



**BOLTON COLLEGE**

**HIGHER EDUCATION (HE)**  
**STRATEGY**

**2016-2019**

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

**Good news:** The Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) Higher Education Review (2014) identified the following features of good practice: vocationally relevant programmes that make use of employers to enhance the student experience; the range of opportunities staff are given to develop, share and adopt new and innovative practice; the strategic approach, institutional commitment and opportunities provided to enhance student employability.

**Government reform:** The Higher Education (HE) sector is facing a new direction of travel and challenge; from the Green Paper initiatives and reform, the Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF) agenda, the increase in alternative HE training providers and subsequent increased competition, the Higher Apprenticeship push, changing technologies and the need for HE providers to ensure currency in information technology applications, and the push to ensure that all HE providers increase their student intake in underrepresented groups in society: doubling the proportion of students from disadvantaged backgrounds entering HE by 2020; increasing the number of BME students entering HE by 20% by 20120; and addressing differences in student outcomes. All of these key policies and initiatives underpin the need for HE provision that meets the needs of students, the demands from employers, and the overall economy.

**Bolton College opportunities:** The HE context presents many challenges and opportunities for the Further Education (FE) sector, and a significant drive for FE colleges is the increased competition for HE students. Students are at the heart of this and therefore we need to ensure that they are given more choice and information on vocational courses in order to meet their needs and that of the economy.

Our priorities have been developed following detailed analysis of current national, regional, and local policy and discussion with key local partners. We aim to continue this level of focussed analysis in determining our HE provision to ensure that it supports students in achieving higher level skills and employment; and contribute to the improvement of higher level skills profile in the borough.

**Who we are:** As a College with a diverse student body and a long history of facilitating access to education, Bolton College is a socially inclusive FE Institution. Our student body is diverse and many come to us with non- traditional entry qualifications and from non-traditional entry backgrounds, including older, diverse ethnicities, and disadvantaged backgrounds.

Our HE student population consist of mature and 18+ students, studying part time and full time, or within the work place and predominantly live locally and are often the first family member to access Higher Education provision. All our HE provision is vocationally oriented and students have the opportunity to acquire knowledge and skills that will prepare them for the world of work.

We aim to provide a rigorous and robust, local higher education curriculum which is employment focussed and leads to improved career outcomes for our students. We also aim to continue working collaboratively with our partners, including the Greater Manchester Higher Collaborative Network, the North West Regional Forum of Higher

Education in Colleges, and the Greater Manchester Higher Education in Further Education Consortium. We will also aim to strengthen our collaborative working with our partner Universities and industry sectors. Finally we will continue to work effectively with Bolton Council to ensure that we deliver a high-quality, demand-led curriculum, and create a system that will support the Council's vision of providing Bolton adults the opportunity to access excellent educational opportunities to meet their needs and enable progression to the highest levels. We also support the Government's vision to ensure that every adult has the opportunity to progress in learning and employment and fulfil their potential.

## **2. THE VISION FOR HE LEARNING AT BOLTON COLLEGE**

Our vision is to transform higher level education within the College to allow our students to enjoy learning, achieve their full potential and progress in their chosen career. We will work with our key partners, with a focus on employers, to ensure that our HE provision provides excitement and challenges for our students and leads to improved career outcomes and life chances. We will focus solely on increasing opportunity for vocation and work-based learning. We will engage employers on all aspects of curriculum development delivery and review. We want to enable students to make positive, informed choices from a dynamic, varied, inclusive and accessible curriculum. We want to offer economically relevant, high quality, flexible learning opportunities that will meet the needs of Bolton adults, employers, and community.

Bolton College works with a wide range of public and private sector organisations, including the 'Bolton Family', to meet the education and training needs of Bolton, its' geographical, cultural, and business communities. 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, and key agencies and training providers. We will ensure that we meet the need of our student body through regular review and enhancement of our mechanisms for student engagement.

We will create a high quality learning environment which captures outstanding practice including a culture of continuous improvement, by providing inspirational, teaching and learning which is responsive to the needs, interests, and experience of our students and leads to success. The quality of learning, teaching and assessment will be enhanced through sharing of good practice both internally and across GM HE providers. We will increase access to lifelong learning opportunities in education and training.

Through our commitment to continuous enhancement, by the end of 2019 we will have strengthened collaborative links with our existing HEI partnerships, and continue to develop our relationships with industry and employers.

We believe in the transformative potential of higher education, for individuals and their families, for businesses, for communities and the economy as a whole. The strategy sets out the College's key directions for HE over the next three years.

### 3. BOLTON COLLEGE HE STRATEGY

#### **Strategic Aim 1:**

To provide a high quality student learning experience, informed by scholarship and professional practice, which is engaging and supportive, and which challenges and inspires.

#### **Objectives: Provide a high quality HE learning experience by:**

- Strengthening a student focussed HE learning, teaching and assessment strategy to support continuous quality improvement
- Providing opportunities for students to be engaged in and be able to influence and shape all aspects of the curriculum
- Engaging students in all aspects of the learning experience including processes to support quality improvement
- Ensuring that staff are enabled to improve and enhance their pedagogic knowledge and skills and professional practice by facilitating appropriate forums
- Ensuring that quality and standards are continually improved and annually monitored via the production of an HE Self Evaluation report (SED) supported by subject area Self Evaluation reports

#### **Strategic Aim 2:**

To work in partnership to provide an enhanced HE curriculum that ensures an increase in progression opportunities for Bolton students.

#### **Objectives: To work effectively with partners to achieve relevant growth in HE provision by:**

- Providing regular opportunities for existing partners to be more engaged in the processes of developing new HE provision
- Developing opportunities to create new links with potential HE partners for the purpose of growing HE provision
- Ensuring currency of curriculum developments with awarding bodies

#### **Strategic Aim 3:**

To provide high quality, flexible, value for money vocational HE programmes and higher apprenticeship pathways, that enable students to develop the knowledge and skills which will prepare them with confidence for future success in work and life.

#### **Objectives: To provide high quality, flexible, value for money HE programmes in response to identified niche market opportunities by:**

- Ensuring that up to date intelligence regarding niche market programme/ course opportunities are developed in partnership with employers and partners
- Increasing the opportunities of relevant staff to develop and strengthen relationships with local employers for the purpose of identifying niche course development
- Working collaboratively with the Quality Unit in ensuring consistency in approach and processes to delivering high quality courses

**Strategic Aim 4:**

To provide higher education learning opportunities for individuals from diverse and disadvantaged backgrounds, and ensure achievement and progression.

**Objectives: Maintain and increase the proportion of students accessing HE by:**

- Promoting EDI by developing an effective CPD package for staff involved in HE delivery
- Monitoring EDI data regularly in relation to recruitment, retention, and achievement; provide actions on associated risks

**Strategic Aim 5:**

To provide an employment led curriculum through effective partnership working with the employment sector.

**Objectives: Provide a curriculum that is employment focussed through effective partnership working by:**

- Strengthening and developing the curriculum that will meet the present and future employment needs through effective engagement with employers
- Working collaboratively with industry bodies and relevant PSRBs to ensure that the skills and competencies embedded within the HE curriculum are carefully aligned to the latest industrial practice

#### 4. MEASURING OUR SUCESS

**Growth:**

- Achieve planned enrolment targets set through the planning process

**Student satisfaction:**

- Maintain our satisfaction rate within the quartile (NSS)
- Maintain our satisfaction rates within the top quartile for internal surveys

**Student success:**

- Maintain and improve student achievement rates both in overall terms and by area
- Maintain our improve the proportion of higher grades students achieve both in overall terms and by subject area

**Student retention:**

- Maintain and improve student retention rates both in overall terms and by area, by a minimum of 95%

**Teaching quality:**

- Maintain our satisfaction rates for learning, teaching and assessment both in overall terms and by area

- Ensure that observations of learning, teaching and assessment are carried out annually; that actions are fulfilled, and an annual report is presented to the HE Quality Assurance Committee
- Ensure that teaching staff have the opportunity for sharing good practice on a regular cycle through the HE Learning, Teaching and Enhancement Group, and staff development/CPD activities

**Work ready students:**

- Ensure that students have the opportunity to experience at least two of the following:
  - A work placement
  - A learning enhancement opportunity linked to key employability skills
  - A research project

**Widening participation:**

- Improve the proportion of students accessing HE from the lowest participation areas (Polar 3 quintile1)
- Ensure all students with a declared disability have access to appropriate learning resources and learning support

**Quality assurance:**

- Maintain and enhance the QAA Quality Code requirements in all aspects of quality assurance systems and processes

**5. MONITORING**

What we will do	Mechanism for monitoring performance
Growth: achieve planned targets set through the planning process	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Performance reviews</li> <li>• Weekly HE report</li> <li>• Dashboard</li> </ul>
Student satisfaction: maintain satisfaction rate within the top quartile	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• NSS</li> <li>• Module evaluation reports</li> <li>• Course end of year evaluation reports</li> <li>• SED</li> <li>• HE Student Forum</li> <li>• EE reports</li> </ul>
Student success: maintain and improve student achievement rates, and higher grade proportions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Performance reviews</li> <li>• SED</li> <li>• Student success rates report</li> <li>• Observation of learning, teaching and assessment reports</li> </ul>

Student retention: maintain and improve student retention rates by a minimum of 95%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Performance review</li> <li>• Weekly HE report</li> <li>• Dashboard</li> <li>• SED</li> </ul>
Teaching quality: maintaining and enhancing learning and teaching	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Module evaluation report</li> <li>• Course end of year evaluation report</li> <li>• Observation of learning, teaching and assessment reports</li> <li>• HE Learning, Teaching and Enhancement Group and minutes</li> <li>• SGP and CPD opportunities</li> </ul>
Prepare students for employment and future careers: provide a work placement or work base experience; provide opportunities to gain employability skills through the curriculum; provide opportunities to undertake and practice research skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Annual audit of employability and transferable skills in curriculum</li> <li>• SED</li> <li>• EE report</li> <li>• Programme Specification Document</li> </ul>
Widening participation: maintain the proportion of students accessing HE from the lowest participation areas (Polar 3 quintile 1)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• SED</li> <li>• Student success rates report</li> <li>• Recruitment and retention data</li> </ul>
Quality assurance: maintain and enhance the QAA Quality Code requirements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• HE Committee</li> <li>• HE Quality Assurance Committee</li> <li>• HE learning, Teaching and Enhancement Group</li> <li>• HE Student Forum</li> <li>• HE surveys</li> <li>• HE web</li> <li>• HE Moodle</li> <li>• HE Policies and Procedures</li> <li>• Collaborative partnership working</li> <li>• CPD/Staff development</li> </ul>

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