



## **Access and Participation Statement 2017-2019**

All documents related to OfS registration have been prepared as part of a joint development planning group and in consultation with The University of Bolton. From academic year 2018/2019 there will be no new students enrolling directly with Bolton College. All new students taught at Bolton College will be contracted to the University of Bolton.

Continuing students remain to be contracted to Bolton College for one further academic year in 2018 - 2019.

From 1<sup>st</sup> August 2018 Bolton College and The University of Bolton will become a merged entity.

<https://www.boltoncollege.ac.uk/news/update-merger-bolton-college-university-bolton>

### **Introduction and Background**

Bolton College provides high quality vocational training to enhance qualifications, skills and employability. With over 800 full- and part-time courses to choose from, delivered at five main centres around Bolton, we're confident that we have something to suit everyone. We continually strive to improve and strengthen what we do best, so that we can help more learners to achieve their ambitions in the future.

In May 2016 Bolton College consulted under the statutory framework of the Further and Higher Education Act 1992 on our proposed merger with the University of Bolton ("Consultation"). We provided feedback on that consultation in July 2016.

Since then an enormous amount of work has been carried out both by the College and the University on how to structure the merger. Both the College and University were invited by the Department for Education to take part in a pilot for the creation of a group structure where the College's operations and activities are carried on through a newly created wholly owned charitable subsidiary of the University.

The Department for Education has now approved that model and is currently designating a newly set up subsidiary company limited by guarantee (called Bolton College) to be eligible to receive public funding which is a necessary step in order to operate a publicly funded further education college. The intention is that the College will dissolve, as set out in the Consultation, and transfer its property, rights and liabilities to the new company all with effect from 1st August 2018. The company will continue to operate the College from its current sites.

The College is a member of GM Higher, a collaboration of 5 universities and 8 further education colleges from across Greater Manchester, who are working together to provide high-quality outreach activities for local schools and colleges as part of the HEFCE funded National Networks for Collaborative Outreach project. GM Higher aims to improve the provision of information, advice and guidance about progression routes to higher education (HE) and improved information about the variety of HE options for learners and their key influencers.

Bolton College recognises and values the cultural, social and ethnic diversity reflected in our students and staff. As a result, we treat all with respect and dignity, and seek to create a positive learning and working environment. We provide a safe and supportive environment which values individuals equally, regardless of:

- Age
- Sex
- Disability
- Race
- Gender reassignment
- Marriage / Civil partnership
- Religion or belief
- Sexual orientation or re-orientation
- Pregnancy and maternity

The college is home to people from a wide range of cultures and backgrounds with diverse beliefs, values and abilities. We aim to meet the needs of all individuals and encourage them to share their experiences and beliefs.

We welcome students with learning difficulties and disabilities and support them according to their needs. We work collaboratively with a range of community organisations and other partners to tackle social exclusion, address discrimination and promote community cohesion.

We want everyone to feel comfortable and secure enough to be themselves; we do not tolerate harassment, bullying, victimisation or discrimination.

Our Single Equality Scheme incorporates the goals of our college Equality and Diversity Strategy; this document is available online within our Key Policies section and is currently under review, along with the action plans, as part of the work the College is undertaking with the National Centre for Diversity.

## **Vision**

Bolton College works with a wide range of public and private sector organisations, including the 'Bolton Family' of public sector organisations, to meet the education and training needs of Bolton, its geographical, cultural and business communities. The College seeks to contribute to the education and training needs of the region and sub-region and, in relation to some niche markets, it will play a national and international role. We will support social and economic regeneration and contribute to measurable business success and community cohesion through the provision of flexible, innovative and responsive high quality training opportunities, working in partnerships with employers, local communities, key agencies and training providers.

We will create a high quality learning organisation which captures outstanding practice including a culture of continuous improvement, by providing inspirational, cutting edge teaching and learning which is responsive to the needs, interests and experience of all learners and leads to success. We will widen participation and increase access to lifelong learning opportunities in education and training at a variety of locations and assist all our learners to reach and maximise their full potential and progress in their learning and employment.

## **Values**

Our key values are:

- Excellence in all we do
- Ensuring learning and the learner are at the heart of everything we do
- Equality of opportunity and celebration of diversity
- Honesty and Integrity
- Serving our community
- Sustainability and Corporate responsibility

## **Widening Participation Priorities**

In order to achieve our goal we have identified key widening participation priorities:

- Effective and targeted marketing
- Fair and effective admissions policy and process
- Simple and affordable fee structure; and targeted financial support
- Tutorial and additional support to improve student achievement and retention
- Progression and Growth
- Evaluation of Widening Participation

### **Effective and targeted marketing**

The college has carried out a great deal of targeted marketing to make sure that potential students are fully aware of our Higher Education (HE) offer. The HE section of the college has a presence at all college open days; and works in collaboration with the University of Bolton, and the Greater Manchester Higher Network, to promote our HE courses. The college also promotes internal progression pathways from our range of relevant and appropriate pre-HE courses. We market our HE courses via social media, both locally and nationally, and target local communities with a series of brochures that include our HE provision.

### **Fair and effective admissions policy and process**

When attracting students from a wide range of non-traditional backgrounds, all HE applicants are considered on their individual merits including their qualifications, personal statement, references, and experiences, and also include accreditation of prior learning. Our Programme Areas may also use an interview and/or assessment as part of the decision making process. Applicants with nonstandard qualifications will also be considered where they have significant professional or vocational experience within their chosen subject area. If we have potential students for whom a HE qualification is not appropriate when they apply

advice is available on how they can gain the appropriate skills/ knowledge or qualifications to enable them to make a successful application in the future. As an example we have developed a portfolio of Access to HE courses, and pre-HE courses that can feed into our HE courses.

### **Simple and affordable fee structure; and targeted financial support**

The college aims to provide the best possible service for its students while maintaining the tuition fees at an affordable level. The college is keen to maintain this value for money approach in order not to deter potential students, particularly those from non-traditional backgrounds as tuition fees grow in other HEIs. However, we also need to ensure that we can cover the cost of teaching these students, who typically need more support particularly during the first year of the course. The college provides financial support, through the HE Hardship Fund), for those students who are experiencing unexpected financial difficulties. For example:

- Meet specific course and living costs which are not already met from other sources;
- Assist if students are in financial hardship;
- Provide emergency payments for unexpected financial crises;
- Help students who may be considering giving up their course because of financial problems.

We also provide financial incentives (Higher Education Progression Award) to our pre-HE level course students, to progress onto a HE course at college.

### **Tutorial and additional support to improve retention**

Another key part of our priorities is in the provision of tutorial and 'other' support that students are entitled to. With full-time and part-time students this can be achieved in traditional ways using a timetabled session. For our full-time and particularly part-time students, who often work long hours, and/or are employed and wish to maximise their time at college studying, tutorials can be facilitated via email and through the Virtual Learning Environment, although tutors are available when required for face to face tutorials. We do encourage students to speak with their tutor/s when they need additional support, or are experiencing personal or challenging difficulties. Students are signposted to the college counselling service, careers service, student support service, learning support services, and learning support is available in all our Learning Resource Centres (LRC) and library. We employ a 'student at risk' process, where students are absent for 2 classes, or have erratic attendance, and Head of Areas and Curriculum Leaders monitor absences on a weekly basis.

### **Progression and Growth**

We are continuing to develop specific progression routes into the University of Bolton for students to convert their HNC and HND qualifications to full degrees in specific pathways. The college continues to offer internal progression routes for our level 3 and 4 courses onto our HNC and HND provision. Specific events are held throughout the year to inform and offer advice and guidance to our learners in terms of our HE offer and how they can progress further once they have completed a HE course at college. We work closely with our

marketing department to ensure we have strong HE presence in all marketing literature, including the use of social media.

### **Evaluation of Widening Participation**

We have been working to improve widening participation for our higher level programmes for a number of years, it is part of the ethos of the whole college running through all levels, and we monitor the success of this very carefully through recruitment, retention, achievement, and destination rates. In addition, the data is differentiated by post code, ethnicity, disability, gender and age. All HE programmes produce an annual self-evaluation document (SED), and include a breakdown of the data so that analysis can be carried out in relation to access and participation. An annual College HE SED is produced, that includes evidence from all HE courses, and the College Governors have oversight of this document.