

# Middlesbrough College

## Access and Participation Plan

2021-22 to 2025-26

### Introduction

Middlesbrough College is a regional community based College, situated in the town of Middlesbrough in the Tees valley. Covering over 300 square miles, the Tees Valley comprises five local authority areas including: Darlington, Stockton-On-Tees, Hartlepool, Middlesbrough, and Redcar & Cleveland. The Tees Valley is highly urbanised, with 90% of the population in urban areas. The population is concentrated in the five main town centres (35%) with the remaining population located in the suburbs, in smaller settlements, or rural areas. [[TVCA Economic Assessment, 2019](#)]

A high proportion of the Teesside population lives in areas with significant indicators of multiple deprivation [[Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government English: English indices of deprivation 2019](#)]. A high number of the Middlesbrough and Redcar and Cleveland IMD wards, where the majority of College recruitment is drawn from, are also classified as POLAR4 quintile 1 and 2 areas. In addition to ranking as one of the most deprived parts of the country, Tees Valley has a highly-polarised distribution of deprivation. It ranks as the second most deprived LEP area in England with all five Tees Valley districts ranking in the most deprived 15% of local authorities nationally. [[TVCA Economic assessment 2019](#)].

Situated as it is, Middlesbrough College is strategically committed to developing its Higher Education curriculum to meet the economic and social needs of the Tees Valley. Consequently, over 90% of HE students enrolled at Middlesbrough College are drawn from the Tees Valley. The College works with public and private sector organisations to design and deliver vocationally orientated programmes of study which enhance the employability of graduates. This strategic approach supports the Governments [Opportunity North East](#) initiative.

The range of factors outlined above have led the College to continually focuss on addressing inequality wherever it exists have helped to shape the College's approach to this Access and Participation Plan.

### 1.0 Assessment of performance

The Middlesbrough College HE student population in 2018/19 numbered 586, with students enrolled to a range of first degree and sub-degree programmes studied both in both full time and part time mode as well as part of an apprenticeship. When data is disaggregated by mode of study, age, ethnicity, gender as well as level of study, datasets become relatively small. Consequently, relatively small variations in numbers from one year to the next represent quite large percentage variations that, taken alone, can present a misleading picture. The following analysis takes these issues into account and an explanation is provided to highlight these issues as appropriate.

The main data used to inform this plan is taken from the OfS dataset. However, almost a quarter of the College's HE student population in 2018/19 was delivered under franchise. Students on these courses were not directly registered with the College and are not included in the OfS dataset. To

address this issue, performance has been evaluated using both the OfS data set and College records.

The first registered students to graduate from the College did so in 2018/19, consequently, there is no current data set for progression statistics. HESA will publish the first set of Graduate Outcomes data for the College in spring 2021. However, as the proportion of graduates in 2018/19 was relatively small, we anticipate that it will be 2022/23 before we have sufficient reliable data to rely entirely upon this information. In the absence of current information, this plan will analyse progression using the most recent information available to the College which was produced as part of the assessment of performance for TEF.

## 1.1 Higher education participation, household income, or socioeconomic status

### 1.1.1 Access

College recruitment to higher education courses, is primarily drawn from the Tees Valley. College data shows that 87% of HE enrolments in 2018/19, were from Tees Valley postcode areas (table 1). The remaining students were enrolled from postcodes adjacent to the Tees Valley. Over 54% of College HE enrolments progress from current College based level 3 programmes. Internal studies show that many of these internal progression students had not considered higher education as a viable progression pathway after level 3 and they cited direct progression to study a degree or sub-degree course at the College and its associated benefits, as a key reason for application. Central to this motivating factor, is the familiarity of the surroundings and the removal of some of the uncertainty about what progression to HE means, factors which are particularly important to students who have no previous family experience of higher education upon which to draw.

<b>Table 1 - Percentage of HE Enrolments by Postcode (Analysis of College records 2018/19)</b>		
<b>Enrolments by postcode</b>	Tees Valley postcodes	87%
	Other postcodes	13%

Postcode analysis of all HE enrolment in 2018/19, shows 39% were from IMD Q1 areas and 16% were from IMD Q2 areas, compared to 44% from IMD Q3-Q5 areas. The data illustrates the effectiveness of the College’s work in addressing local inequality by driving recruitment from IMD Q1 and Q2 areas.

In addition to the high incidence of IMD areas, the Tees Valley has a high proportion of POLAR4 quintile 1 and 2 areas. Table 2 shows that 36% of all HE enrolments are from POLAR4 Q1 classification areas and 10% are from POLAR4 Q5 classification areas which illustrates the College’s success in widening participation in higher education.

<b>Table 2 - Percentage of HE enrolments by POLAR4 Classification (Analysis of OfS data set 2018/19)</b>				
		Proportion of total enrolment		
		Full-time	Part-time	Total
<b>POLAR4 Quintile</b>	1	28%	8%	36%
	2	17%	5%	22%
	3	10%	3%	14%
	4	10%	8%	17%

	5	4%	6%	10%
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The pattern of recruitment illustrated in table 2 is similar when the wider HE population including students on franchise courses is included. (Q1 = 33%, Q5 = 11%).

The data in Table 2 represents a 7% increase in the proportion of students from POLAR4 Q1 areas compared to the 2020-21 plan (29%).

The College recognises that in order to continue to meet its strategic objectives to improve the economic fortunes of the region, its residents and hence our students, it is important to ensure that students from low participation wards continue to apply to and access higher education. Consequently, although this is an area of significant success for the College as demonstrated by the data in Table 2, it is essential that the significant investment in support for access is maintained which is reflected in the investment plan.

**1.1.2 Success**

**Comparison of continuation and attainment rates for students from POLAR4 areas**

<b>Table 3 - Comparison of continuation rates between students from POLAR4 Quintile areas</b> (Analysis of OfS data set 2018/19)			
		<b>Full-time Continuation</b>	<b>Part-time Continuation</b>
<b>POLAR 4 classification</b>	<b>1</b>	85%	94%
	<b>2</b>	91%	95%
	<b>3</b>	95%	93%
	<b>4</b>	95%	100%
	<b>5</b>	83%	94%

**Continuation**

As shown in Table 3, continuation rates amongst full time students in the Q1 classification are slightly higher than those amongst students in the Q5 classification. A similar pattern is repeated amongst part time students with 94% continuation amongst Q1 and Q5 students. The pattern shown in Table 3 is similar when the analysis is applied to the wider College HE student population, with proportional variations in continuation rates across the quintiles varying by between 0.5% - 2%.

2018-19 was the first year that the College had reportable data on student continuation rates by POLAR4 quintile so it is not possible to draw any conclusion on the trend of this data. As detailed in Section 3.2c, the College is aware of the challenge presented by recruiting a high proportion of disadvantaged students and where the specific strategies employed do not address any disparity in performance, remedial action is taken. The College will continue to monitor the continuation rates across all POLAR4 quintiles over the next two to three years and if necessary, revisit the approaches taken to support student continuation and add an additional target to this plan.

**Attainment**

Positive attainment is measured by the number of students obtaining a first or upper second class degree. The majority of HE provision delivered by the College is at sub-degree level. In 2018/19, the number of students that were working towards an honours degree, represented only 20% of the student population in the OfS data set. The students studying on franchised HE courses were all on sub-degree awards, so their inclusion in any calculations did not affect the overall outcomes. Consequently, the data for attainment by POLAR4 quintile is not reportable. The relatively small

numbers in each category make statistical comparison of limited value, however, there is no significant gap between any of the POLAR4 quintiles.

The attainment rate (i.e. pass rate) amongst students on sub-degree courses is good with those students from POLAR4 Q1 areas showing a pass rate of 94% compared to 98% of students from POLAR4 Q5 areas. The disparity in group sizes makes meaningful comparison difficult and as 2018-19 was the first year that the College had reportable data on performance by POLAR4 quintile, there is no historic pattern to draw upon. Consequently, the focus moving forwards is to maintain high levels of attainment for POLAR4 Q1 students and monitor the trend over the next two to three years to identify whether the gap between Q1 and Q5 groups is a cause for concern. If a pattern of a gap in performance becomes apparent, the plan will be revisited to include targets to address the gap.

**1.1.3 Progression**

Until 2018/19, all students on higher education programmes of study were registered with a partner university. Consequently, the College has no nationally reported data on progression statistics other than that provided by the previous partner university referred to above (up to 2016/17) and the data provided as part of the TEF year 2 assessment in 2017. Neither data set indicated any disparity in progression to further study or graduate employment between the POLAR4 quintile groups. This position will continue to be kept under review as more recent data becomes available. Given the relatively small size of the data when sub-divided into groups, a reliable picture of progression by POLAR4 quintiles may not be available until we have 3 years of data over which an aggregated benchmark can be calculated. If a pattern of a gap in performance becomes apparent, the plan will be revisited to include targets to address the gap. In the interim, to continue to support the College commitment to improving the economic fortunes of the region, its residents and hence our students, it is essential to continue to support progression to higher skilled employment or further study.

**1.2 Black, Asian and minority ethnic students**

Table 4 - BAME Students as a percentage of HE (Analysis of OfS data set 2018/19)				
		Full-time %	Part-time %	Total %
Ethnicity	White	52%	42%	94%
	BAME	NR*	NR*	6%

\* NR – data not reported to ensure the anonymity of the information provided.

**1.2.1 Access**

As shown in Table 4, the proportion of HE students in the College from BAME communities is 6%. Further analysis of the group by disaggregation of the data into constituent communities is unhelpful because of the relatively small student numbers. Although BAME student recruitment is relatively low, the percentage of enrolments from BAME communities reflects the proportion of the BAME community across the Tees Valley which is 5.2% ([Tees Valley Economic Assessment](#)). Consequently, the data shows a positive outcome in terms of ensuring equality of access. This pattern is repeated across the wider HE student population at the College.

The College recognises that in order to continue to meet its strategic objectives to improve the economic fortunes of the region, its residents and hence our students, it is important to ensure that students continue to apply to and access higher education, regardless of ethnicity. As the BAME population of the

Tees Valley is so small, even a slight shift in recruitment patterns can have a significant impact on the proportion of BAME students studying at the College. Consequently, although this is an area of significant success for the College as demonstrated by the data in Table 4, it is essential that the significant investment in support for access is maintained which is reflected in the investment plan.

**1.2.2 Success**

<b>Table 5 - Comparison of continuation rates by ethnic groups (Analysis of College and OfS data set 2018/19)</b>		
	Continuation (OfS)	Continuation (College)
<b>White students</b>	90%	90%
<b>BAME students</b>	100%	97%

**Continuation**

As shown in table 5, the continuation rate of BAME students is 10% higher than that for students who describe themselves as white based on the OfS data set. When students on franchised courses are included, the continuation rate for BAME students falls slightly by 3%, but remains above that of white students. This is a pattern of performance that has been maintained over recent years and the College will ensure that it continues to remove any barriers to continuation to students from BAME communities moving forwards.

**Attainment**

Positive attainment is measured by the number of students obtaining a first or upper second class degree. The majority of HE provision delivered by the College is at sub-degree level. In 2018/19, the number of students that were working towards an honours degree, represented only 20% of the student population in the OfS data set. The students studying on franchised HE courses were all on sub-degree awards, so their inclusion in any calculations did not affect the overall outcomes.

The data for attainment by ethnicity for students on sub-degree courses, is not reportable because of the small group sizes. However, there is no significant attainment gap between white and BAME students. The disparity in group sizes makes meaningful comparison difficult however and while historic patterns show that BAME students have a higher attainment rate than white students the differences in attainment between the 2 groups can move significantly from one year to the next. Consequently, the focus moving forwards is to maintain high levels of attainment for students from all disadvantaged groups.

**1.2.3 Progression**

Until 2018/19, all students on higher education programmes of study were registered with a partner university. Consequently, the College has no nationally reported data on progression statistics other than that provided by the partner university (up to 2016/17) and the data provided as part of the TEF year 2 assessment in 2017. The TEF data provides a good indicator based as it is on an historic average pattern, so removing the challenge of presenting small data sets.

The TEF data shows that full time BAME student progression to employment or further study was 3% higher than the benchmark and above that of students who described themselves as white. Full time BAME student progression to highly skilled employment or further study was 7% higher than the benchmark and above that of students who described themselves as white. There was a similar pattern amongst part time BAME students, with progression to employment or further study was 2%

above the benchmark and higher than students who described themselves as white. BAME student progression to highly skilled employment or further study was 3% above benchmark and higher than students who described themselves as white.

This position will continue to be kept under review as more recent data becomes available. Given the relatively small size of the data when sub-divided into groups, a reliable picture of progression amongst BAME students may not be available until we have 3 years of data over which an aggregated benchmark can be calculated. In the interim, to continue to support the College commitment to improving the economic fortunes of the region, its residents and hence our students, it is essential to continue to support progression to higher skilled employment or further study.

### 1.3 Mature students

#### 1.3.1 Access

<b>Table 6 – Student enrolment by age group (Analysis of OfS data set 2018/19)</b>			
<b>Age group</b>	<b>Full-time %</b>	<b>Part-time %</b>	<b>Total %</b>
<b>Young</b>	37%	9%	46%
<b>Mature</b>	33%	21%	54%

Table 6 shows that mature student recruitment is 54% compared to 46% of students classified by the OfS as young. The split between young and mature full and part time students is representative of typical annual recruitment patterns. A higher proportion of mature students than young students seek part time study options as many of them are in full or part time employment, or have caring responsibilities. The pattern of recruitment shown in Table 6, is similar when the wider College HE enrolment is taken into account.

The data in Table 6 reflects the College’s commitment to providing a second chance to students who may have not succeeded in education at their first attempt. Consequently, by the time that they have successfully completed level 3 and enter higher education, many of them are over 21.

The College recognises that in order to continue to meet its strategic objectives to improve the economic fortunes of the region, its residents and hence our students, it is important to ensure that students continue to apply to and access higher education, regardless of age. Consequently, although this is an area of significant success for the College as demonstrated by the data in Table 4, it is essential that the significant investment in support for access is maintained which is reflected in the investment plan.

#### 1.3.2 Success

<b>Table 7 – Continuation rate by age group (Analysis of College data and OfS data set 2018/19)</b>		
	<b>All students</b>	
	<b>Continuation (OfS)</b>	<b>Continuation (College)</b>
<b>Young</b>	89%	91%
<b>Mature</b>	92%	94%

### Continuation



As shown in table 7, the OfS data set shows the continuation rate amongst mature students is 3% higher than that amongst young students. When College data is used, the position remains the same although the gap widens by 2%.

This pattern is a reflection of performance in previous years and illustrates the positive outcome for support for mature students across the College. As detailed in Section 3.2c, the College is aware of the challenge presented by recruiting a high proportion of disadvantaged students and where the specific strategies employed do not address any disparity in performance, remedial action is taken. The College will continue to monitor the continuation rates across all age groups over the next two to three years and if necessary, revisit the approaches taken to support student continuation and add an additional target to this plan.

### **Attainment**

Positive attainment is measured by the number of students obtaining a first or upper second class degree. The majority of HE provision delivered by the College is at sub-degree level. In 2018/19, the number of students that were working towards an honours degree, represented only 20% of the student population in the OfS data set. The students studying on franchised HE courses were all on sub-degree awards, so their inclusion in any calculations did not affect the overall outcomes. Consequently, the data for attainment by age group is not reportable, however, attainment amongst mature students is above that of young students by 4%.

Mature students have a 6% higher attainment rate than young students on sub-degree courses. Historic trends show that this pattern is fairly consistent. Consequently, the focus moving forwards is to maintain high levels of attainment for students regardless of disadvantage.

### **1.3.3 Progression**

Until 2018/19, all students on higher education programmes of study were registered with a partner university. Consequently, the College has no nationally reported data on progression statistics other than that provided by the partner university (up to 2016/17) and the data provided as part of the TEF year 2 assessment in 2017.

The TEF data provides a good indicator based as it is on an historic average pattern, so removing the challenge of presenting small data sets and showed progression to employment or further study for both young and mature full time students is above benchmark. Young part time student progression is slightly below the benchmark, whereas mature part time student progression is above benchmark. Given the high incidence of deprivation in the Tees Valley coupled with lower than average rates of employment, and the fact that the overwhelming majority of graduates remain in the area, the data represent a positive outcome. This position will continue to be kept under review as more recent data becomes available and if necessary, additional targets will be added to this plan. In the interim, to continue to support the College commitment to improving the economic fortunes of the region, its residents and hence our students, it is essential to continue to support progression to higher skilled employment or further study.

## 1.4 Disabled students

### 1.4.1 Access

13% of HE students in 2018/19, declared a disability. This percentage is significantly higher than the proportion of residents in Middlesbrough (5.9%) in receipt of Disability Living Allowance ([Middlesbrough Council Annual Equality and Inclusion report](#)). It also represents an increase of almost 3% over the previous year. The relatively high participation rate reflects the Colleges positive action in encouraging applications from students with a disability. The number of students declaring mental ill health at enrolment has increased in recent years, representing approximately 2/3 of declarations in 2018/19. This increase reflects national reported trends across the sector. The relatively low number of part-time students who declared a disability makes disaggregation on mode of study statistically limited.

The College recognises that in order to continue to meet its strategic objectives to improve the economic fortunes of the region, its residents and hence our students, it is important to ensure that students continue to apply to and access higher education, regardless of physical or mental ability. Consequently, although this is an area of significant success for the College as demonstrated by the data in Table 4, it is essential that the significant investment in support for access is maintained which is reflected in the investment plan.

### 1.4.2 Success

<b>Table 8 – Continuation rate of students with a stated disability (Analysis of College and OfS data set 2018/19)</b>		
	<b>All students</b>	
	Continuation (OfS)	Continuation (College)
<b>Students with a disability</b>	86%	88%
<b>Students without a disability</b>	91%	93%

#### Continuation

The OfS data in Table 8, shows that the continuation rate of students with a declared disability was 86% compared to 91% amongst students with no declared disability. When the wider College data is considered, the gap reduces by a further 1%. This represents positive progress towards closing the gap in continuation between students with a disability and those without a disability since the 2021 plan (11% gap in continuation). The relatively small disabled student population has a significant effect on the measurement of performance between the two groups and makes it difficult to identify any consistent pattern of performance. However, the continuation rate gap between students with and without a disability will remain an area of focus for the College moving forwards.

As detailed in Section 3.2c, the College is aware of the challenge presented by recruiting a high proportion of disadvantaged students and where the specific strategies employed do not address any disparity in performance, remedial action is taken. The College will continue to monitor the continuation rates amongst students with a disability over the next two to three years and if necessary, revisit the approaches taken to support student continuation.



## Attainment

Positive attainment is measured by the number of students obtaining a first or upper second class degree. The majority of HE provision delivered by the College is at sub-degree level. In 2018/19, the number of students that were working towards an honours degree, represented only 20% of the student population in the OfS data set. The students studying on franchised HE courses were all on sub-degree awards, so their inclusion in any calculations did not affect the overall outcomes. While all students who declared a disability had a positive outcome in terms of attainment, the small numbers are unreportable.

The data for attainment by disability for students on sub-degree courses, is not reportable because of the small group sizes. However, there is no significant attainment gap between students with a disability and those without a disability. The disparity in group sizes makes meaningful comparison difficult and historic patterns show that the differences in attainment between the 2 groups can move significantly from one year to the next as illustrated by the shift in recruitment patterns between 2016-17 and 2018-19. The 2020-21 plan flagged the attainment rates between full-time students with a disability and those without a disability as a target based on 2016-17 data. The 2018-19 data, shows that this disparity is now removed. Consequently, the focus moving forwards is to maintain high levels of attainment for students with a disability, while recognising the influence of group size on this student population.

### 1.4.3 Progression

Until 2018/19, all students on higher education programmes of study were registered with a partner university. Consequently, the College has no nationally reported data on progression statistics other than that provided by the partner university (up to 2016/17) and the data provided as part of the TEF year 2 assessment in 2017. The TEF data provides a good indicator based as it is on an historic average pattern, so removing the challenge of presenting small data sets.

The TEF data shows that progression to highly skilled employment or further study for full-time and part-time students with a disability was 18% lower than that for students without a disability up to 2017. While the age of the TEF data diminishes its value, the gap in progression between students with and without a disability will remain an area of focus moving forwards.

This position will continue to be kept under review as more recent data becomes available. Given the relatively small size of the data when sub-divided into groups, a reliable picture of progression amongst students with a disability may not be available until we have 3 years of data over which an aggregated benchmark can be calculated. In the interim, to continue to support the College commitment to improving the economic fortunes of the region, its residents and hence our students, it is essential to continue to support progression to higher skilled employment or further study.

## 1.5 Care leavers

According to data from the [Department for Education](#), the number of all care leavers aged 17-21 across the Tees Valley in 2018 represented 0.11% of the population. The proportion of care leavers on HE study programmes at the College was 0.54% which is significantly above the proportion of the Tees Valley care leaver population, but broadly in line with the number of 16-19 year-old students at the College recorded as being in care, who were studying at Level 3 and below, (0.48%).

Of those HE students studying at the College that declared they were care leavers in 2018/19, all were enrolled to full-time study programmes and 98% achieved their learning aim which is better than the national picture, (according to the [National Network for the Education of Care Leavers](#), care leavers in higher education are over a third more likely to withdraw than students with otherwise similar characteristics). The percentage of care leavers who achieved their learning aim in recent years, has fluctuated between 90% and 100%, although the relatively low numbers involved makes it difficult to draw meaningful comparisons. 89% of care leavers that have left the College over the past 3-years, have progressed into work or further study.

The data shows that the College has a good track record across the student life-cycle in supporting care leavers.

Based on the care leaver population across the Tees valley it will be challenging to significantly increase care leaver recruitment beyond current levels, however, the College is committed to continuing to encourage and support care leaver progression to higher education.

## 1.6 Intersections of disadvantage

### 1.6.1 Access

The evidence shows that the College has a good track record of encouraging and supporting access to higher education across all disadvantaged groups. Consequently, although specific targets to improve Access have not been set, the College will continue to focus on maintaining positive performance and ensure that planned levels of investment to support and encourage Access are maintained.

### 1.6.2 Continuation

The continuation rate amongst young full time IMD Quintile1 white males is relatively low when compared to full time white males from other IMD classifications. The small number of students with these characteristics in this and other IMD quintiles affects the data and makes comparisons difficult. The relative difference in continuation rates between IMD Q1 and Q2 (combined), when compared with IMD Q3 to Q5 (combined), provides a representative picture of the performance between the lowest and highest quintiles (see Table 10). Although the numbers are relatively low overall, it is recognised that the gap illustrated in Table 10 is a pattern that is repeated nationally. The pattern of performance was also flagged as a target to be addressed in the 2020-21 plan, albeit this was based on 2016-17 data. The gap shown in Table 10 represents a decline in performance in meeting the target to close the gap in performance. The College is committed to ensuring that all students are supported to complete their chosen course of study and will work towards reducing this gap.

As detailed in Section 3.2c, the College is aware of the challenge presented by recruiting a high proportion of disadvantaged students and where the specific strategies employed do not address any disparity in performance, remedial action is taken. The College will continue to monitor the effectiveness of the strategies employed to support continuation over the next two to three years and if necessary, revisit the approaches taken to improve performance.

Table 10 – Continuation of Male Students by IMD Quintile (Analysis of OfS data set 2018/19)			
		Proportion of male enrolment	Continuation
IMD Quintile	1&2	32%	81%
	3,4&5	16%	92%

A further sub-set of this intersect described in Table 10, are the number of students in this group declaring mental health issues as a reason for non-continuation, which has increased in recent years. Universities UK indicates that being first in family to attend university (which covers many of the students identified in the intersection described above) has been identified as a risk factor for poor mental health amongst students (OfS Regulatory advice 6). Given the socio-economic profile of the region, the issue is of particular interest to the College. While the data that supports this intersection only represents a small fraction of the student body, it is recognised that not all students would necessarily declare this information. Given the size of the data set, the College does not intend to set a separate target, but it will be kept under review.

The data on other ethnic groups by IMD quintile is unreportable because of the small student numbers involved. There is nothing to suggest however, that performance by ethnicity is affected by socioeconomic groupings.

### 1.6.3 Progression

Despite relatively positive rates of progression into highly skilled employment or further study in general for graduates, there are some minor intersections of data for groups of part-time young students and students from disadvantaged wards. Given the low number of students in the group the College does not intend to set a specific target at this point. However, the attainment of this group will be monitored closely to ensure that the existing strategies are effective in addressing any disadvantage.

## 2.0 Aims and objectives

The College’s HE Strategy is a subset of the College Strategic Aim, Vision and Mission and is mapped to the overarching College Strategic Priorities.

Higher Education Strategic Aims 2019-2024		
	HE Strategic Aims	College Strategic Priority Reference
1	Develop a higher education portfolio that leads to positive vocational outcomes for students	One Ambition One Commitment One Voice
2	Provide a flexible HE portfolio that represents good value for money for students.	Organisational Resilience One Voice
3	Maintain a high level of quality, both in terms of delivery, student outcomes and resources.	One Ambition One Team One Voice

4	Maintain positive growth in HE numbers through continuous programme development and review.	Organisational Resilience One Voice One Commitment
5	Engage effectively with students in all aspects of HE policy and process.	One Ambition One Community

Annual departmental performance is mapped to the College strategic plan, with specific KPIs set and assigned to each curriculum manager.

## 2.1 Target groups

Based on the critical evaluation of performance in Section 1 of this plan, the College has identified the target groups as shown in Table 11 and will be working to achieve the following objectives:

- Close the gap in continuation between students with a disability and students with no disability.
- Close the gap in continuation between white IMD quintile 1 males and IMD quintile 5 males.

Further detail on the time span in which these objectives will be achieved and the specific measurement of how performance will be assessed, is outlined in the Targets and Investment plan.

Table 11 – Target Groups identified for APP 2021/22		
Target reference	Target groups	Lifecycle stage
PTS_1	Students with a disability	Success
PTS_2	White economically disadvantaged males	Success

In addition to the specific target groups shown in Table 11, the College will continue to review and evaluate its performance in supporting student continuation across all groups.

## 2.2. Aims and objectives

### 2.2.1 Access

The College recognises that in order to continue to meet its strategic objectives to improve the economic fortunes of the region, it is important to ensure that students are able to continue to access higher education regardless of disadvantage. Consequently, although this is an area of significant success for the College as illustrated in by the data in Section 1 of this plan, it is essential that the significant investment in support for access is maintained which is reflected in the investment plan.

#### Aims:

The College aims to maintain the level of positive performance achieved to date in widening participation across all disadvantaged groups.

#### Objectives:

1. Planned levels of investment to support and encourage Access across all target groups will be maintained.

2. Access data will be monitored to ensure a positive outcome for all disadvantaged groups.

### 2.2.2 Success

Continuation rates are generally good but statistical representation of continuation is significantly affected by the small HE student population at the College and subsequently, the small groups of students when sub-divided by disadvantage. Based on the analysis of performance in Section 1 of this plan, the following aims and objectives have been set.

#### Aims:

1. To close the gap in continuation rates between students with a disability and students with no disability.
2. To close the gap in continuation rates between young white males from disadvantaged wards compared to young white male students from wards with no disadvantage.

#### Measurable Objectives (for details see Targets and Investment Plan – appendix 1);

1. To eradicate the performance gap in continuation rates between students with a disability and students with no disability over the next 5 years.
2. To eradicate the performance gap in continuation rates between young white males from disadvantaged wards compared to young white male students from wards with no disadvantage over the next 5 years.

### 2.2.3 Progression

The College recognises that in order to continue to meet its strategic objectives to improve the economic fortunes of the region, it is important to ensure that graduates are able to progress into graduate employment or further study regardless of disadvantage. Consequently, while the data in Section 1 of this plan does not flag any specific areas of concern, it is essential that the investment in support for progression is maintained which is reflected in the investment plan. This area will be kept under review moving forwards as more data becomes available to ensure that the stated aims and objectives continue to be met.

#### Aims:

The College aims to support progression to graduate employment or further study for all students, regardless of disadvantage.

#### Objectives:

Planned levels of investment to support progression to graduate employment or further study will be maintained.

## 3.0 Strategic measures

### 3.1 Whole provider strategic approach

Oversight of Higher Education at the College rests with the Academic Board, operating under the authority delegated to it by the Board of Governors. The Chair of Academic Board reports to the full Governing Body and its sub-committees throughout their meeting cycle. Key HE activities, including the implementation of this Access and Participation Plan, are included in these reports.

The College HE Strategy is a sub-strategy of the College Strategic Plan and focusses upon addressing the specific needs of the region, including the socio-economic issues outlined in the introduction to this plan. Central to this strategy is to create a portfolio of programmes of study that are designed to support student progression into higher education and successful progression to further study or employment.

Given the socio-economic structure of the Tees Valley, and the profile of the higher education student body at the College, the strategy supports students throughout the student lifecycle. The investment outlined in this plan is designed to continue to underpin the strategy and support all students, particularly those from under-represented groups.

The overarching strategic aim of this plan in respect of the delivery of equality of opportunity, is embedded in the College equal opportunity policy, please see Section 3.2c, page 12 of this document. Central to this approach is the College commitment to continuously reviewing and learning from past performance as it ensures that all students are supported to access higher education and achieve a positive outcome. The infrastructure to achieve this is described in section 3.2 below as well as referenced throughout the plan.

The size of the HE student population at the College means that when data is disaggregated by protected characteristic as well as level of study, datasets become relatively small. While this represents a challenge when identifying patterns of performance across disadvantaged groups, it does allow the College to target support for student continuation and attainment at individual students rather than groups. Individual targeted support is a key strategy in the delivery of this plan and performance will be monitored against the targets set to ensure that the strategies employed are effective.

The staff expertise in providing individual student support, is based on an extensive cross-College CPD programme which both academic and support staff are required to undertake, ensuring that all staff are aware of the implications of dealing with specific protected characteristics. Underpinning this broad based knowledge are key personnel in Student Services and Additional Learning Support, who provide specialist expertise targeted at individual protected characteristics as well as tapping into a network of specialist external agencies. Engagement with professional networks and sector representative bodies such as the AoC and the OfS, as well as regular liaison with other HEPs, has been used to enhance the level of understanding and range of strategies that can be employed to support students further. Consequently, the College is able to provide a full range of tailored support to individual students regardless of disadvantage. Specific issues are identified either during termly 'at-risk' meetings between the Associate Director Teaching & Learning (HE) and the programme teams, or, informally by the programme team. Any support needs are flagged with the appropriate in-house or external agency to provide intervention support as soon as possible.

The explanation in the previous paragraph illustrates how the College's overarching strategy towards providing student support to maintain or improve equality of opportunity for all students, has been built on experience gained over many years. The range of activity described in the remainder of this section of this plan is based on this foundation and illustrates how the College has developed mechanisms to support access, success and progression.

In response to the new priorities for access and participation and the governments agenda to provide more flexible pathway into and through higher education, the College has taken the decision to reduce the number of 3-year full-time degrees in its portfolio. In their place, the College is focussing attention upon foundation degrees plus top-up programmes as well as Higher Technical



Qualifications. As the majority of the College's HE portfolio is due for revalidation in 2022-23, the transition away from full-time 3-year degrees will be accelerated.

A consequence of the shift in the portfolio design as outlined above is that a new approach to the provision of financial support to students is required to replace the existing bursary scheme which was targeted at students on 3-year full-time degree programmes. See section

### **3.2 Relationship between the Access and Participation Plan and other College strategic measures**

#### **a. Higher Education Office**

The College established the Higher Education Office (HEO) in 2015 to work with academic departments and cross-College functions such as registry, data, quality and finance, to ensure that HE is embedded centrally. In addition to data analysis, the HEO employs a range of qualitative approaches to monitoring student performance and satisfaction to ensure that the College is supporting students effectively and meeting their needs.

The HEO also operates a network of Higher Education Working Groups, each of which provides a forum for students and the HEO to raise any issues with the manager responsible for that specific business support department. The benefits are that any lessons learned from the escalation of the issues raised, inform policy and process moving forwards.

Opportunities for the qualitative analysis of areas of disadvantage experienced by students at the College that are provided by the mechanisms outlined above, are critical to informing understanding of the effectiveness of measures in place to support student access, success and progression.

The HEO has led on the strategies reported in this Access and Participation Plan, designed to improve the College's understanding of the efficacy of its approach to supporting access, achievement and progression. Good progress has been made towards the planned strategic measures stated in the 2021 plan. Specifically:

- Reviews of the approaches taken to supporting students across a range of other FECs were conducted during the first half of 2019/20. Lessons were learned and strategies identified that were transferrable to Middlesbrough College. The opportunity to review these strategies with the student body and formulate medium term plans, particularly about different approaches to financial support, were restricted as the country moved into lockdown in response to the Covid-19 pandemic. The factors associated with the pandemic have required a more flexible model of financial support, with a greater focus on hardship support at the present time compared to the norm. Until there is a cessation in the short-term pressures created by the pandemic, the financial support model will remain flexible and responsive while simultaneously continuing to honour the commitments already in place to support students.
- Planned increases in staffing to enhance data analysis and student support have been achieved and are already providing positive returns. The appointment of a HE Student Engagement Officer attached to the Student Services Team and a HEO Data Projects Coordinator, have enhanced both understanding and the related response to student needs, as well as an effective method of tracking the efficacy of measures introduced.

The outputs and effectiveness of the measures outlined above are reported into Academic Board via the HE Working Groups to ensure that there is oversight of the outputs of the Plan. In addition, The Director of Higher Education submits termly reports directly to Governors via the Standards Committee, which includes reference to the Access and Participation Plan and progress towards meeting stated objectives.

**b. Supporting participation by aligning HE curricula with students and the jobs market**

The College has demonstrated positive outcomes in terms of raising participation in higher education, particularly amongst the target groups identified in this plan and targeted by the Office for Students. This activity will continue to be a key element of the annual cycle of activity undertaken by the central College Admissions and Schools Teams. These teams ensure that information and guidance is provided to both prospective students and appropriate gatekeepers (e.g. schools and advisors) on the range of support available to students with protected characteristics. Included in this activity are:

- An annual programme of outreach visits to local feeder institutions to establish early links and raise aspirations and targets.
- An annual programme of Discovery Days targeted at supporting and encouraging application.
- Open events at which target students have the opportunity to visit the College and speak to academic staff and employers to explore the range of career opportunities available through specific study paths.
- Taster events at which target students can gain valuable insight into the alternative offer of HE study in a College environment.

The College Strategic Plan is designed to meet the needs and expectations of all students regardless of background or profile. The plan is also designed to address the specific concerns raised by prospective students when considering the relative merits of choosing further study over seeking employment. This plan reflects these values and is underpinned by the College Higher Education Strategy which uses employability outcomes as a tool to removing barriers to participation in the region. The evidence of the College’s achievements in this respect, provides a powerful message to potential students and raises regional participation rates. This alignment also supports and encourages students to recognise the value of continuing with their studies which has assisted in placing College continuation rates amongst the highest in the region (TEF data).

A key contributor to supporting progression to employment, is an ongoing programme of investment in relationship building with employers through a range of initiatives, including:

- payments to secure high quality workplace mentors to ensure positive outcomes for students in work-based learning settings;
- aligning programme development to labour market intelligence to support student progression into graduate employment;
- embedding professional qualifications into higher awards to support direct progression to employment upon graduation. Where a professional qualification is deemed key to

employment, the College covers the cost of accreditation and/or membership. These costs are not passed onto the students either directly or via increased fees.

**c. Supporting student attainment and continuation with effective teaching and academic support**

A consequence of the College’s successful track record in widening participation in higher education amongst disadvantaged and under-represented groups, is that a higher proportion of the student population require higher levels of additional support in order to continue in education. The barriers faced by many of the students from under-represented groups to continuing in education are for the most part not academic. To address this problem the College provides a wide range of immediate support mechanisms to support student continuation (see below) underpinned by a flexible tailored approach to supporting students. In order to achieve this flexibility, the curriculum is designed to allow students to step in and out of study at different levels. In addition, the Extenuating Circumstances Committee uses its authority to extend periods of study to support students who are struggling to balance often conflicting priorities of study, work, family and home life.

To ensure that all students are supported effectively, the standard HE teaching model is built around a combination of formal scheduled teaching and academic support. The benefit of this model is that the academic support sessions ensure that students receive the level of support that they need and require, independent of gender, age, ethnicity, socio-economic group, background or other characteristic. For those students who occasionally have difficulty attending taught sessions, particularly those in work and studying part-time, the same level of academic support is provided via the [College VLE](#) as a minimum. A key benefit of this approach is that it facilitates support to those students with protected characteristics by removing barriers.

The delivery model is underpinned by a range of additional support and resources, provided by specialist teams across the College business support areas, including: Student Services; Disability Support Services; Finance and the Learning Resource Centre. Moving forward, additional investment will be focussed on providing extra staff resource to all of these areas to support student continuation and attainment.

The College HE Learning and Teaching process, which is a sub-set of the College Teaching and Learning Policy, is designed to reflect the dimensions of the UK Professional Standards Framework for teaching and supporting learning in higher education ([UKPSF](#)). Underpinning this process is a requirement for all staff to hold PgCE qualifications. From 2019, an additional requirement was added, supporting staff to apply for [HEA Fellowship](#).

The Head of Teaching and Learning will continue to be involved in the Working Group tasked with addressing the objectives outlined in the APP Strategy. The lessons learned from the outcomes of the Working Group activity, will be used to inform future development of the HE learning and teaching process.

All of the measures outlined above will be maintained moving forwards. Any specific areas of disparity in continuation performance not addressed by the measures already employed, will be identified and addressed.

The College is confident that the measures outlined above support the strategic aims of this plan to improve continuation rates amongst disabled students and young white male students from IMD Q1 areas.

#### d. Ensuring equality of opportunity and outcome for all students

All College services, programmes and operations, reflect a commitment to - and implementation of - equality, diversity and inclusion. This commitment is reflected in the College's core values of *driving inclusion* and *promoting mutual respect* and wellbeing for all and is a key factor in shaping this access and participation plan. Consequently, the College believes that its current overarching strategic aims in respect of the delivery of equality of opportunity are sufficient to apply to and cover, the 2021-22 to 2025-26 access and participation plan.

The approach to the management of equality and diversity is monitored and reported upon by the Vice Principal (Students). All College reports relating to equality and diversity are reported to the Governing Body through the Equality and Diversity Committee. The VP (Students) is part of Academic Board and so will represent the views of the Equality and Diversity Committee in the oversight of the strategies included in this APP. This activity will ensure that the actions identified in the strategy - to review and improve the mechanisms for support for under-represented groups - are embedded in cross-College reporting mechanisms.

The College aims to be a leading organisation in the promotion of equality and diversity and acknowledges that equality of opportunity and the recognition and promotion of diversity, are integral to its success.

Middlesbrough College recognises its legal and moral obligations to:

- eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and any other conduct prohibited by the Equality Act 2010;
- advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and people who do not;
- foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and people who do not.

Key to meeting these obligations and supporting student success, is the removal of barriers to engaging with the support and expertise outlined previously in this plan. The range of additional financial support provided through this plan, will assist in facilitating this action by removing some of the barriers to attendance that students face because of financial hardship. This activity includes:

- Bursaries
- Hardship payments.
- Professional accreditation/membership fees.
- Payment of costs associated with trips and visits.
- Standard minimum levels of academic support for all students which are above the sector average regardless of subject.
- The provision of loan laptops to student on entry, available for the duration of their studies.

The size of the HE student population at the College is relatively small and some of the sub-groups are very small. Consequently, the measures being put in place to support the attainment of the targets outlined above as well as maintaining the successful outcomes in terms of Access, Success and Progression as identified in the critical evaluation of performance in Section 1, will be individualised rather than aimed at generic groups. To individualise support in the way described above, requires a flexible approach to the provision of the support mechanisms included in this section of the report as well as a responsive approach to addressing need wherever it arises. The creation of the HE Student Engagement Officer (SEO) post has enhanced the College approach to designing tailored individual student support as well as the process for monitoring its effectiveness. The SEO attends the Student Support Working Group along with the HE Special Educational Needs Coordinator (SENCO). The Working Group has created and introduced and monitors a series of mechanisms to ensure that the tailored support process is effective, this includes;

- A pre-enrolment vetting process to identify any barriers to access and continuation that may be encountered by individual students. This has led to enhanced early assessment processes for student with disabilities to ensure that support is in place prior to enrolment.
- An adapted 'At Risk' student monitoring process, which has enhanced the mechanisms for identifying barriers to progression as well as the frequency of when monitoring is carried out. Previous 'at risk' assessments were conducted termly and focussed primarily on academic performance. The new process includes a formalised reporting mechanism to report non-academic issues to the SEO and the SENCO, including the impact on academic performance. As well as improving the timeliness of intervention, the new process also links directly to all other support processes, including Extenuating Circumstances and financial support assessment, to ensure that a holistic programme of targeted support is provided quickly.
- The SEO and SENCO both attend Academic Board and have standing agenda items to report on the effectiveness of the measure in place and to review resource allocations. Academic Board are monitoring the efficacy of the process and ensuring that the approach to providing tailored support remains fit for purpose.

#### **e. Supporting Progression**

A key focus of the College higher education portfolio is to ensure that there is a vocational theme throughout the student lifecycle. Consequently, the message that a higher education award at Middlesbrough College is part of a journey into employment is central to all activity. This focus influences and includes:

- the content of advertising and promotion campaigns;
- programme design and development/redevelopment;
- programme structure and delivery models (fitting around employment);
- professional accreditation/membership fees;
- embedded work-based learning in all programmes including paid mentors;

- free or subsidised vocational trips and visits.

All of these activities are the responsibility of the academic faculties and are embedded in curriculum planning. The HEO oversees this embedding process and monitors that all stated aims linked to student support are embedded across the student lifecycle.

The measures outlined above support the stated objectives of this plan to support progression to graduate employment or further study while the College gathers further data on performance across all disadvantaged groups over the next 2-3 years.

### 3.3 Student consultation

The College Student Union is an independently elected body comprising both FE and HE students. The student body has also elected a HE student representative to sit on Academic Board. The role of this individual is to engage in discussion on policy and procedure relating to higher education and feedback/feedforward, student views from the cross-college student representative group.

To ensure that HE students have every opportunity to engage with College activity, the College has a Head of HE Student Engagement who provides a mechanism to support continuity and an administrative infrastructure to support the activity of the Student Union. Key to this role is the guidance and support provided to students to ensure that they are able to engage with the range of fora available to them to present their views, share opinions and consult on College plans and policy.

To ensure that HE students at the College have a distinct voice, the College provides a series of HE specific platforms for student engagement and input. These platforms ensure that student representation is meaningful and regular. Platforms includes HE Student Council (organised by the Head of Student Engagement and attended by the Principal and the Director of HE ), Programme Boards, HE Working Groups and Academic Board.

The HE Working Groups run at least termly and provide the opportunity for students from all subject areas to engage with and present their views to key managers of both academic and student support services. The HE Office administers these groups and ensures that student views from all other formal and informal fora are represented. Direct response is provided to all HE Students and their representatives via the VLE. This approach ensures that all students have a voice and also allows specific focus for students with protected characteristics.

The key approach to gathering student views in the development of this APP were as follows:

- All data used to inform this plan were approved by Academic Board. Their inclusion and use was approved by the student representative on Academic Board.
- In approving this plan, Academic Board asked the student body to comment and identify any areas being overlooked by the College. The students agreed that the content of the Plan was appropriate, but felt that an analysis of all current strategies designed to support access and participation should be kept under review to ensure that they remain fit for purpose. This inclusion was approved.
- In addition to the approach outlined above, the HE Office engaged with individual students from under-represented groups, particularly those within the intended scope of the activity,



to ensure that they felt that the stated aims represented their views. Feedback was positive in all cases.

The College will ensure that this engagement continues during the implementation and evaluation phase. Given the length of time it will take to fully implement the plan, the approach to ensuring the whole student body receives and understands the feedback on outcomes, is as follows:

- The student body is briefed on all key documents, policies and processes pertaining to their time as a student at the College. A key element of this induction is a review of the [Essential Information](#) page of the College website. This page includes the Access and Participation Plan. The page is also hyperlinked from the College Virtual Learning Environment, which all students access throughout their studies.
- The Student Representative network receives an update at the beginning of each year on the activities that Student Representatives are asked to engage in, comment upon, or contribute to. For new Student Representatives, this activity is covered during the Student Representative Induction process. The Access and Participation Plan is included in this annual update/induction.
- Developments in - and progress towards - attainment of objectives of the Access and Participation Plan will be shared with students in-year via the feedback mechanisms and channels described above.
- The Higher Education Office will support the dissemination of information on progress towards meeting objectives through Canvas via the Student Section of Canvas. All new announcements on this site appear on every student's homepage when they log into Canvas.

All students will have the opportunity to raise any specific questions or concerns about the Access and Participation Plan as well as any other aspect of College activity through the fora described in this section.

During consultation on the type of financial support provided to students carried out in 2021-22, student representatives stated that they would be willing to see an increase in fees, if necessary, to ensure the continuation of the lap-top loan scheme introduced during the pandemic. During the 2021-22 academic year, the College rolled out an experimental laptop loan scheme to all new students and again, feedback was positive.

### **3.4 Evaluation strategy**

The College has a good track record of monitoring performance and evaluating strategies to support student recruitment, success and progression. This approach feeds into the annual reporting and monitoring cycle that tracks performance reports to College Governors. As part of embedding the APP into this process, the College is working towards developing an evidence-led evaluation strategy as it moves forward. The College welcomes the sector-wide increased focus on evaluation and institutional research on access and participation measures. While the challenges presented by the current pandemic have slowed progress towards this goal, work is in progress and we are building upon existing processes to strengthen our approach. To assist in this process, the College has made use of the OfS Evaluation self-assessment tool to evaluate activities across the student lifecycle. Initial findings are summarised below, together with areas for development.

As part of the self-evaluation of practice stated in the last iteration of the College Access and Participation Plan (APP), the College committed to carrying out a collaborative review of its approach to access and participation. Between July 2019 and February 2020, in a series of meetings with other FE Colleges combined with a desk-based research project was undertaken. The output from this activity has been beneficial and has helped to shape the approach to the design and delivery of this APP. Of particular interest to the College as it moves forwards, is the extent to which the stated strategy of individualised support for students from disadvantaged groups, is effective at tackling inequality.

#### **3.4.1. Strategic content**

Initial assessment shows that this area of activity is advanced which reflects the strong analytical culture embedded across the College. While the infrastructure is clearly in place and supports the delivery of the APP objectives, the process will be improved with further engagement with the OfS data set moving forward and the opportunity to reflect on outcomes over a longer period. The positive message to be taken from the exercise is that the culture of evaluation at the College is effective and embedded. Areas for further development include: creating more opportunities for reflection on the effectiveness (or otherwise) of activities and supporting staff to enhance their evaluation skills and understanding. A key benefit of conducting further analysis, will allow more time to assess the effectiveness of the individualised approach to supporting students from disadvantaged groups. It is also anticipated that the collective understanding across the College HE community of both the individualised approach to providing support to students, as well as other strategies, will be enhanced through engagement with wider research and initiatives to expand our understanding of their efficacy.

#### **3.4.2 Programme design**

The programme design score showed that this is an area of practice that is emerging. Areas for further development include: providing greater clarity on how the outcomes and impacts of all programmes are measured and the evidence underpinning the choice of outcome measures for the access and participation programmes. Early indications of the effectiveness of the new programmes adopted to date to support students are good, however, the current operating environment, presents new challenges so it will take time to demonstrate their continued effectiveness. Consequently, all strategies will continue to be reviewed on an annual cycle to ensure that they achieve their intended outcomes.

#### **3.4.3 Evaluation and implementation**

This area of activity was identified as emerging practice. A particular challenge is the range of partnership work in which the College is able to engage with other stakeholders to maximise evaluation data and results. Further work is needed in this area to enhance the range of data available. For some protected characteristic groups, e.g. care leavers, the range of available data is limited and the College is looking to engage with regional and national research activities to improve its understanding. In particular, a key focus of activity is in enhancing our understanding and awareness of applications from care leavers who have not previously studied at the College. Preliminary research has shown that this problem is shared by other providers that the College has consulted with in developing this Plan, consequently, it is anticipated that sharing of knowledge and understanding of this group will improve a wider understanding of this challenge.

### 3.4.4 Improving through learning

The reflective culture and processes that exist already in the College will ensure that this area of activity continues to inform practice. In our self-evaluation, we identified reflective culture as an emerging area of activity, as it is important to allow time to embed the data recently available into the College processes. Looking ahead, it is anticipated that the actions required to achieve this will be a relatively good fit with the College annual quality cycle. As part of the previous APP, the College identified the need for a dedicated data analyst to support wider understanding of the impact of programmes of activity upon the target groups. The appointment of a dedicated data analyst in 2019-20 has helped to provide a good platform from which to measure the effectiveness of the programmes and initiatives adopted to date.

### 3.4.5 Overlap with NECOP

The NECOP project (FutureMe) delivers intensive interventions, aligned to the Regional Progression Framework (RPF). The learning outcomes of the RPF have been developed and mapped to the Careers Development Institute Framework and the Gatsby Benchmarks to demonstrate how all activities support specific HE focused outcomes. Since the project began in 2017, events such as HE talks and campus visits have been designed to improve students' knowledge of HE pathways, provide information to dispel any misperceptions and to provide experiences of student life. Employer talks, visits and careers fairs have offered students the opportunity to meet employers and discover the world of work providing students with a clear goal and raising attainment amongst students from designated low participation areas. A key feature of the second phase of the project is the use of Outreach Hubs to focus upon students from underrepresented groups with particular consideration of support for those with a disability and for care leavers.

### 3.4.6 Developing the evaluation strategy

To ensure that this plan is effective and remains fit for purpose, the approach to its delivery will be evaluated over the next 5 years on an annual cycle, to include the following;

- Student performance data reports and at risk reports will be monitored and provided to the Student Support Working Group. Further analysis of the data will be used to inform understanding of the effectiveness of the measures used to tackle inequality and maintain progress towards meeting targets.
- The termly outputs from the Student Support Working Group will be used by the HEO to monitor progress against targets identified as part of this plan are achieving their intended aims of improving outcomes for students. Any performance gaps will be highlighted and reported into the monthly meeting cycle of Academic Board to determine whether a change in plan is needed.
- Any emerging themes or patterns of inequality highlighted by the Student Support Working Group, or any other fora, will be identified and monitored by the HEO and reported to Academic Board. If required, new targets will be introduced to address any such inequalities.
- The support programmes will be reviewed with the student body both through the Working Groups as well as through wider feedback, including but not limited to, Programme Boards and the Cross College HE Student Council.

Any lessons learned through the process described above, will feedback into the evaluation strategy design and be used to update or expand the process accordingly.

### **3.5 Monitoring progress against delivery of the plan**

The Governing Body receives and reviews reports on the progress against plan of the College's Higher Education Strategy on a termly basis. The content and progress against targets outlined in the 2021-22 to 2025-26 access and participation plan (APP) will be included in this reporting process.

Academic Board has received, reviewed and commented on the 2021-22 to 2025-26 APP during its creation. A standing item will be added to the agenda to review progress against targets. Academic Board includes student representatives.

The minutes of Academic Board are submitted to the College Management Team meetings for information and any items requiring action over and above that identified by Academic Board are raised. In addition, the Chair of Academic Board is a member of the College Senior leadership Team (SLT) and reports on any matters that may require additional action or intervention by SLT on a bi-weekly basis.

The Higher Education Office (HEO), has operational oversight of all aspects of HE quality management. Progress against actions to meet targets set in the APP 2021-22 to 2025-26, are reviewed in the bi-weekly HEO Team Meetings. As part of its function, the HEO convenes and chairs a series of working groups, involving students and key managers from business support areas, specifically; marketing, IT, estates, Learning Resource Centre, CPD and research, finance and registry. Each working group will have progress against actions to meet targets set in the APP 2021-22 to 2025-26 as a standing item. The working groups provide a forum for any aspect of College activity that impacts upon student experience to be reviewed and discussed. All actions from the working groups are reported into Academic Board.

In addition to the engagement with students via the working groups and Academic Board, the College also holds a cross College HE Student Council meeting, which is chaired by the HE Student Engagement Officer and attended by the Principal and Director of Higher Education. The main purpose of this meeting is to provide a less formal forum for any student representative to raise the views or concerns of their peers, on any aspect of their experience as students. As well as generating an immediate action plan to address any actions, feedback from these meetings is fed into the HE working groups to provide the opportunity for wider consideration of the impact of College HE policy and practice.

### **3.6 Financial support**

#### **Position at the point of creating the 2021-22 to 2025-26 Access and Participation Plan**

The opportunity to review the range of financial support strategies with the student body and over the last year has been restricted as the country moved into lockdown in response to the Covid-19 pandemic. The factors associated with the pandemic required a more flexible model of financial support, with a particular focus on hardship support responding to specific needs as they arose. In particular, there has been an increase in: the provision of loan lap-tops, including some high-specification machines to support continuity of study; increased allocation of software licenses to allow remote student access and financial hardship payments to support students that lost part-time work.

Until there is a cessation in the short-term pressures created by the pandemic, the financial support model will remain flexible and responsive while simultaneously continuing to honour the commitments already in place to support students.

### **Update to the approach to Financial Support provided to students entering in 2023-24**

A key lesson learned during the Coronavirus pandemic was that many students face challenges to continuation because of access to reliable and accessible (when they need it) IT hardware and software. To address the challenges created by this digital poverty, the College introduced a laptop loan scheme and free access to software during 2021-22. The benefits to students were significant and the scheme was received positively. During the 2021-22 academic year, the College rolled out an experimental laptop loan scheme to all new students and again, feedback was positive.

Over the past 2 years, the College has also continued to develop its curriculum to provide more flexible short courses to the extent that from 2023-24, there will only be one full-time 3-year degree course remaining. All other degrees will be delivered in components of Foundation degree plus top-up degree. This will reduce the number of students eligible to receive a bursary under the terms of the current scheme moving into 2023-24.

Based upon the factors outlined above, the College has in consultation with the student body, agreed to transfer the funds allocated to the provision of a £1000 cash bursary paid over 2-years to full-time students on 3-year degree programmes, to the provision of lap-tops and software to all students in the target groups.

#### **3.6.1 Access**

All essential materials and equipment required to commence study at the College are provided free of charge to students upon enrolment. This includes: access to software that students may need to aid independent study away from the College premises; any professional body membership or accreditation fees which are deemed essential to meeting the entry criteria for employment in the sector; any essential PPE required either for College or placement based learning; the costs of any qualifying entry requirements such as DBS.

The list of support provided to students is regularly reviewed in consultation with students to ensure that any perceived barriers to entry are removed and that support is targeted towards addressing the most pressing concerns.

#### **3.6.2 Success**

There is a degree of overlap between the financial support provided to support access as outlined in 3.4.1 and the support provided to support success. This overlap is inevitable, given that in removing barriers to entry of a financial/resource nature, the same features will support success.

Based on the lessons learned during the Coronavirus pandemic and the strategic shift away from 3-year full-time degrees the funds previously allocated to bursary payments will be moved towards providing loan laptops, software and other essential hardware, where required, for 2023-24 entrants. It is anticipated that the new scheme will ensure that assistance will benefit a larger number of students from the following groups.

- Students from areas of lower higher education participation, lower household income and/or lower socioeconomic status groups (POLAR4 Q1 & 2; IMD Q1).

- Black, Asian and minority ethnic students.
- Mature students.
- Disabled students.
- Care leavers.
- Carers.
- People estranged from their families;
- People from Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities.
- Refugees.
- Children of military families.

The total funding allocated to financial support for students as identified in the previous Access and Participation Plan, will not change as a result of the shift in priorities outlined above.

Feedback from part-time and mature students in particular, identified their concerns about the level of student debt. To address this issue, the College took the strategic decision to charge a lower fee on all courses below honours degree level. This approach has been supported and welcomed by students as a positive step towards reducing concerns around the level of debt upon graduation. All students on these courses are also provided with all essential materials and equipment free of charge.

Hardship funds are available to all students and are particularly focussed upon support to those from underrepresented groups. The purpose of the payments, which was agreed with the student body, is to address short-term challenges that may arise at any point during the student life cycle. The hardship fund is not designed to meet continuous short falls in income or regular expenditure. In all cases, the College is committed to supporting students to be financially independent. The students felt that this flexibility was important given the wide range of challenges that they can and do face. Individual requests are assessed on an 'as needed' basis through an application process to Student Services. Information describing access to hardship funds is provided to all students through Student Services and the Student Union.

### **3.6.3 Progression**

Support for student progression is driven by feedback from students, employers and market research. At the design stage of each programme of study, the College reviews the required and desirable professional qualifications for graduates in the sector concerned. Where a professional qualification exists that will enhance the employment prospects of the graduate, the College works with the professional body concerned to embed the qualification into the course. Any costs associated with this activity are absorbed by the College. In addition, all students' professional membership fees are paid by the College. While this strategy does not directly target students with protected characteristics, it does ensure that any student with a protected characteristic is not disadvantaged by not being able to meet the costs of professional fees.



Targeted support for students with protected characteristics is provided through a range of activities and interventions, to assist in higher level study and employment applications. In particular, these interventions focus on guiding students with no experience - whether personally or in their family unit - through the strategies to employ when making applications.

Wherever appropriate, the College will support students with protected characteristics in planning and formulating applications for employment of further study. This includes, helping students to recognise any barriers they may face and identify strategies to overcome them. In addition, the College will support students with any assistive technologies that they may require when completing applications.

## 4.0 Provision of information to students

The College manages and monitors the information provided to students through the Higher Education Working Group (Marketing). The group ensures that information provided to students, including details of fees and charges, is accurate, timely and consistent. The HE Working Group (Marketing) welcomes student representatives as members.

The HE Working Group (Marketing) reviews the content of all web and print based communications to ensure that they are accurate, fit for purpose and comply with legal requirements. Specifically, this includes all information relating to:

- total cost of the course, including tuition fees and any additional essential costs;
- the payment of bursaries or other financial support;
- ensuring that students have access to all relevant policies both prior to application and after enrolment that explaining what they will be charged for;
- arrangements for payment and rights of cancellation;
- complaints handling.

All College staff engaged in discussing courses and offers to prospective students are trained in how to manage the process and comply with Competition and Markets Authority guidance. Students are also advised about their [rights as consumers](#) and what they can expect from the College in terms of information that affects their contract with the College. Staff are aware of the importance of being accurate, clear, timely and complete in the information, advice and guidance that they provide to prospective students.

The College commits to maintaining the fee levels advertised at the time of application/enrolment and does not increase fees on an annual basis in line with inflation. This is explained in the [Fees and Charges policy and guidance](#) documents available on the College website. This policy includes information covering fees payable for the duration of courses.

The process of providing hardship funds is understood across all student facing functions to ensure that students that wish to access hardship funds are supported through the channel that they choose to take. All applications are managed through Student Services and the Higher Education Office.

The approach to the fees and charges policy is shared and discussed in the Higher Education Working Group (Finance and Registry). This working group welcomes students as members.

The College does not sub-contract any of its provision to other providers.

All of the above information is provided on the College website and is available for students to access at all times.

Any specific enquiries regarding fees or financial support that arise in year can be addressed to either Student Services or the HE Office.

## 5.0 Appendices

1. Targets (tables 2a, 2b and 2c in the targets and investment plan)
2. Investment summary (tables 4a and 4b in the targets and investment plan)
3. Fee summary (table 4a and 4b in the fee information document)

### Summary of 2021-22 entrant course fees

\*course type not listed

#### Inflationary statement:

We will not raise fees annually for 2021-22 new entrants

**Table 4a - Full-time course fee levels for 2021-22 entrants**

Full-time course type:	Additional information:	Course fee:
First degree	N/a	£8,500
Foundation degree	N/a	£6,900
Foundation year/Year 0	*	*
HNC/HND	N/a	£4,600
CertHE/DipHE	N/a	£6,900
Postgraduate ITT	N/a	£5,000
Accelerated degree	N/a	£9,250
Sandwich year	*	*
Erasmus and overseas study years	*	*
Other	*	*

**Table 4b - Sub-contractual full-time course fee levels for 2021-22**

Sub-contractual full-time course type:	Additional information:	Course fee:
First degree	*	*
Foundation degree	*	*
Foundation year/Year 0	*	*
HNC/HND	*	*
CertHE/DipHE	*	*
Postgraduate ITT	*	*
Accelerated degree	*	*
Sandwich year	*	*
Erasmus and overseas study years	*	*
Other	*	*

**Table 4c - Part-time course fee levels for 2021-22 entrants**

Part-time course type:	Additional information:	Course fee:
First degree	N/a	£6,900
Foundation degree	N/a	£6,900
Foundation year/Year 0	*	*
HNC/HND	N/a	£4,600
CertHE/DipHE	*	*
Postgraduate ITT	N/a	£2,100
Accelerated degree	*	*
Sandwich year	*	*
Erasmus and overseas study years	*	*
Other	*	*

**Table 4d - Sub-contractual part-time course fee levels for 2021-22**

Sub-contractual part-time course type:	Additional information:	Course fee:
First degree	*	*
Foundation degree	*	*
Foundation year/Year 0	*	*
HNC/HND	*	*
CertHE/DipHE	*	*
Postgraduate ITT	*	*
Accelerated degree	*	*
Sandwich year	*	*
Erasmus and overseas study years	*	*
Other	*	*

# Targets and investment plan

## 2021-22 to 2025-26

Provider name: Middlesbrough College

Provider UKPRN: 10004344

### Investment summary

The OFS requires providers to report on their planned investment in access, financial support and research and evaluation in their access and participation plan. The OFS does not require providers to report on investment in student success and progression in the access and participation plans and therefore investment in these areas is not recorded here.

#### Note about the data:

The figures in Table 4a relate to all expenditure on activities and measures that support the ambitions set out in an access and participation plan, where they relate to access to higher education. The figures in Table 4b only relate to the expenditure on activities and measures that support the ambitions set out in an access and participation plan, where they relate to access to higher education which is funded by higher fee income. The OFS does not require providers to report on investment in success and progression and therefore investment in these areas is not represented.

The figures below are not comparable to previous access and participation plans or access agreements as data published in previous years does not reflect latest provider projections on student numbers.

Table 4a - Investment summary (£)

Access and participation plan investment summary (£)	Academic year				
	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24	2024-25	2025-26
<b>Total access activity investment (£)</b>	£87,757.00	£88,235.00	£84,240.00	£81,172.00	£81,172.00
Access (pre-16)	£6,052.00	£6,085.00	£5,810.00	£5,598.00	£5,598.00
Access (post-16)	£42,366.00	£42,596.00	£40,668.00	£39,186.00	£39,186.00
Access (adults and the community)	£39,339.00	£39,554.00	£37,762.00	£36,388.00	£36,388.00
Access (other)	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00
<b>Financial support (£)</b>	£57,901.00	£58,930.00	£64,600.00	£69,000.00	£69,000.00
<b>Research and evaluation (£)</b>	£20,000.00	£20,000.00	£20,000.00	£20,000.00	£20,000.00

Table 4b - Investment summary (HFI%)

Access and participation plan investment summary (%HFI)	Academic year				
	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24	2024-25	2025-26
<b>Higher fee income (EHFI)</b>	£1,183,165.00	£1,184,635.00	£1,206,835.00	£1,206,835.00	£1,206,835.00
<b>Access investment</b>	7.4%	7.4%	7.0%	6.7%	6.7%
<b>Financial support</b>	4.9%	5.0%	5.4%	5.7%	5.7%
<b>Research and evaluation</b>	1.7%	1.7%	1.7%	1.7%	1.7%
<b>Total investment (as %HFI)</b>	14.0%	14.1%	14.0%	14.1%	14.1%





