

Access and Participation to Higher Education Statement

About Higher Education at Lakes College

Lakes College is General Further Education (GFE) College offering a wide range of provision in the Higher Education sector. The College is strategically committed to promoting its higher education programmes to students from all social groups. To ensure it achieves this, the college has a [Higher Education Strategy](#) which outlines a range of activities directed towards raising aspirations, eliminating barriers to entry and enhancing the student experience. We welcome and encourage applications from students from all backgrounds and alongside published [entry criteria](#) we also value and consider students previous work and life experience.

The Higher Education programme offer includes a wide range of Foundation Degree, HNC/D, Honours Degrees, Degree Apprenticeships and professional level courses that employers and individuals require to meet their higher level learning and skills needs.

The College has an experienced and dedicated team of staff teaching and supporting HE provision, with focus on; high quality Learning, Teaching and Assessment; high quality learning environment; ensuring the range of programmes offered have differing access points, ensuring offer is linked to opportunities in the labour market and employer requirements.

Support and resources

Academic support

Students are provided with a range of academic support during their study. This includes providing specific subject based and study skills support to ensure students reach their potential regardless of their starting point. The college also has a dedicated Additional Learning Support Team and a range of assistive technology and expertise to enable effective support for any student requiring this to progress their chosen study path successfully.

Pastoral support

All students enrolled onto Higher Education courses are provided with access to a named Student Mentor. Their role is to support students with respect to their broader needs and development as needed.

Alongside this, the college has a dedicated Student Services team who can provide advice and referral in a range of support areas to include finance, health and well-being.

Material support

Where students experience financial hardship, the college can make awards to support their access to Higher Education and give guidance on financial matters where needed.

Advice and guidance

The College provides high quality impartial advice to all students to aid effective decision making in line with an individual's personal and career goals, this is available from both college support staff and from the effective partnerships we have in place with our partner Universities and specialist advice agencies. The college successfully holds [Matrix Quality Standard](#) accreditation for provision of advice and guidance which includes a regular programme of events to accommodate student participation needs.

Widening participation activities

According to the most recent [POLAR4 dataset](#), participation rates for 18 year old Students into higher education is low (quintile 1 or 2) for the majority of post codes in West Cumbria. In this respect, the college is part of a Cumbria collaborative programme which aims to promote access to HE for all, both independently and through this partnership, the college undertakes the following widening participation engagement activity;

- High quality support and advice on the UCAS application process
- Promotion through partnerships with local schools
- Specialist targeted open evenings to provide information and give advice
- Parent/Guardian engagement events
- Employer engagement events
- Promotion of progression routes to existing college students
- Dedicated employer engagement team who provide 1:1 specialist advice to employers
- Bespoke marketing campaigns and activity which promote inclusivity

Monitoring and Reporting

As part of the Self-Assessment of Higher Education, the college evaluates patterns of access and achievement to identify any `gaps`.

For **2019/20**, the following `participation` gaps were identified:

- Although the trend for students starting Higher Education **19 or under** at the college has improved during 19-20, this age group still only represent 13% of the HE cohort. This mirrors the most recent POLAR4 data which indicates that participation in Higher Education for West Cumbrian 18 year-olds is low with most post codes with quintile 1 and 2.
- Decline in the proportion of **females** studying Higher Education courses at the college has decreased further to only 27.8%.
- The proportion of students from **ethnic minority** backgrounds participating in higher education at the college remains well below the local population at 1.1%.
- There has been a levelling off of students from a **disadvantaged backgrounds** undertaking HE courses at the college (36 in 19-20).
- There has been a steady rise in the numbers of students accessing Higher Education with a self-declared **learning difficulty** which is now at 7.9% (up from 3.6% in 17-18).

For 2019/20, the following `achievement` gaps were identified:

- Learners between the ages of 21-30 are less likely to be retained on the course (90.9%) compared to those under or above this
- Females are less likely to remain on their HE programme compared to females.

Our Ambitions and Actions to increase participation and achievement:

Following on from the self-assessment above, we are committed to increasing participation and achievement for the following groups of Students as follows:

- Encouraging students to start their Higher Education programme earlier (**21 or under**) and to increase participation especially where this is low within post codes with quintile 1 and 2 (POLAR).
- Addressing the decline in female students accessing Higher Education especially within Engineering, Computing and Sport by promoting participation through targeted events
- Increasing the proportion of learners from ethnic minority backgrounds to be at least representative of the local population by promoting diversity and the recruitment of a wider range of social, cultural and educational backgrounds
- Increasing the proportion of learners from disadvantaged backgrounds undertaking higher education courses particularly through working with local schools where progression to Higher Education rates are low
- Increasing access and progress within higher education for those students with learning difficulties by better emphasising the support available in the college through advice and guidance
- Ensuring that any achievement gaps are incorporated within course level strategies and action plans