

Higher Education Access and Participation Statement

2024/25

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Contents

1. Purpose:.....	3
2. Aims:.....	3
3. Background and Context:.....	4
4. Ambition and Strategy:	6
5. Targets:.....	7
6. Performance indicators:	8
7 Widening Access Activities:	12
8 Widening Participation and Student Support and Activities	15
9. Evaluation of access and participation activity:.....	17
10 Consultation:	19
11 Summary:	19
12 Monitoring & Review	19
13. Glossary.....	20

1. Purpose:

- 1.1 The Office for Students (OfS) mandates that all higher education providers, create either an Access and Participation Statement or Plan. Given that Tameside College is registered under the OfS's approved category for fee levels up to the basic amount, an Access and Participation Statement is appropriate.
- 1.2 This Access and Participation Statement sets out Tameside College's commitment and plans to improve accessibility and participation in higher education (HE) courses. Ensuring the support and guidance required is in place for all prospective and current students, regardless of their background, characteristics or starting point.

2. Aims:

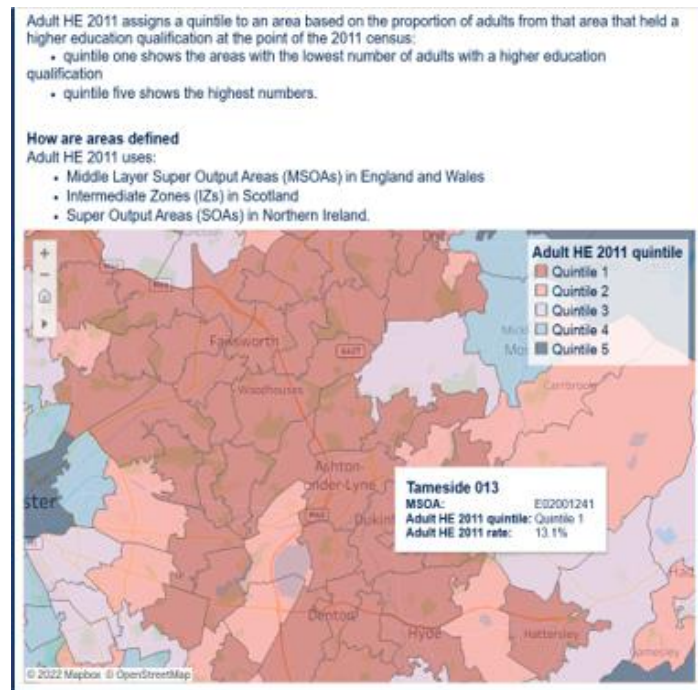
- 2.1 To improve the accessibility of higher education to all prospective students and to support participation on quality programmes that encourage success and positive progression, actively improving social mobility for local residents.
- 2.2 Tameside College is committed to widening access and participation in higher education amongst under-represented groups in the local area (see section 5.3). This is inherent in its mission to 'transform lives by offering first class education and training to improve employability and generate economic prosperity'.
- 2.2 Widening access is at the forefront of everything that we do. The college's engagement with the local community is long-standing and deep-rooted, and plays a key role in raising aspirations within the borough and engaging with groups who would not otherwise enter, experience and ultimately benefit from higher education.
- 2.3 The college's aims to provide a range of relevant high quality and employment-focused higher education courses. It is committed to making higher education more easily accessible to a wide range of students. This includes providing progression opportunities for existing students, targeting potential students from areas where there are low higher education participation rates, and the up-skilling/ re-skilling of the local community.

- 2.4 The college reviews its higher education provision annually to ensure that it benefits local employers, and prioritises employability. By providing part-time, flexible programmes to meet local needs, the curriculum is aligned to local skills gaps identified within the Greater Manchester region. This is a key priority of the college along with the promotion of lifelong learning.
- 2.5 In accordance with the [Equality Act 2010](#) the college is committed to promoting equality, diversity and inclusion in all aspects of the higher education provision offered. As part of this commitment, the college strives to ensure that the higher education experience offered is fair, unbiased, and free from any form of discrimination or prejudice. Ensuring that every student regardless of their background or characteristics is treated with respect, dignity, and fairness.

3. Background and Context:

- 3.1 Based in Ashton-under-Lyne, Greater Manchester, Tameside College is a further education (FE) college delivering a small number of higher education (HE) courses in the Tameside area. The HE offer at Tameside College makes an important contribution to widening HE access and participation especially for students with non-traditional qualifications or limited HE choices. The cost effective nature and flexible delivery models enable Tameside College to meet the needs of local students and employers.
- 3.2 Tameside is ranked as the 28th most deprived of 317 Local Authority districts in England. It is the 5th most deprived borough in Greater Manchester. 29 of the borough's 141 Lower Layer Super Output Areas (LSOAs) are in the most deprived 10% of LSOAs nationally and 11 are in the most deprived 5% of LSOAs nationally.

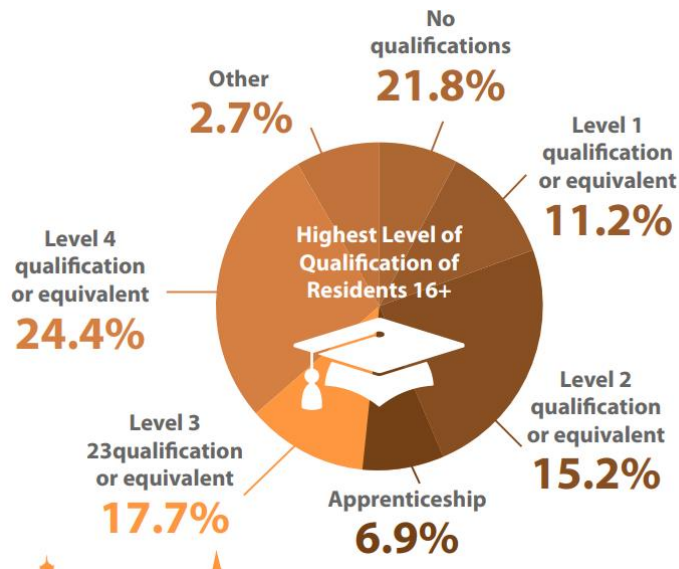
- 3.3 College data shows that post-16 participation is currently lower than the national average. In the area around the college, young participation in higher education is in quintile 1; and of the 19 wards in Tameside, 13 are on the lowest quintiles ((POLAR4) quintiles 1 and 2) for the country for participation in higher education for young people.



- 3.4 Tameside has an employment rate of 57.1% with 28.5% of Tameside's jobs paying below the Living Wage (compared to 20.75% in Greater Manchester). Tameside has been identified as a Priority EIA (on low attainment and high rates of economic disadvantage) by the DfE in March 2022.¹
- 3.5 The unemployment rate for the Tameside region is 4% which is slightly higher than that for the North West region (3.9%) and the national average (3.6%). However the majority of jobs available locally are low paid with the average weekly pay for both males and females being below the national average. 18.2 % of households were recorded as workless in 2021.

¹ (TMBC demographics, data, statistics and population data - <https://www.tameside.gov.uk/demographic-information>)
(ONS 2021 census <https://www.ons.gov.uk/visualisations/censusareachanges/E08000008/>)
https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1149245/Priority_Education_Investment_Areas_-_selection_methodology.pdf

- 3.6 Compared with both the North West and with Great Britain as a whole, the Tameside region has a less qualified workforce with only 24.4% of people qualified to level 4 or equivalent, compared to 36.6% in Greater Manchester and 54.8% Nationally. Tameside has an above average proportion of residents holding no qualifications 21.8%².



- 3.8 These statistics are what drive the college to support the aspirations of the local community and the needs of employers to educate and retain a locally sourced highly qualified and skilled workforce.
- 3.9 The college is well placed to build on the contribution made to the widening participation and social mobility agenda, and is focused on providing an inclusive and supportive learning environment.

4. Ambition and Strategy:

- 4.1 It is the ambition of Tameside College to offer an outstanding learner experience which is closely aligned to the College Values:
- It is my responsibility
 - Work together
 - Value and respect each other
 - Act with integrity

² <https://www.tameside.gov.uk/getmedia/91d26566-60b2-4285-ba59-a09892f6cac8/Tameside-in-Profile-2023-Updated.pdf>

4.2 This will be accomplished within the context of the college's strategic objectives for Higher Education:

1. Develop vocational pathways from full time provision
2. Respond to the needs of local employers
3. Identify accreditation routes and develop higher education through partnerships
4. Deliver higher education provision that is affordable
5. Deliver higher education provision that is accessible to all

4.3 By embedding these strategic objectives, the college remains focused on continuing to widen access to higher education from a range of under-represented, targeted groups including:

- People from areas of low higher education participation
- People from low-income backgrounds
- Mature learners
- Students of particular ethnicities
- Disabled students
- Care leavers

4.4 The college aims to widen participation by supporting these groups of students to achieve on their chosen programme of study.

5. Targets:

5.1 Our student profile shows we are already successful in meeting the widening access and participation agenda. The college remains focused on monitoring and assessing the effectiveness of the activities in place.

5.2 The college has set an ambitious five year target, to see an increase in the percentages of under represented groups enrolled on HE courses by 2028, the progress of these will be monitored annually (section 9 for further details).

5.3 Due to the small numbers on some courses and some none-undergraduate courses for many of the courses no data is available so internally generated data will be used.

5.4 Monitoring progress will be based on the OFS KEY performance indicators displayed on the OFS dashboard data. The indicators we will monitor will be;

- Student enrolments statistics
- Student retention rates
- Student attainment rates
- Student progression rates

6. Performance indicators:

6.1 Student enrolment statistics

6.1.1 Students enrolled on higher education courses at Tameside College come from a variety of age groups. Different subjects, delivery models and curricula that attract learners from particular age ranges, for example the cohort on Engineering programmes is predominantly male, part time, and mature.

6.1.2 In 2023-24, 83% of students were mature students (aged 21+) at the point of entry, this is inconsistent to national trends.

Table 1 : Comparison of HE student by age

Academic year	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24
Mature (21+) (%)	81	80	83
under 21 (%)	19	20	17

6.1.3 The HE student population is predominantly part time and has been for many years.

In 2023-24, 89% of students studied part time and a significant number of these were in part-time or full-time employment. The college aims to continue to improve access of part-time learning through increasingly more flexible modes of study and the further development of online and blended learning. The college will continue to offer

programmes that are sympathetically timetabled to accommodate the high number of students who either work, or have caring responsibilities.

Table 2 : Comparison of HE student by full time attendance

Academic year	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24
Full time (%)	17	15	11
Part time (%)	83	85	89

6.1.4 The ethnic profile of the student population reflects the local region in which the majority of HE students live, 88% of students were recorded as White British in 2023-24.

Table 3: Comparison of HE student by ethnicity

Academic year	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24
White/ British (%)	83	83	88
Pakistani (%)	4	5	3
Other White (%)	2	2	3
White/Black Caribbean (%)	2	Less 1	0
Other (%)	9	9	5
Not provided (%)	Less 1	Less 1	Less 1

In the last academic year there has been a slight 2% decrease (from 10% to 8%) in the number of students who declared a support need or disability. These students were offered the same extensive support as other students at the college. This may be in the form of practical solutions such as special equipment or software of working with curriculum and/or ALS (Additional Learning Support) staff on strategies for learning or a support plan.

Table 4 : Comparison of HE student by declared disability

Academic year	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24
No disability declared (%)	92	90	89
Declared disability (%)	7	10	8
Not provided	1	Less 1	3

6.2 Retention and attainment rates

6.2.1 Historically overall retention and attainment rates of HE students have been consistently high. Of the handful of students who leave their course, the majority withdraw at the start of the academic year or within the first year of study (table 5 and 6). This is often due to the unrealistic expectation students have of studying a HE course.

In 2023/24 94% of all student were retained to the end of the academic year and 97% of these were completers (students due to complete their programme and gain an award).

Table 5 : Comparison of HE student retention and attainment

Academic year	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24
No enrolled	211	240	218	185
Retention (%)	89	90	89.4	94
Attainment (%)	85	86	87	TBC

6.2.3 In 2022-23 138 completers were enrolled on HE courses, of these 131 (94.9%) retained and 87% attained (achieved a qualification). This represents a significant increase in retention from the previous year. In 2023-24 this retention rate was improved further to 97% for completers. Attainment rate is TBC as late Assessment Boards have not yet taken place.

Table 6 : Comparison of HE student (completers) retention and attainment

Academic year	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24
No of completers	128	136	138	107
Retention (%)	91	89.7	94.9	97
Attainment (%)	82	83	87	TBC

6.2.4 In recent years there was an increase in the overall achievement rates for learners who completed on all courses. This in part can be attributed to the student support mechanisms, and close monitoring of students and their progress.

6.2.5 The college's level of achievement is particularly significant given that in 2023-24 51% of HE students enrolled were from POLAR³ quintiles 1 and 2 areas and only 2% were from quintile 5. This is a measure of the proportion of young people who participate in higher education, (POLAR) classification groups areas, across the UK. POLAR classifies local areas into five groups, or quintiles. Quintile one shows the lowest rate of participation. Quintile five shows the highest rate of participation.

Table 7 : Comparison of HE student POLAR data

Academic year	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24
Quintile 1	31	27	18
Quintile 2	33	34	33
Quintile 3	12	18	23
Quintile 4	16	17	21
Quintile 5	8	5	2

6.3 Progression rates

Destination data for 2022-23 identifies that 75% of students reported they were engaged in working or further study 6 months after completing their Tameside College course, only 6% of respondents were unemployed which is similar to the previous year. Students were employed overwhelmingly in professional occupations and while the destinations were diverse, they are reflective of the curriculum offered.

Table 8 : Comparison of HE student destination data

Academic year	2021-22	2022-23
HE or further study (%)	10	6
Work or Apprenticeship	82	69
Unemployed (%)	7	6
No data	2	19

³ [About POLAR and Adult HE - Office for Students](#)

7 Widening Access Activities:

7.1 Community Outreach

- 7.1.1 The college recognises that it has a key part to play in raising aspiration and supporting the academic attainment of young people in the local community.
- 7.1.2 The college has a long history of engaging with a wide range of activities with local schools, to raise the aspirations of students to believe that they can progress into higher education. The college will continue to invest time and resources to enable the development of strategically targeted long-term outreach activities.
- 7.1.3 The college hosts the Greater Manchester Higher Regional Hub for Tameside, Stockport and Oldham. Within this context, the college works with a wide range of stakeholders, including local schools, post-16 providers and alternative providers, to engage with young people from year 9 upwards. This activity is targeted to certain wards where progression to higher education is less than that indicated by attainment at Key Stages 3 and 4 and involves outreach work both within the college and the local community, working with young people and key influences from the target wards.

7.2 Internal Progression

The college has clear progression routes to higher education for vocational students.

The college runs a variety of internal progression activities to widen access to higher education including:

- the promotion of progression for internal students through targeted progression and careers events and talks
- support with UCAS applications and taster sessions
- provide opportunities to incorporate the development of knowledge, behaviours and skills required to progress to higher education.

7.3 Access courses /alternative pathways

7.3.1 The college believes in broadening of the Access to Higher Education portfolio to provide opportunities for students from diverse backgrounds and levels of education to progress to higher level study this includes;

- hosting employer network events and study skills support for students at level 3.
- offering access courses that act as an entry point to higher education. These courses act as an access point for those from disadvantaged backgrounds and under-represented groups.

7.3.2. Among those who access the college's higher education provision, there is a wide range of entry qualifications, including Access to Higher Education programmes, Level 3 Diplomas and A Levels. At induction all students are offered support with the transition to academic study at levels 4 and above.

7.3.3 If potential students are not ready for HE or do not meet the entry criteria, we have a range of bridging courses including Access to HE.

7.3.4 The college offers programmes at a lower cost so that members of the local community and employers have a more affordable alternative route to access higher education. This is particularly attractive for those students who wish to remain local and/or work whilst studying. Tuition fees are reviewed annually to ensure students will get a more affordable, high quality learning experience.

7.4 Recruitment and Admissions

7.4.1 The college uses targeted marketing to encourage under-represented groups to apply for higher education courses.

7.4.2 At the first point of contact, the college provides information about higher education opportunities to potential students in a range of recruitment activities.

These may include

- taster sessions,
- work-shops,
- open events.

Information is also provided through the website and other forms of print and digital marketing.

- 7.4.3 The college operates a fair HE Admissions and Recruitment Policy which clearly and transparently sets out the entry criteria onto courses and helps to provide advice and guidance to direct an applicant appropriately. This includes information about entry routes via non-traditional qualifications and previous experience and training.
- 7.4.4 we aim to attract students from non-traditional backgrounds, however, in order to facilitate this, all HE students will have an interview and a literacy and numeracy assessment if they do not have the pre-requisite entry qualifications.
- 7.4.5 Professional and work experience in their chosen subject will also be considered if applicants do not hold the pre-requisite entry qualifications.
- 7.4.6 The admissions process is centrally administered and all prospective higher education students are interviewed to assess their suitability and support needs. The policy and procedure reinforce the college's commitment to achieving equal opportunities for all its students.
- 7.4.7 The college ensures that all students have an opportunity to reach their full potential and are not discriminated against during the admissions processes or throughout their college experience. It does so through the work of the highly experienced and qualified admission team who work closely with academic teams and support services.
- 7.4.8 Applications are welcomed from all students, and the college's admissions process assesses each application individually to ensure that students are placed on an appropriate programme of study.

7.5 Employer outreach

The college has long standing relationships with local and regional businesses. Curriculum teams work closely with these stakeholders when introducing additional pathways in order to support skills shortages. The aim of this is to;

- provide an affordable HE programme to stimulate demand from new students, including those already in work
- provide opportunities for employers to upskill their own workforce.

8 Widening Participation and Student Support and Activities

8.1 Support

8.1.1 The college offers students both academic and pastoral support, through the central Student Services Team. This support is offered to students, whether they are progressing through from a fulltime level 3 programme at 18, returning to study after a long gap, or studying a higher level qualification linked to their job role.

8.1.3 The Student Services Team offers a wide range of impartial advice and guidance on a range of services including course information, application and enrolment procedures, health and welfare, learning support, finance, travel and accommodation.

8.1.4 Curriculum staff provide individualised and intensive support to students including regular tutorials and small teaching groups which enable the close management of academic progress.

8.2 Induction

8.2.1 Pre-entry information is given to students as well as pre-entry activities in the months prior to the start of the course. These activities provide appropriate information about academic expectations, regulatory policies and types of support (including financial) on offer.

- 8.2.2 The transition to higher education can be more difficult for students with additional needs or those with limited family support. Central to a successful transition is a robust and comprehensive induction process.
- 8.2.3 The college induction programme supports an effective transition and is developed and delivered by academic teams in conjunction with support teams. It is reiterated through a students' tutorial sessions which also develops their key and transferable skills.
- 8.2.4 The college believes that widening participation has to be addressed at various stages of the student cycle, not just in relation to pre-entry activities or at the point of admission.

8.3 Attendance and Retention

- 8.3.1 To aid retention, and ensure students have a smooth transition into higher education, the college induction programme introduces students to aspects of higher education such as support available, college expectations and HE academic integrity rules.
- 8.3.2 The college monitors attendance and retention rates of its students very closely. The college will maintain this vigilance and act responsively if gaps appear.

8.4 Curriculum

- 8.4.1 Recruitment and retention is aided by the college's own curriculum planning process, this aims to provide seamless progression for existing students onto a range of higher education courses.
- 8.4.2 Built in exit points at Level 4, 5 and 6 to allow students to attain a range of levels of qualification and study at the pace that is right for them.
- 8.4.3 The college offers a range of Access to Higher Education qualifications to prepare students returning to study to access higher level study. HE Students receive structured study skills

support and smaller class sizes providing them with a more supported, personalised learning journey.

8.5 Employability

- 8.5.1 Local Enterprise Partnership priorities and Labour Market Intelligence inform the ongoing development of the curriculum and the opportunities that are provided to students. As a consequence, students benefit from high quality, employment-focused courses that meet local, regional and national priorities.
- 8.5.2 The active engagement with employers, validating partners and community groups, enables the creation of a tailor-made curriculum offer that addresses economic, community and social needs.
- 8.5.3 The college is committed to continue investment in the support of students into employment or further study. Employability is embedded in to curriculum delivery and is delivered through bespoke workshops and clinics linked to future progression and employment opportunities. This impacts positively on the numbers of students progressing into employment.
- 8.5.4 The college offers flexible delivery models in order to widen participation and to address skills gaps identified by local businesses. Programmes are designed to facilitate this flexible delivery to enable those in work to attend on a part-time basis.

9. Evaluation of access and participation activity:

- 9.1 The OFS access and participation data dashboard explores data by different stages of the student lifecycle. These are:
- Access: the profile of students entering higher education.
 - Continuation: the percentage of first year students who continue their studies after 12 months (full-time and apprenticeship students) or 24 months (part-time students).

- Completion: the percentage of first year students that are in active study or have qualified after four years (full-time and apprenticeship students) or six years (part-time students).
- Degree outcomes (attainment): the number of students who were awarded first or upper second-class degrees.
- Progression: the number of students progressing to professional or managerial employment, further study or other positive outcomes, 15 months after gaining their qualification. This data represents the results of the Graduate Outcomes (GO) survey from 2017-18 onwards.

9.2 We will use indicators based on these to evaluate and report on the impact of our access and participation activities, these include:

- Student enrolments statistics
- Student retention rates
- Student attainment rates
- Student progression

Student enrolment statistics will be analysed and compared with previous years. These will be presented to the ASC on a yearly basis drawing attention to any improvements or trends.

Student retention rates are monitored as part of the yearly HE Quality Cycle and will be analysed as part of the college performance review process. This data will be presented to the ASC on a yearly basis for scrutiny.

Student attainment rates are monitored as part of the yearly HE Quality Cycle. This data is included in the annual SED which is presented to the ASC, Senior Leadership Team and Governing body for scrutiny.

Student progression destination data will be collected and presented in the college annual SED.

10 Consultation:

HE Students and staff have been consulted during the writing of this Access and Participation Statement. Access and participation is included on the standard agenda at student representative meetings. As part of the Induction process student groups are informed of the existence of the Access and Participation Statement and its location on the College's [website](#).

11 Summary:

- 11.1 The college takes its commitment to widening access and participation seriously. This Statement outlines the focus and activities for 2024-25. College data that will be used to identify the proportion of HE students that are from under-represented groups and the college will demonstrate, using data any improvements or trends in widening the access and participation of these groups.
- 11.2 Student retention and success will remain a priority, and the college will continue to work to further develop and improve the whole student experience so that we can meet the priorities outlined in the College's Higher Education Strategic Plan.
- 11.3 The college will revise it's Access and Participation Statement annually to ensure that it reflects the current student cohorts and local needs as applicable. Any revisions will be approved by the Academic Standards Committee and the approved revised document will be made available on the College [website](#).

12 Monitoring & Review

- 12.1 This Access and Participation Statement undergoes annual review and potential amendment by the Academic Standards Committee.
- 12.2 The HE Quality Officer conducts annual monitoring processes to assess the effectiveness and impact of the Access and Participation initiatives. This is presented to Academic Standards Committee for analysis.

13. Glossary

Attainment- the academic outcome that a student achieves at higher education.

Completers- students due to complete their programme and gain an award

Continuation - refers to students who continue their studies into their second, or later, years of study.

Participation rates Of Local AREas (POLAR)- a way of measuring areas or neighbourhoods across the UK according to the participation of young people in higher education from those areas or neighbourhoods. You may see this referred to as high or low progression areas.

Progression- students leaving one course at the college and going into a higher level course.

Underrepresented Groups-refer to groups which are currently underrepresented in higher education.

Target Groups- This refers to underrepresented groups which have particular gaps in equality of access, success, progression, continuation or attainment.

Widening Access Activity- Any activity which takes place to encourage underrepresented groups to apply to and enter higher education. This may include programmes or activities which take place at a university or in schools or colleges and could range from a talk by a current student, to a summer school which takes place over several weeks.

Widening Participation- Removing the barriers to higher education, including financial barriers, that students from lower income and other under-represented backgrounds face.