

# HIGHER EDUCATION ACCESS AND PARTICIPATION STATEMENT 2022-23



## **Purpose:**

To provide an Access and Participation Statement that supports the delivery of Tameside College's Higher Education Plan which includes the widening of participation and access to higher education.

## **Statement:**

Tameside College is committed to widening participation in higher education amongst under-represented groups and this is inherent in its mission to 'transform lives by offering first class education and training to improve employability and generate economic prosperity'. Widening participation is at the forefront of everything that we do. The College's engagement with the local community is long-standing and deep-rooted, and we play 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.

The College's ambition to be outstanding at all points of the student life-cycle. It is passionate about providing high quality and employment-focused higher education, and is committed to making it easily accessible to a wide range of students. This includes the provision of progression opportunities to existing College students, targeting potential students from areas where there are low higher education participation rates, and the up-skilling/ re-skilling of the local community. The College reviews its provision annually to ensure that it benefits local employers, and it prioritises employability in its higher education portfolio, providing part-time, flexible programmes to meet local needs. The curriculum is linked to skills gaps identified within the Greater Manchester region.

Aligned to this, a key priority of the College is the promotion of lifelong learning.

## **Context:**

The College is located in one of the most deprived areas of the country and data shows that post-16 participation in Tameside is currently lower than the national average. In the area around the College, young participation in higher education is in quintile 1; from the 19 wards in Tameside, 13 are on the lowest quintiles ((POLAR4) quintiles 1 and 2) for participation in higher education for young people. The College serves the wider Tameside Metropolitan Borough which has a population of approximately 227,100. The College's operational context is that of an ageing population, with the life expectancy for both men and women low. Females outnumber males by approximately 3100. The ethnic background of the borough is predominantly white British (90.93%) and 21% of the population is registered as having a disability. 5.8% of the population is economically inactive.

Tameside is the 23<sup>rd</sup> most deprived borough nationally out of 317 local authorities (IoD2019 data) with 13.4% of Tameside residents living in income-deprived households

In January 2021, there were 37,366 pupils in Tameside schools, 5328 at key stage 4. Historically, fewer pupils achieve grades 4+ in maths and English GCSE than nationally; in 2019 62.1% of pupils achieved grades 1-4 comparative with the national average of 59.4%. Tameside has been identified as a Priority EIA by the DfE in March 2022. Compared with both the North West and with Great Britain as a whole, the Tameside region has a less qualified workforce with only 26% of people qualified to NVQ level 4.+ compared to 38.5% in GM and 43.5% in England. Tameside has an above average proportion of residents holding no qualifications 7.5%. The unemployment rate 3.9% for the Tameside region is slightly below that for the North West region 4.6% and the national average 4.4%. Jobs available are fairly low paid with the average weekly pay for both males and females being below the national average (563.9 against 613.1 for males and 480.2 against 558.1 for females). The most recent data on claimants of out-of-work benefits shows that Tameside is higher than the North West and nationally at 4.9% (4.4% in the North West and 3.9% nationally).

These statistics drive the College to support the aspirations of the local community and the needs of employers to educate and retain a highly qualified and skilled workforce. It 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. The College, through its academic and pastoral support, enables students to realise their full potential, whether they are progressing through from a fulltime level 3 programme at 18, are returning to study after a long gap, or are studying a higher level qualification linked to their job role.

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The Local Enterprise Partnership priorities and Labour Market Intelligence informs the ongoing development of the curriculum and the opportunities we provide for our students, and as a consequence, students benefit from high quality, employment-focused courses that meet local, regional and national priorities. The active engagement with employers, validating partners and community groups, enables us to tailor the curriculum offer to address economic, community and social needs.

## **Practice:**

Students enrolled onto higher education programmes at the College come from a variety of age groups. Different subjects, modes of delivery and curricula attract learners from particular age ranges, for example the cohort on Engineering programmes is predominantly male, part time, and mature. In 2021-22, 81% of students were aged 21+ at the point of entry and 47% of full-time learners were under 21. Against national trends, the College's higher education student population is predominantly part time and has been for many years. In 2021-22, 76% of the cohort were part time and a significant number were employed. The College will continue to improve access of part-time cohorts through increasingly flexible modes of study and the further development of online learning. The College will also continue to offer programmes that are sympathetically timetabled to accommodate the high number of students who either work or have caring responsibilities.

The ethnic profile of the student population reflects the region in which the majority of students originate; 83% of the students on higher education programmes identify themselves as White British in 2021/22. Over the past year, there has been a slight decline in the number of students recording themselves as Asian. There has been a 2% increase to 8% in the number of students who declare a disability. There are no significant gaps in the attainment rates of different cohorts of learners and the overall attainment rates remain high. The College's level of achievement is particularly significant given that over half of all higher education students (64%) come from POLAR quintiles 1 and 2 (only 8% come from quintile 5).

Among those who access the College's higher education provision, there is a wide range of qualifications that students attain in order to progress onto their programmes, including Access to Higher Education programmes, Level 3 Diplomas and A Levels. 40% of the cohort have non-tariff entry qualifications and only 13% present with medium or high tariff entry qualifications. All students are offered support with the transition of academic study at levels 4 and above.

The College is committed to continue investment in the support of students into employment or further study through the work of the central Matrix-accredited Student Services team. Employability is embedded within curriculum delivery and is delivered through bespoke workshops and clinics linked to future progression and employment opportunities, all of which impacts positively on the numbers of students progressing into employment. Destination data identifies that for 2019/20, 60.2% reported they were engaged in working or further study 6 months after completing their programme, 4% of respondents were unemployed which has remained static for a number of years. The employment level of students overwhelmingly in the professional occupations, and while the destinations are diverse, they are reflective of the curriculum offer.

## **Ambition and strategy:**

The ambition to offer an outstanding learner experience is closely aligned to the College's Core Values:

- Respect for learners and staff
- Equality and Diversity
- Success for all
- Professionalism
- Excellence in Service Delivery
- Commitment
- Transparency

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Within the context, the College's Strategic Objectives for Higher Education are fivefold:

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

Embedded within these strategic objectives, the College remains focused on continuing to recruit students to higher education from a range of under-represented 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

The College will also continue to support these groups of students to achieve on their chosen programme of study. Our student profile shows that we are successful in meeting the widening participation agenda and the College strategy remains focused on accessing and engaging with these cohorts.

Recruitment onto College programmes is aided by the College's curriculum planning which provides seamless progression for students onto a range of higher level qualifications. We offer a flexible curriculum in order to widen participation and to address skills gaps and there are exit points at Level 4, 5 and 6 to allow students to attain a range of levels of qualification. This flexibility of the offer, along with the price allows the residents of Tameside to access high quality, higher level provision. Programmes are designed to facilitate a flexible delivery to enable those in work to attend on a part-time basis.

The College offers programmes at a lower, more affordable cost so that the local community and employers have access to affordable higher education, and the provision targets students who wish to remain local and/ or work whilst studying. Tuition fees will be reviewed annually, but all students will get a high quality learning experience that will be appropriate for higher education in a further education context. The College also offers a range of Access to Higher Education qualifications to prepare students returning to study to access higher level study. The College offers students structured study skills support and smaller class sizes so they have a personalised learning journey.

## **Support:**

The College provides individualised and intensive support to students. There are regular tutorials and small teaching groups enable the close management of academic progress. Pastoral issues, where they arise, are dealt with swiftly. College-based support is complemented by lectures, seminars, practical classes and individual tutorials alongside meetings with the wider support services. The Student Services Department 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.

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. Applications are welcomed from all students, and the College's individually with all students to ensure that they are placed on an appropriate programme of study. At the first point of contact, the College provides information about higher education opportunities to potential students in relation to a wide range of outreach activities. These may include activities such as taster sessions, work-shops, open events or competitions in schools, colleges, workplaces and community venues. It also provides information through the website and other forms of print and digital marketing.

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The College operates a fair Admissions Policy which clearly and transparently sets out the entry criteria for entry onto programmes and helps to provide advice and guidance to direct an applicant appropriately. This includes non-traditional qualifications and experiential learning. 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. The College ensures that all students meet their full academic potential and are not discriminated against during the admissions processes or subsequently in college. It does so through a highly experienced and qualified admission team who work closely with academic teams and support services.

The transition to higher education can be more difficult for students with additional needs or with limited family support. Central to a successful transition is a robust and comprehensive induction process. This includes information given to students as well as pre-entry activities in the months prior to induction. These activities provide appropriate information about academic expectations, regulatory policies and types of support (including financial) on offer. The College has a planned induction programme which supports 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.

### **Activities:**

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; both of which are key in arming young people with the skills necessary to access the range of educational opportunities open to them. The College have been a sponsor of Droylsden Academy, a local 11-16 school since October 2009. The College and the school work in partnership to raise levels of attainment and the aspirations of all students. A key objective to the partnership is to contribute to the regeneration of the area by retaining young people in education and training post-16 and therefore reduce the number of NEETS in the borough.

The College has a long history of engaging with a wide range of local schools, both primary and secondary to raise aspirations and equip learners with the belief that they can progress through further education and into higher education. The College will continue to invest time and resources to enable the development of strategically targeted long-term outreach activities. It has undertaken a range of 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; the 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; hosting employer network events to promote higher education; provision of study skills to support students at level 3 and then in the transition to higher education and a range of events held in collaboration with local schools to raise aspiration and attainment or to signpost careers.

The College currently hosts the Greater Manchester Higher regional hub for Tameside, Stockport and Oldham which is funded through the National Collaborative Outreach (NCOP) monies. 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.

### **Consultation:**

Students have been consulted with during the writing of this Access and Participation Plan through the elected Student Representatives. Access and participation is included on the standard agenda at student rep meetings. As part of the Induction process on the Student groups have been informed of the Statement and its location on the College's website and learning platform.

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## Summary:

The College takes its commitment to widening participation seriously. This Access and Participation Plan outlines our strategic priorities for 2022-23. Our data identifies that we have a high proportion of students from under-represented groups and that the College can demonstrate significant success in widening participation. Student retention and success will remain core, and the College will work to further develop and improve the whole student experience so that we can meet the priorities outlined in the Higher Education Strategic Plan.

The College will revise this Access and Participation Statement annually to ensure that it reflects the current students and addresses student cohorts as applicable. Any revisions will be approved by the Curriculum and Standards Committee and the approved revised document will be made available on the College website.

This Access and Participation Statement can be found here:  
[http://www.tameside.ac.uk/Pages/Higher\\_Education/Default.aspx](http://www.tameside.ac.uk/Pages/Higher_Education/Default.aspx)

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## Review/Change History:

Version	Description/Detail of Update & Name of Person who has carried out Update	Approval	Date of Issue
2	Helen Booth	n/a	September 2022