continued onto the subsequent year of their HE programmes
 - the equivalent figure for White students was 83.9%, but no data exists for other ethnicities
- vi. 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. National Student Survey (NSS) data exists for 2020-21 and an internal survey of HE learners based on NSS was conducted in February 2023*. The following responses are largely positive and enlightening with respect to the student experience and its impact on the issue of continuation/retention.

Question group	NSS 2020-21		2022-23*	NSS 2022
	CoPC	Sector average	CoPC	Sector average
Teaching on my course	91.9%	79.9%	93.3% v good	80.1% agree
Learning opportunities	88.7%	79.0%	80% always	79.4% agree
Assessment and feedback	88.2%	68.6%	97.5% always	68.5% agree
Academic Support	94.1%	73.5%	100% always	73.9% agree
Organisation and management	90.2%	69.7%	90% excellent	69.9% agree
Learning Resources	70.1%	73.6%	40% agree	80.9% agree
Learning Community	91.2%	66.5%	100% str. agree	68.2% agree
Student Voice	89.2%	66.4%	94% always	66.5% agree
Overall	94.1%	75.4%	90% always	76.3% agree

EORR Risk 6: Insufficient academic support

Students may not receive sufficient personalised academic support to achieve a positive outcome

EORR Risk 7: Insufficient personal support

Students may not receive sufficient personalised non-academic support or have sufficient access to extracurricular activities to achieve a positive outcome

EORR Risk 8: Mental health

Students may not experience an environment that is conducive to good mental health and wellbeing

EORR Risk 9: Ongoing impacts of coronavirus

Students may be affected by the ongoing consequences of the coronavirus pandemic

EORR Risk 10: Cost pressures

Increases in cost pressures may affect a student's ability to complete their course or obtain a good grade

- vii. The majority of EORR risks related to the 'Success/On Course' element of the academic lifecycle can be readily attributed to the issue of continuation/retention, since as stated above, the academic and personal support available will inevitably determine the extent, to which certain individuals feel that they are coping with and succeeding on a particular HE course. Developing the effectiveness of such support as HE provision at the College grows and ensuring that learners continue to appreciate the efforts made on their behalf will, therefore, inform the intervention strategies to be implemented.
- viii. Mental health is a problem that is becoming ever more prevalent across society and education, and colleges are very definitely affected by the increase in this issue. At the same time, struggles resulting from the coronavirus pandemic and cost pressures associated with the current economic situation may well account for many of the learners who have been lost to courses, not least those where learners have elected at the outset to engage in part-time study.
- ix. Closely associated with the continuation/retention issue, is completion. If students fail to continue into the second phase of two-year programme, they do not by implication complete their studies, and also show up in the retention figures for the course. The other aspect of this problem, however, concerns those who finish the programme, but do not ultimately achieve – or at least not at the level that their inherent potential suggests they should.
- x. The OfS Dashboard information for completion is very old and there are no details about completion. Similarly, CoPC data systems do not easily allow detailed investigation of the differential between these three elements and this will need to be addressed, if the causes are to be fully understood.
- xi. Review of table above would suggest that students are reasonably content with the teaching, assessment and support that they have been receiving.
- x. Attainment figures for some subjects across the period of review may appear confused as in most cases they combine courses that are graded distinction/merit with those that operate on a simple pass/fail basis; nonetheless, some interesting deductions can be made:
 - Reasonably good proportions of awards with distinction/merit can be seen in each instance where this applies, particularly if considered that not every programme contributing to these figures over a five-year period would necessarily have had that option – Computing 55.4%; Construction 57.1%; Engineering 65.5%;
 - The large proportion of 'no grade' in Education (31%) corresponds to the low retention rate commented on above.

2.4.2 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. Admittedly against a small sample, if a single response to NSS from Highbury/CoPC students stands out (*see above*), it is that for Learning Resources. Across both iterations of the survey (national in 2020-21 and internal in 2022-23), this is the only category that scores below the sector average.
- ii. This outcome may be accentuated in the latest survey since a good proportion of those questioned are studying towards FdSc Computing, for which state-of-the-art facilities are a valid expectation on the part of learners. Nonetheless, the need to have high-quality resources that are readily available for use by students is a prerequisite of effective HE provision.

EORR Risk 11: Capacity issues

Students may not have equal opportunity to access limited resources related to higher education, such as suitable accommodation

2.4.3 EORR Risks

The risks to equality of opportunity identified in the EORR for the 'On Course' element of the academic lifecycle have been attributed to the CoPC Risks emerging from the College's assessment of performance. These are referenced under each of the headings above, which between them cover all EORR Risks fully.

2.5 Progression

2.5.1 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.

- i. In the 'Progression' element of the academic lifecycle, available data, or rather the lack of it, allows the CoPC Risk to directly echo that on the Equality of Opportunity Risk Register – *EORR Risk 12*.
- ii. Some interesting conclusions have been possible from an analysis of the general CoPC destinations information with particular reference to progression to the University of Portsmouth. These are detailed in section 1.6 above.
- iii. The number of students involved and the challenges of contacting graduates for information mean that details supplied by Graduate Outcomes seldom offers great insight for college-based HE and this is certainly true in terms of City of Portsmouth College.
- iv. With a 60% response rate and little clarity on the nature of employment or study engaged in, the GO data provided does little to establish the success or otherwise of the College in seeing its graduates progress to significant graduate employment or further higher-level study.
- v. There is clearly a tendency for students to go into employment rather than further study, which would suggest that progression to degree top-up programmes is relatively minimal. If correct, this would represent a disappointing outcome for HE at the College, even if L4/5 qualifications have a value of their own in terms of the skills gap.

EORR Risk 12: Progression from higher education

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

2.6 Student Characteristics

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

As is often the case with college-based HE, CoPC has welcomed a substantial proportion of mature students: Education 94.1%; Accounting 88.6%; Business 83.0%; Construction 81%; Journalism 57.1%; Engineering 51.2%; Computing 38.4%; Whilst a case can be made to adjust this balance in favour of younger students, this should naturally occur from the extension to provision envisaged in the College HE Strategy.

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 latest available figures show only 30% of care leavers achieving top grades at GCSE and this in itself presents a challenge for continuation to higher-level study. The University of Portsmouth has nonetheless introduced a Care Leaver Covenant to address this matter from the perspective of national recruitment and CoPC hopes to work in cohort with the University to develop activity on a more local basis.

As the City of Portsmouth College continues to evolve its policies and record systems post-merger, increased attention is rightly being paid to student groups, such as those eligible for free school meals in past six years and learners with mental health conditions. There are also efforts being made to improve College data on sexual orientation, transgender issues and faith groups. At the moment, however, statistical information is not sufficiently available, or at least easily questionable, to make detailed conclusions in terms of targets.

Similarly, the capacity to interrogate intersections of disadvantage also needs development, and it is for this reason that there is significant overlap in our approach to resolving inequalities affecting diverse groups and also explains why the intervention strategies outlined below specify advancements in the College’s data capabilities as a vital aspect of monitoring progress on objectives and identifying further improvement issues.

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 both as statements of intent to guide interventions and as ambitious, clearly-defined, outcomes-based, numerical targets designed to secure continuous improvement in outcomes for students over the duration of this plan, as required by the regulatory notice and advice. For each combined objective, the subsequent intervention strategy outlines how actions undertaken by the College are expected to achieve the desired improvement.

3.1.1 CoPC Risk 1: Gender Balance [PTA_1]

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 by 2027-28 and as an average across the intervening years.

Intervention Strategy:

Activity	Inputs	Outcomes	Cross action
<p>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</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>No programme has >70% of single gender Increased confidence amongst learners of their value on all programmes, irrespective of gender</p>	<p>PTA_2 PTA_3 PTA_4 PTS_1 PTS_3</p>

Activity	Inputs	Outcomes	Cross action
b) Capital investment Redevelopment (see PTS_2) 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	PTA_2 PTS_2
c) Employer engagement Sector expertise supports mixed-gender employment	Time for engagement with local business	Fewer preconceptions of gender-specific roles	PTA_3 PTS_3
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	PTA_2/3/4 PTS_1/3
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - target student groups: all higher education provision at the College whilst ensuring that evaluation allows for specific interpretation of different student groups and between FT/PT programmes - numbers of participants: 30-300 – all HE students with total number increasing - new or existing activity / collaborative approach – <i>see italics in text</i> Applies to all interventions 			

Evaluation:

Activity	Outcomes	Method(s) of evaluation	Summary of publication plan
a)	No programme has >70% of single gender as average	Close review of gender balance on application	Annual data included in HE SAR with appropriate actions
b)	Attractive industry-specific learning environment	Annual review of campus strategy + forward planning	Staged action-plans for progress + funding of redevelopment
c)	Fewer preconceptions of gender-specific roles	Regular student voice activities in quality cycle	Identified in marketing resources + progress review to L+Q
d)	Accurate data focus on gender balance	Constant review of efficacy of data	Annual data included in HE SAR with appropriate actions

3.1.2 CoPC Risk 2: Representation of students with disabilities and/or learning difficulties [PTA_2]

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 programmes have at least 25% representation from students with disabilities and/or learning difficulties by 2027-28 and as an average across the intervening years.

Intervention Strategy:

Activity	Inputs	Outcomes	Cross action
<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; combined with a long-term action to change perceptions in this group about their educational worth and capabilities (see PTA_1 for delivery)</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>PTA_1 PTA_3 PTA_4 PTS_1 PTS_2 PTS_3</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>PTA_3 PTA_4 PTS_1</p>
<p>c) Capital investment Redevelopment (see PTS_2) 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>PTA_1 PTS_2</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>PTA_4 PTS_1 PTS_2</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>	<p>PTA_1/3/4 PTS_1/3</p>

Evaluation:

Activity	Outcomes	Method(s) of evaluation	Summary of publication plan
a)	Increased access: 25% of students with disabilities or learning difficulties	Ensuring full declaration and accurate diagnosis provides specific data	Annual data included in HE SAR with appropriate actions
b)			
c)	Accessible facilities support learning	Annual review of campus strategy + forward planning	Staged action-plans for progress + funding of redevelopment
d)	Positive response to IT access + device availability	Regular student voice activities in quality cycle	Quality team data + summary of student voice outcomes
e)	Accurate data allows disability/learning split	Constant review of efficacy of data	Annual data included in HE SAR with appropriate actions

3.1.3 CoPC Risk 3: Representation of students from ethnic minorities [PTA_3]

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 at least 25% representation from BAME groups, spread appropriately across all ethnicities, by 2027-28 and as an average across the intervening years.

Intervention Strategy:

Activity	Inputs	Outcomes	Cross action
a) Cross-city engagement Targeted marketing with suitable imagery to stress the opportunities diverse representation and effective support offer to those from BAME communities; combined with a long-term campaign to change perceptions in this group about their educational worth and capabilities (see PTA_1 for delivery)	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 from all ethnic backgrounds of their value on HE courses	PTA_1 PTA_2 PTA_4 PTS_1 PTS_3
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	PTA_3 PTA_4 PTS_1
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	PTA_1 PTS_3

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	PTA_1/2/4 PTS_1/3
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Evaluation:

Activity	Outcomes	Method(s) of evaluation	Summary of publication plan
a)	Increased access: 25% of students from BAME communities reflects city + College population	Regular review of ethnic breakdown on all courses compared to city/College	Annual data included in HE SAR with appropriate actions
b)		Discussion with employers and local authority	Identified in marketing resources + progress review to L+Q
c)			Annual data included in HE SAR with appropriate actions
d)	Accurate data allows breakdown of ethnicities	Constant review of efficacy of data	Annual data included in HE SAR with appropriate actions

3.1.4 CoPC Risk 4: Representation of students from low participation and/or deprived areas [PTA_4]

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 by 2027-28 and as an average across the intervening years.

Intervention Strategy:

Activity	Inputs	Outcomes	Cross action
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 (see PTA_1 for delivery)	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	PTA_1 PTA_2 PTA_3 PTS_1 PTS_3
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	Cost of bursary – <i>bursaries exist but for HE should be above level for other provision and set against more diverse criteria</i>	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	PTA_2 PTA_3 PTS_1

Activity	Inputs	Outcomes	Cross action
IAG to clarify student funding (see PTA_2)	Tutor time to provide positive enrolment incl. awareness of bursaries		
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	PTA_2 PTS_1 PTS_2
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	PTA_1/2/3 PTS_1/3

Evaluation:

Activity	Outcomes	Method(s) of evaluation	Summary of publication plan
a)	Maintaining and growing student numbers from POLAR/IMD Q1 areas	Regular review of home postcodes + data updates	Annual data included in HE SAR with appropriate actions
b)			
c)	IT provision supports deprived students	Regular student voice activities in quality cycle	Quality team data + summary of student voice outcomes
d)	Data identifies origin of learners on all courses	Constant review of efficacy of data	Annual data included in HE SAR with appropriate actions

3.1.5 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.

Objective:

- i. To decrease the proportion of students, who do not successfully complete CoPC higher education programmes, by providing academic and personal support that improves retention and outcomes.
- ii. Continuation, retention and pass rates are >90% across all HE programmes by 2027-28 and as an average across the intervening years, with >75% distinction/merit as applicable.

Intervention Strategy:

Activity	Inputs	Outcomes	Cross action
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	PTA_2 PTA_3 PTA_4 PTS_3
b) Personal and financial support Bursaries to target those for whom travel to College or childcare	Cost of bursary – <i>bursaries exist but for HE should be above level for other provision</i>	If personal and financial support can be provided in an equitable fashion, this would assist vulnerable learners to remain on	PTA_2 PTA_3 PTA_4 PTS_1

Activity	Inputs	Outcomes	Cross action
make non-continuation more likely IAG to clarify funding (see PTA_2)	Nursery facilities in College's investment plans could greatly assist with this situation	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	PTA_2 PTA_4 PTS_2
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	PTA_1/2/3 PTS_3

Evaluation:

Activity	Outcomes	Method(s) of evaluation	Summary of publication plan
a)	>90% continuation, retention and pass rates	Regular in-year review of retention data	Annual data included in HE SAR with appropriate actions
b)	Reduction in withdrawals due to financial difficulties	Value for money assessment for bursaries	Rationale to COO for bursary levels in subsequent years
c)	'Learning resources' >85% +5% above sector average	Responses to 'learning resources' in surveys	Action-plans from outcomes of student satisfaction surveys
d)	Complex data identifies areas for improvement	Constant review of efficacy of data	Annual monitoring return

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 by 2027-28.

Intervention Strategy:

Activity	Inputs	Outcomes	Cross action
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	PTA_2 PTA_4 PTS_1

Activity	Inputs	Outcomes	Cross action
b) Collaborative support Development of links with UoP faculties – use of VR/AR/AI facilities + lecturer expertise	Negotiation of costed partnership agreement Costs related to vital staff development time	Deep / mutually supportive partnership between city's University + College assists learning on joint HE courses	Possible data development with UoP
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	PTA_1 PTA_2

Evaluation:

Activity	Outcomes	Method(s) of evaluation	Summary of publication plan
a)	>85% agree effective learning resources for HE	Regular student voice activities in quality cycle	Annual data included in HE SAR with appropriate actions
b)	Regular interaction with UoP supporting IT	Faculty-based record of University contacts	HEPG statement to Corporation
c)	Successful development of HE-specific facilities	Annual review of campus strategy + forward planning	Staged action-plans for progress + funding of redevelopment project

3.1.7 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.

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	Cross action
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	PTS_1
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	PTA_1 PTA_3

Activity	Inputs	Outcomes	Cross action
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	PTS_1
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	PTA_1/2/3 PTS_1

Evaluation:

Activity	Outcomes	Method(s) of evaluation	Summary of publication plan
a)	>65% graduates in further study or higher-level jobs	Effective internal HE destinations process	Annual data included in HE SAR with appropriate actions
b)			
c)	Students know how to access opportunities	Tutorial discussions	Individualised progression plans
d)	Valid progression data for all graduates	Constant review of efficacy of data	Annual data included in HE SAR with appropriate actions

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 Equality and Diversity 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.

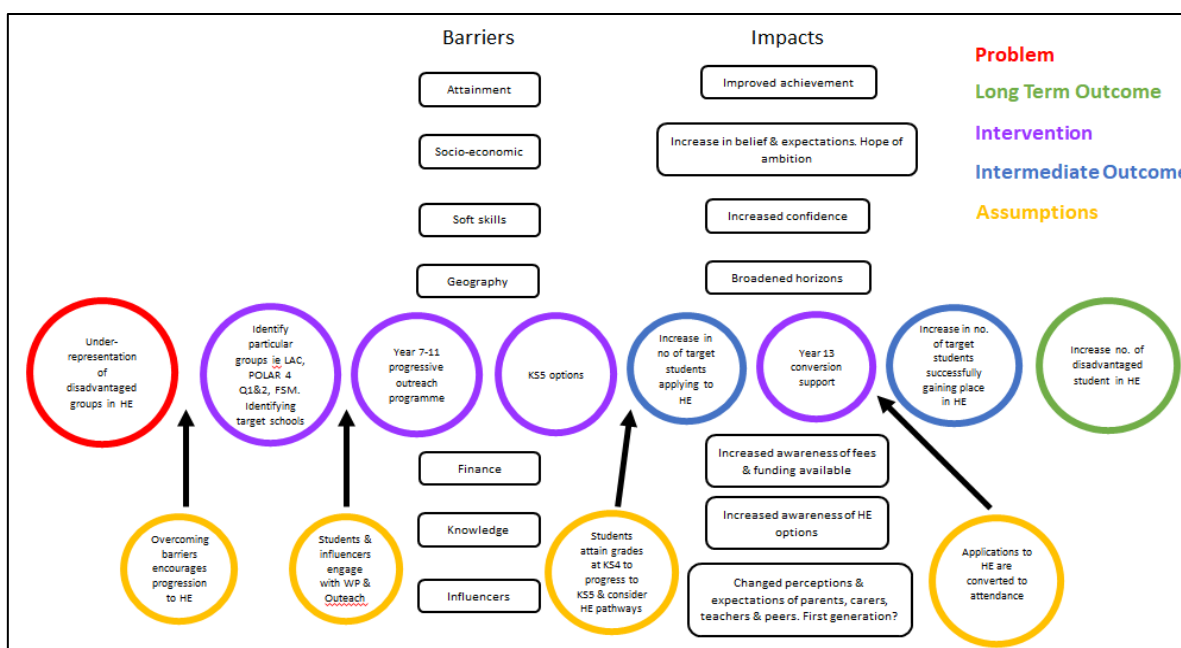
SUN has been successful in reaching its target audience and has increased the readiness of young people locally to seize the opportunities higher-level study can provide.

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 throughout the five years of the plan. The study support, individualised advice and personal development on offer will prepare younger students more effectively for HE and so impact directly on efforts to improve continuation across all programmes.

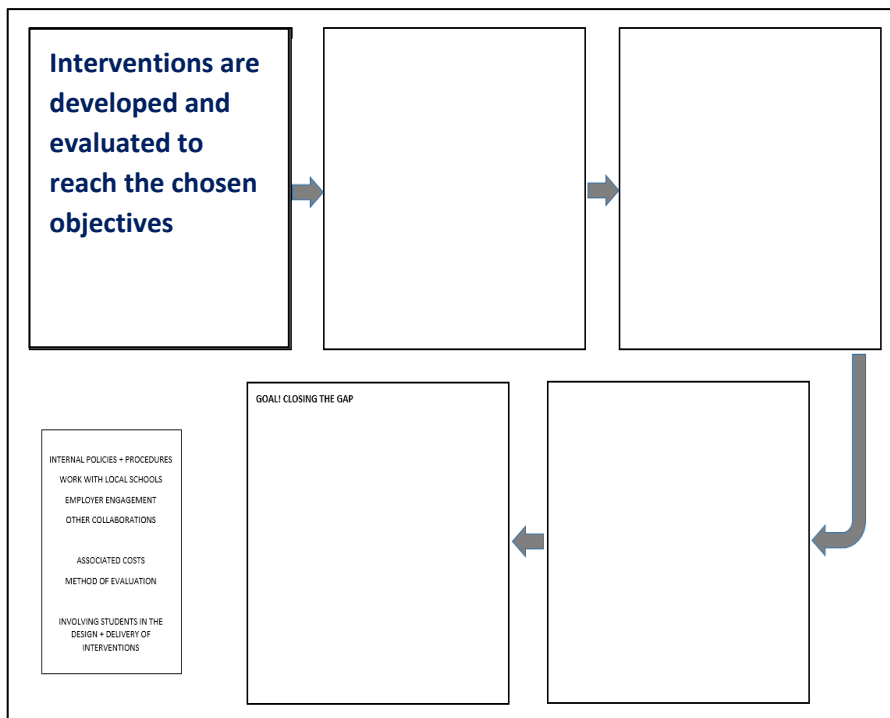
Providing appropriate learning skills both before and within HE programmes will, however, not only assist younger applicants, but also those returning to education, as more mature learners are often also in need of such support in order to succeed and perform well on their courses.

The strategic context of the College’s approach to addressing equality of opportunity is further explained in section 1 above.

4.2 Theory of Change



Measures to be implemented with the aim of meeting ambitious objectives for target groups, have been developed and will be constantly reviewed under a theory of change procedure. Above is a diagram, which articulates a theory of change applicable to target students in low participation areas, but the same format can be used for other strategic goals. College staff, students and local business representatives will scrutinise this theory of change as the plan evolves.



Working in close collaboration with UoP, the document shown here is similar to one used to gather ideas from mixed groups of managers and tutors during staff training. Colleagues discussed the best approach in seeking to improve access, success on course and progression for underrepresented groups. Along with statistical analysis, this process is one way of ensuring that CoPC staff engaged with delivering HE had the chance to contribute to objectives, as well as the definition of strategic measures to close gaps for target students.

4.3 Evaluation strategy

Developing high quality approaches to evaluation as part of CoPC's whole provider strategic approach is crucial when striving for significantly improved outcomes and in order to have confidence that the activities implemented offer the greatest benefit to target groups. All research needs to be conducted with the necessary ethical, safeguarding, legal and risk considerations and effective evaluation commences at the planning stage. Involving the use of statistical, survey and interview tools, a vital part of this process is close reflection on all available information and data, as well as thorough self-assessment of performance and practice against measurable criteria.

City of Portsmouth College has been successful in acquiring funding from the DfE to develop its HE provision through the Skills Injection Fund. Capital and resource funding will lead to the introduction in 2023-24 of two new HTQ programmes in Construction and Healthcare and the College is presently preparing its bid for the next round of funding to continue this development. At the same time, intensive work is being undertaken between teaching teams at the College and the corresponding faculties at the University of Portsmouth for the approval of new L4/5 programmes in a wide variety of disciplines, as the strategic development of higher education at the College continues.

In both these instances, initial and ongoing evaluation has been a critical element. The very rigorous approval process implemented by the University demands full justification of the purpose of all new provision, its relationship to existing courses, both at the University and across the partnership network, and the potential demand from prospective students. Analysis of a wide range of information from different stakeholders and the local community during the development of new courses has led the academics charged with evaluating the application to arrive at conclusions based on quantitative and qualitative evidence from multiple sources.

This familiarity with evaluative practice has been put to good use in developing the contents of this plan and will also prove invaluable during the implementation of proposed interventions to assess whether actions taken are having the desired and anticipated impact on target groups. Whilst assessment of performance and the widest consultation underpins the context of this plan, evaluation of its potential success during delivery will determine how practice can be refined and further improved to eliminate inequality across the student lifecycle. This will involve constant referral to the original aims and objectives of planned activities and robust mechanisms for reflecting on the theory of change principles established at the outset in order to make any required alterations to implementation.

Evaluation is nonetheless another area where cohort size can have a disproportionate effect on the validity of findings. If statistics can offer mixed messages about the groups and lifecycle stages most deserving of investment, when based on small numbers, the same is true about many attempts to evaluate support programmes at a provider level. Every presentation given by the College in local schools is evaluated similarly; however, extensive evaluation frameworks with control groups and multiple approaches is difficult for small providers with limited capacity to realise.

It is, therefore, our partnership with the University of Portsmouth that ensures our ability to evaluate programmes and activities thoroughly. UoP has a team of dedicated evaluation specialists, well versed in the appropriate form of narrative or empirical structure to assess each activity and our close association with the University will facilitate our engagement with these experts.

The SUN network has been thoroughly reviewed over recent years, in part by this team, providing a wealth of data about the enthusiasm for specific activities and the degree of student learning. Results have shown that participants from primary schools to FE colleges have found events motivational and that the influence on student opinions of higher education has been significant. Equally, however, some of the programme's initiatives have been brought to an end prematurely due to insufficient evidence of impact.

City of Portsmouth College has benefitted substantially from this evaluation support and will continue to do so as the landscape develops over coming years.

4.4 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 HE SAR will be a pivotal tool in the monitoring cycle. All HE programmes and student groups are engaged in its production and it 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 and Quality committee meetings and directly by the Principal at HE Strategy within senior management discussions. At the same time, developments will be constantly held under review in line management discussions between the Head of HE and the Deputy Principal, as well as at regular meetings of the HE Implementation Group with programme leaders for all courses in the company of data, IT, learning resource and marketing managers. Any concerns emerging with regard to securing identified targets can therefore be easily escalated.

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. Student representatives will demand that revised actions are implemented to address shortfalls, as well as encouraging greater focus on those areas that have both proven to be successful and met with their approval.

Finally and 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 (see section 1.6 above) to deal with all quality and developmental issues related to CoPC provision. These interactions will have an increasing basis in data collection and analysis, as the University evolves its own processes.

Primary sources used to inform our monitoring and planning process will include future NSS outcomes, in addition to survey data regularly being produced about groups internally. These effective measures of quality and student opinion will provide us with information to monitor progress and investigation of outcomes will help to shape our year-on-year improvement strategy and the work we engage in with programme managers, teaching staff and delivery partners. Detailed analysis assists the wide-ranging review mechanisms we have with the University, whilst many conclusions will have a direct relevance to access, success and progression.

Monitoring is embedded across the organisation, and as the APS articulates the College's values and reflects its ambitions, ensuring the aims of the plan are achieved is a concern shared by all. 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 of the organisation and a genuine recognition of its role in meeting the College mission.

4.5 Student consultation

Learner voice is taken extremely seriously at CoPC, including for its 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 its 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 produce a detailed student written submission on an annual basis
- 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.

The HE SAR mentioned in the previous section will be a pivotal tool in the monitoring cycle and learner voice is central to that process, providing the chance to place learners at the heart of College action-planning and decision-making. All HE student groups are engaged in its production and it serves throughout the year as a vehicle to determine priorities, guide developments and provide a context for staff training.

Governors are equally interested in hearing directly from students about their experiences, including those on the growing higher education provision. Procedures are therefore already being put in place to elect a new student governor to take on the responsibility of representing HE on governing committees with this influential role being seen as an important element of the student voice process that underpins our delivery.

4.6 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. This includes details of the bursaries available to higher education students to promote access and participation, with the College's intention being to focus this financial support more directly on underrepresented groups in coming years.

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, City of Portsmouth College will give all applicants the HE Student Contract, as well as providing them with the HE Student Charter and the Student Protection Plan to make them aware of their rights and the support measures in place. Internet-based guidance is complemented by a full range of published materials, including information leaflets about each course.

Please also refer to 'Targets, investment and fees' (FIT)