

# Grantham College

## Access and participation plan

### 2020-21 to 2024-25

Grantham College is a small general FE college whose HE provision is designed to meet the needs of the local community. The College's student population reflects the wider populace in the region. The College aims to break down barriers to Higher Education and widen access to and participation of the local community with particular reference to those groups who are under-represented. Our learner numbers at HE level are very low when compared to universities and larger college groups. 180 students informed the calculations for our TEF Year 4 metrics.

We have reviewed our current and historic performance using the OfS APP dashboard datasets. Where information is not available via the OfS datasets, we have used our TEF Year 4 metrics, and in some cases our internal data. Where there are current gaps in available internal data we will enhance our data monitoring systems to track the performance of underrepresented groups (December 2019 onwards).

## 1.0 Assessment of Performance

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

#### 1.1a Access

The access of students from POLAR4 quintiles 1 and 2 is high (see Table 1 below). The number of quintile 2 HE learners at Grantham College is significantly higher than the national percentage. There is a positive trend as we have more quintile 1 than quintile 5 learners. There are no significant gaps.

**Table 1: Access proportions by POLAR4 quintile**

**(Source: Access and participation dashboard, Office for Students, 2019, UK. Based on 2 year average data to 2017/18 – data before 2016/17 withheld due to low numbers).**

POLAR4	Grantham College	National
Quintile 1	15%	12%
Quintile 2	35%	15.7%
Quintile 3	7.5%	19%
Quintile 4	32.5%	23%
Quintile 5	10%	30.3%
Gap 1-5	5%	-18%

## 1.1b Success

### Non-continuation

The OfS access and participation dataset does not currently present information for gaps in the continuation rates of HE students from Grantham College in comparison with the population by household income, or socioeconomic status. From our TEF Year 4 dataset (aggregated indicator), POLAR4 quintiles 1-2 full-time achieved 76.9% continuation, with quintiles 3-5 at 69.2%. We do not consider this gap to be significant as it marks a positive reversal of the national trend for more HE learners to continue from Q3-5. Part-time numbers are R – Not Reportable.

### Attainment

The OfS access and participation dataset does not present information for gaps in the attainment of HE learners at Grantham College in comparison with the population by household income, or socioeconomic status. The below shows attainment by IMD decile from our internal datasets. (We recognise the distinction between POLAR4 and IMD information, and will collect POLAR4 attainment rates in our internal datasets from 2019 onwards.)

**Table 2: Attainment by IMD decile 2017-18**

**(Source: Grantham College internal datasets, 2019, UK)**

IMD	Grade PA %	Grade ME %	Grade DIS %
1	30%	30%	40%
2	0%	100%	0%
3	22%	33%	44%
4	20%	20%	60%
5	36%	55%	9%
6	67%	33%	0%
7	20%	40%	40%
8	50%	25%	25%
9	100%	0%	0%
10	0%	0%	100%

**Table 3: Attainment by IMD decile 2016-17**

**(Source: Grantham College internal datasets, 2019, UK)**

IMD	PASS %	Grade ME %	Grade DIS %
1	20%	60%	20%
2	0%	100%	0%
3	58%	33%	8%
4	50%	50%	0%
5	20%	60%	20%
6	25%	50%	25%

7	50%	17%	33%
8	50%	33%	17%
9	33%	33%	33%
10	33%	67%	0%

**Table 4: Attainment by IMD decile 2015-16**

(Source: Grantham College internal datasets, 2019, UK)

IMD	Grade PA %	Grade ME %	Grade DIS %
1	40%	40%	20%
2	100%	0%	0%
3	29%	57%	14%
4	100%	0%	0%
5	100%	0%	0%
6	0%	0%	100%
7	25%	50%	25%
8	50%	25%	25%
9	0%	33%	67%
10	0%	100%	0%

#### **Progress over time:**

There are no significant gaps over time in relation to attainment by IMD decile, with deciles 1-3 achieving a positive trend upwards for merits and distinctions in 2017-18.

### **1.1c Progression to employment or further study**

The OfS access and participation dataset does not present information for gaps in the attainment of HE students at Grantham College in comparison with peers by household income, or socioeconomic status. Across the three years of suitable metrics, our TEF Year 4 data shows the progression rates to employment or further study for full-time POLAR4 quintiles 1-2 at 94.7%, with quintiles 3-5 at 96.4%. There are no significant gaps. Part-time is shown as R – Not Reportable.

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

### **1.2a Access**

Grantham has a lower percentage of non-White residents compared to the national population. From the 2011 census (Office for National Statistics), Grantham comprises 96.3% White residents (national percentage 86%), with 2% Asian residents (national percentage 7.5%), 0.6% Black ethnic groups (national percentage 3.3%), 0.2% Mixed ethnicity (national percentage 2.2%), and 0.2% other ethnic groups (national percentage 1.0%). The ethnicity of Grantham College's HE cohort reflects that of the local population. No OfS APP data is available in this area. TEF Year 4 metrics are shown as N or R (Not Reportable). We have added a written commitment (i) on pages 12-13 to increase headcount and to reflect on how our work will contribute to access, success, and progression for BAME students.

## 1.2b Success

### Non-Continuation

No OfS APP data is available in this area. TEF Year 4 metrics are shown as N or R (Not Reportable). Please refer to Commitment (i), pages 12-13.

### Attainment

No OfS APP data is available in this area. TEF Year 4 metrics are shown as N or R (Not Reportable). Please refer to Commitment (i), pages 12-13.

## 1.2c Progression to employment or further study

No OfS APP data is available in this area. TEF Year 4 metrics are shown as N or R (Not Reportable). Please refer to Commitment (i), pages 12-13.

## 1.3 Mature students

### 1.3a Access

The below tables (Tables 5 to 7) show that there is a significant and widening gap in the percentage of mature students gaining access to HE provision at the College in relation to their peers. The College will prioritise closing this gap.

**Table 5: Access by age 2017-18**

**(Source: Access and participation dashboard, Office for Students, 2019, UK)**

2017-18	Grantham College
Young (under 21)	75%
Mature (21 and over)	25%

**Table 6: Access by age 2016-17**

**(Source: Access and participation dashboard, Office for Students, 2019, UK)**

2016-17	Grantham College
Young (under 21)	68%
Mature (21 and over)	32%

**Table 7: Access by age 2015-16**

**(Source: Access and participation dashboard, Office for Students, 2019, UK)**

2015-16	Grantham College
Young (under 21)	60%
Mature (21 and over)	40%

## 1.3b Success

### Non-Continuation

No data on this area is available on the OfS access and participation dashboard. The below is configured from the OfS individualised data files for Grantham College (Cont = Continuing; Qual = Qualified):

**Table 8: Percentage of students aged under 21 continuing or qualifying**

(Source: OfS individualised data files for Grantham College, 2019, UK)

YEAR	Age Under 21 Cont or Qual%
14/15	88%
15/16	82%
16/17	90%

**Table 9: Percentage of mature students continuing or qualifying**

(Source: OfS individualised data files for Grantham College, 2019, UK)

YEAR	Age 21-25 Cont or Qual %	Age 26-30 Cont or Qual %	Age 31-40 Cont or Qual %	Age 41-50 Cont or Qual %	Age 51+ Cont or Qual %
14/15	100%	100%	100%	0% (no students)	100%
15/16	67%	100%	71%	33%	100%
16/17	67%	83%	100%	67%	100%

**Progress over time:** There is a gap between 21-25 year olds', 26-30 year olds', and 41-50 year olds' continuing and qualifying percentages and those of young learners. The College will prioritise closing these gaps.

### Attainment

The OfS access and participation dataset does not present information for gaps in the attainment of young/mature HE learners at Grantham College. The information overleaf shows the percentage of grades achieved by young and mature students from our internal datasets.

**Table 10: Percentage of grades achieved by young/mature students for 2017-18**

(Source: Grantham College internal datasets, 2019, UK)

2017-18 Age	Grade	No.Students	% of those achieved
Young	Distinction	R	26%
Young	Merit	R	32%
Young	Pass	R	41%
Mature 21+	Distinction	R	47%
Mature	Merit	R	41%
Mature	Pass	R	12%

**Table 11: Percentage of grades achieved by young/mature students for 2016-17**  
(Source: Grantham College internal datasets, 2019, UK)

2016-17 Age	Grade	No.Students	% of those achieved
Young	Distinction	R	21%
Young	Merit	R	29%
Young	Pass	R	50%
Mature 21+	Distinction	R	8%
Mature	Merit	R	83%

**Table 12: Percentage of grades achieved by young/mature students for 2015-16** (Source: Grantham College internal datasets, 2019, UK)

2015-16 Age	Grade	No.Students	% of those achieved
Young	Distinction	R	28%
Young	Merit	R	33%
Young	Pass	R	39%
Mature 21+	Distinction	R	15%
Mature	Merit	R	54%
Mature	Pass	R	31%

The percentage of mature students achieving high grades has risen to close those gaps between mature and young learners in 2017-18. The College will continue to monitor grades against characteristic.

### 1.3c Progression to employment or further study

No information is available on progression of mature students on the OfS dashboard datasets. Our TEF Year 4 metrics show across three years of suitable metrics that 95.7% of full-time young students are progressing to employment or further study, and 96.4% of full-time mature students. 96.7% of part-time young students

are progressing to employment or further study, and 100% of part-time mature students. There are no significant gaps.

## 1.4 Disabled students

### 1.4a Access

The OfS Access and Participation Dashboard data shows that the percentage of disabled students accessing our full-time Higher Education provision is now in line with national levels. (No dashboard data is available for our part-time figures due to very small numbers of students.)

**Table 13: Access by percentage of not disabled/disabled students 2015-16, 2016-17, 2017-18**  
(Source: Grantham College internal datasets, 2019, UK)

2015-16	Grantham College
Not disabled	95%
Disabled	5%
2016-17	
Not disabled	88%
Disabled	12%
2017-18	
Not disabled	85%
Disabled	15%

### 1.4b Success

#### Non-continuation

The OfS access and participation dataset does not hold information for gaps in continuation of disabled and non-disabled students (numbers are withheld on the dashboard as statistically insignificant). Our TEF Year 4 metrics lists the continuation rates as 73.3% for disabled learners and 78.8% for non-disabled learners.

There are no significant gaps.

#### Attainment

The OfS access and participation dataset does not hold information for gaps in attainment of disabled and non-disabled students. The information overleaf is from our internal datasets.

**Table 14: Attainment by percentage of those achieved - no disability/disability for 2017-18**  
(Source: Grantham College internal datasets, 2019, UK)

2017-18 Disability	Grade	No.Students	% of those achieved
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yes	Distinction	R	43%
yes	Merit	R	0%
yes	Pass	R	57%
no	Distinction	R	32%
no	Merit	R	41%
no	Pass	R	27%

**Table 15: Attainment by percentage of those achieved - no disability/disability for 2016-17 (Source: Grantham College internal datasets, 2019, UK)**

2016-17 Disability	Grade	No.Students	% of those achieved
yes	Distinction	R	33%
yes	Merit	R	33%
yes	Pass	R	33%
no	Distinction	R	16%
no	Merit	R	43%
no	Pass	R	41%

**Table 16: Attainment by percentage of those achieved - no disability/disability for 2015-16 (Source: Grantham College internal datasets, 2019, UK)**

2015-16 Disability	Grade	No.Students	% of those achieved
yes	Distinction	R	40%
yes	Merit	R	40%
yes	Pass	R	20%
no	Distinction	R	19%
no	Merit	R	42%
no	Pass	R	38%

There are no significant gaps in the attainment of high grades for disabled students in comparison with their peers. Indeed, the percentage of disabled students achieving distinctions is higher than non-disabled students across all three years of measurement.

#### **1.4c Progression to employment or further study**

The OfS access and participation dataset does not hold information for gaps in progression of disabled and non-disabled students at Grantham College. Our TEF Year 4 metrics list the progression rates to



employment or further study as 100% for disabled learners and 95.2% for non-disabled learners. There are no significant gaps.

## **1.5 Care leavers**

Due to no previous or present care leavers registered for HE level study at the College, it is difficult for us to set a valid target. We have added a written commitment on page 14 to increase headcount and to reflect on how our work will contribute to access, success, and progression for care leavers.

## **1.6 Intersections of disadvantage**

As highlighted earlier, the small number of HE students studying at Grantham College makes it even more difficult to identify and evaluate gaps in absolute terms around intersections of disadvantage, and of disaggregated sub-groups, because of suppressed statistics for data protection.

## **1.7 Other groups who experience barriers in higher education**

As per the above point, it is difficult to identify smaller sub-sections in partial data from a limited range of percentages in our HE cohorts. One area that will be explored via the APP Working Group is potential barriers in accessing higher education for children from military families, and for military personnel. Lincolnshire and more specifically Grantham and its surrounding areas have a large percentage of RAF and military bases. There has been no formal analysis of students from these groups; it is an area for development for our APP activities, particularly around data collection and how we analyse performance (given the small numbers of HE students involved).

# **2. Strategic aims and objectives**

## **2.1 Target groups**

We have used our assessment of performance to select our target groups. We have flagged significant gaps and those which we believe that we can have the biggest impact on closing. We have discounted some smaller gaps or those that have not been sustained over a number of years. We will continue to review and evaluate these target groups through our self-assessment process. We propose to target the following groups in our access and participation work in the following stages of the learner lifecycle:

### **Access**

1. Mature students (gap identified in our assessment of performance, section 1.3a).

### **Success**

2. Mature students (gap identified in section 1.3b for Non-Continuation. There is no gap for Attainment).

(There are no significant gaps between underrepresented groups and their peers for Progression to employment or further study)

## **Commitments**

3. BAME students (access, success, progression)
4. Care leavers (access, success, progression)
5. Data collection

## **2.2 Aims and objectives**

### **2.2a Access**

**Target group 1:** Mature students (gap identified in our assessment of performance, section 1.3a).

**Target PTA\_1:** To reduce the gap in access between young and mature students in Higher Education at Grantham College for mature students.

**Baseline percentage of mature students in cohort 2017-18:** 25% (Source: Access and participation dashboard, Office for Students, 2019, UK)

**Yearly milestones for access by percentage of mature students in cohort:** 2020-21 = 30%; 2021-22 = 35%; 2022-23 = 40%; 2023-24 = 43%; 2024-25 = 45%.

#### **Measures to achieve targets:**

We will evaluate the findings from the LINCHigher 'Explaining the Gaps Project' when they are released later this year (December 2019; please see more detailed information on pages 15 and 16);

We will ensure clearer and wider circulation of information for our specific university-level offer, for mature learners. This will be achieved by ensuring a welcoming atmosphere within Admissions, targeted marketing materials, and by setting admission criteria which are realistic for mature learners (deadline March 2020);

The College will consider methods for learners to articulate motivations for success in HE at the admissions stage, including the use of bespoke interviews for mature students (deadline March 2020);

We will also provide opportunity for individual advice on admissions and post-application feedback to ensure that our processes are clear and fair (review December 2019);

We will raise awareness of the importance of employer engagement in improving access rates of mature learners (as per Smith 2008 in 'Underpinning evidence' overleaf; ongoing measure);

We will continue to run our suite of Access to HE programmes – a pathway specifically tailored for mature learners who are returning to education via non-traditional routes or after a period of absence. Further to a 2019 revalidation, we are now able to offer Business programmes within the Access to HE portfolio as well as Humanities and Social Sciences programmes, all of which will be driven by enhanced marketing to attract mature learners (December 2019 onwards);

We will continue to sustain and promote our dedicated HE centre in terms of adding an important social dimension to attract mature learners (November 2019 onwards).

### **Underpinning evidence:**

The College refers to the following underpinning evidence for measures to be taken:

From HEA Academy Evidence Net, 'Mature learners: a synthesis of research' by Judith Smith 2008. In particular, Smith highlights the importance of employer engagement: "The research found that 30% of adults would consider going to university at some point in the future and that 6% were already seriously considering it. The conclusion was that this suggests there are nearly 4 million people considering, or willing to consider, higher education (DIUS 2008). If these learners are to participate in HE, employers, employees and higher education providers need to work together to appreciate each others' perspectives and to ensure that the needs of all parties are accommodated."

The College also refers to HEFCE (2006) 'Pathways to Higher Education: Access Courses' ([http://www.hefce.ac.uk/pubs/hefce/2006/06\\_16/](http://www.hefce.ac.uk/pubs/hefce/2006/06_16/)) noting in particular that, "Two-thirds of the students from access courses on three or four year fulltime degree programmes graduate within five years. This proportion compares favourably with other 'non A-level' entrants. Further, six months after graduating, of those employed 78 per cent were in 'graduate' jobs. The report recognises the importance of the Access to HE programmes for supporting mature student entry and progress through higher education and also indicates the link between mature entry and widening participation to HE."

## **2.2b Success**

**Target group 2:** Mature students (gap identified in section 1.3b).

**Target PTS\_1:** To reduce the non-continuation gaps between young and mature students.

### **Baseline percentage of mature students continuing or qualifying by age 2016-17:**

21-25 year olds 67%, 26-30 83%, 31-40 100%, 41-50 67%, 51+ 100%

(Source: OfS individualised data files for Grantham College, 2019, UK)

### **Yearly milestones (percentages of mature students continuing or qualifying by age):**

19/20: 21-25 year olds 70%, 26-30 85%, 31-40 100%, 41-50 70%, 51+ 100%;

20/21: 21-25 year olds 75%, 26-30 88%, 31-40 100%, 41-50 75%, 51+ 100%;

21/22: 21-25 year olds 80%, 26-30 90%, 31-40 100%, 41-50 77%, 51+ 100%;

22/23: 21-25 year olds 85%, 26-30 92%, 31-40 100%, 41-50 80%, 51+ 100%;

23/24: 21-25 year olds 90%, 26-30 95%, 31-40 100%, 41-50 82%, 51+ 100%;

24/25: 21-25 year olds 95%, 26-30 95%, 31-40 100%, 41-50 85%, 51+ 100%.

### **Measures to achieve targets:**

The College will support the development of independent learning skills of mature learners and ensure HE tutors have a clear understanding of the prior learning experiences of students (November 2019);

The College will encourage mature students to consider ourselves as an HE provider that meets individual needs and challenges students to reach their full potential (ongoing measure);

Wherever possible, we will provide flexible learning programmes through modularisation and part-time routes for Access to HE, and consider the changing needs of students across their learner life-cycle (as per Piette, Mercer and Saunders below in ‘Underpinning evidence’);

We will also target our financial support to assist mature learners in continuing their studies (see pages 18-19).

### **Underpinning evidence:**

Ref Osborne et al (2004), in general mature students perform at least as well as younger students. Males have lower retention rates than females, but older men withdraw for finance or work-related issues whereas older women withdraw for family reasons. The Committee of Public Accounts Report (CPA 2008) into retention rates in higher education notes that around 28,000 full-time and 87,000 part-time students who started first-degree courses in 2004-05 were no longer in higher education a year later. Of the part-time first-degree students who started courses in 2001-02, only 46.9% had graduated after six years and 44.5% had left higher education without completing a qualification. By contrast, 76.8% of the full-time students starting in 2002-03 achieved a qualification and only 15.2% left without a qualification. Around 8% of both full and part-time students were still studying.

The OfS analysis on continuation and transfer rates (<https://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/data-and-analysis/continuation-and-transfer-rates/>) notes: “The continuation rate of mature students is significantly lower than the benchmark.”

Piette (2002) and Mercer and Saunders (2004) indicate a need for flexible provision and flexibility in how students access their learning, and highlight the importance of considering the changing needs of students throughout the course and the social dimension of the learning experience. Mercer and Saunders (2004) note the importance of recognising the changing levels of self-confidence and belief across the life-time of a course – Piette (2002) “‘Altered states’ but “fitting the studying in”: the experience of students on Part-Time degrees’, paper presented at SCUTREA, 32<sup>nd</sup> Annual Conference, 2-4 July 2002, University of Stirling, cited in Smith (2008); Mercer and Saunders (2004) ‘Accommodating change: the process of growth and development amongst a mature student population’, *Research in Post-Compulsory Education*, 9: 2, 283-300, cited in Smith (2008).

## **2.2c Commitments**

We have three commitments: (i) to improve the access, success, and progression rates for BAME students; (ii) to improve access, success, and progression rates for care leavers; and (iii) to update the APP using OfS Access and Participation dashboard datasets as more data is made available.

### **(i) To improve the access, success, and progression rates for BAME students.**

#### **Measures to meet commitment:**

The College will enact a set of measurable collaborative activities via its partnership with LiNCHigher in 19/20 onwards to attract more BAME students to HE regionally (December 2019 onwards). We will make

particular use of the findings from the LiNCHigher 'Explaining the Gaps Project' when they are released later this year (for details see pages 15-16; December 2019). We will continue to showcase our commitment to diversity and inclusion at our Open Events, Careers Fairs, and Student Conferences (Open Events quarterly; Careers Fair January 2020; Student Conferences February 2020). The APP will be a standing item at the HE Group and dovetails with the Equality and Diversity action plan for 19-20 (quarterly meetings). The Vice Principal – Higher Education will continue to deliver talks to Level 3 students and conduct schools outreach activities to raise awareness of our HE provision in 19-20 and onwards (November 2019 and May 2020). Following a recent report to the OfS (as cited overleaf in 'Underpinning evidence'), the College will centre its focus on three drivers for this area (ongoing measure): strong leadership in terms of equality and diversity; creating an open culture and space for conversation about race and closing the access gaps; and developing a racially diverse and inclusive environment for success and progression. For all stages of the learner lifecycle and following the Cabinet Office Race Disparity Audit, the College will, through Marketing, Outreach, charity activity, and curriculum design, work to reinforce a deep sense of belonging, and its contribution to the local community (review December 2019).

### **Underpinning evidence:**

The College refers to findings from 'Understanding and overcoming the challenges of targeting students from under-represented and disadvantaged ethnic backgrounds', a report to the Office for Students by Jacqueline Stevenson, Joan O'Mahony, Omar Khan, Farhana Ghaffar and Bernadette Stiell, February 2019 (<https://www.universitiesuk.ac.uk/policy-and-analysis/reports/Documents/2019/bame-student-attainment-uk-universities-closing-the-gap.pdf>)

The report's conclusion finds the following as key to access and participation for BAME learners:

1. Providing strong leadership: University leaders and senior managers need to demonstrate a commitment to removing the BAME attainment gap and lead by example.
2. Having conversations about race and changing the culture: Universities and students need to create more opportunities to talk directly about race, racism and the attainment gap and to identify what students think is causing it.
3. Developing racially diverse and inclusive environments: University leadership teams are not representative of the student body and some curriculums do not reflect minority groups' experiences. A greater focus is needed from universities, working with their students, on ensuring that BAME students have a good sense of belonging at their university, and on understanding how a poor sense of belonging might be contributing to low levels of engagement and progression to postgraduate study.

The College will put measures in place to provide personal tutor training in raising awareness about racial diversity in our Staff Development Week (July 2020), and help foster a sense of belonging via tailored timetables (July 2020) and continued close collaboration with the student body via representatives, social forums, and focus groups (ongoing measure).

### **(ii) To improve the access, success, and progression rates for care leavers.**

This commitment is for us to increase headcount of care leavers and to reflect on how our work will contribute to access, success and progression of care leavers (review May 2020).

**Measures to meet commitment:**

We are following the DfE report from 14 March 2019 'Principles to guide higher education providers on improving care leavers' access and participation in HE'. As per the report, the College will in Year 1 of the plan:

- incorporate care leavers as a priority group in admissions policies, and consider contextual admissions for this group, so that their often disrupted education and other challenges can be taken in to account;
- through outreach activities, encourage children in care to recognise that higher education is an option for them, and to support them in understanding their options and application, including through special open days targeted at foster carers, staff in children's homes and the children they look after;
- support attainment-raising through study support programmes via homework clubs and summer schools;
- sustain suitable accommodation for care leavers, providing priority access;
- provide a starter pack that provides basic items, including towels, bedding and other essentials that any young person requires when they first arrive at their college accommodation;
- identify a designated member of staff to support care leavers. The role-holder will seek to understand the barriers and challenges that care leavers face, including mental health;
- offer a 'buddy system', where care leavers in their second or third years become mentors to care leavers in their first year;
- implement our commitment by prioritising care leavers in admissions and our accommodation offer, providing clear information about our offer on our website.

**(iii) To update the APP using OfS Access and Participation dashboard datasets as more data is available.**

Due to small numbers, some data for Grantham College is not yet available on the OfS Access and Participation dashboard. As a result, some analysis of our performance in our APP uses our TEF Year 4 or internal data. As the TEF data metrics are not identical to the APP indicators we commit to revisiting this and to use instead the OfS dashboard datasets as more data is made available (to review on rolling basis).

### **3. Strategic measures**

#### **3.1 Whole provider strategic approach**

##### **a. Overview**

Our APP is aligned with our Corporate Strategy. As per our Strategic Plan 2019-2022, Grantham College's overarching strategic aims are as follows:

1. To ensure that student and apprentice progression, employability and career opportunities are central to everything we do so that we help to improve social mobility, reduce employers' skills gaps and support the creation of a thriving local economy and community;
2. To develop and deliver a vocational, technical, professional and higher education curriculum which supports the above whilst increasing access & inclusivity;
3. To maintaining a financially robust and sustainable organisation that allows us to continue to invest in delivering our mission;
4. To create a values driven organisation where all staff are supported & empowered to deliver the above, continuously improve & inspire our students to strive for and achieve the highest standards.

Under Goal 1, the College works to ensure that student and apprentice progression, employability and career opportunities are central to everything we do so that we help to improve social mobility, reduce employers' skills gaps and support the creation of a thriving local economy and community. To monitor the strategy, the Senior Leadership Team of the College will agree appropriate SMART targets for each year of the strategy with the governors of the college and report progress on these to each relevant Committee and Corporation meeting via College dashboards covering quality, finance and other issues. Each SMART target on these dashboards will identify which of the Strategic Goals it is related to so that progress is regularly monitored. The College has also identified the following main objectives for its HE strategy:

1. To widen access to Higher Education programmes in the area by increasing the amount of courses offered at levels 4 and 5 and particularly to address GLLEP priorities;
2. To further develop a Higher Education ethos and culture within the College;
3. To ensure that Higher Education provision at the College is of the highest quality;
4. To embrace new learning technologies and managed learning environments in order to enhance students' learning opportunities;
5. To continue to provide development opportunities for those staff teaching on Higher Education courses at the College.

Progress against the main objectives outlined within the HE strategy will be measured on a termly basis via the College's performance monitoring, business planning and appraisal processes. Key performance indicators such as the number of enrolments, the number of programmes delivered, and the amount of HE-specific CPD sessions delivered will be monitored and recorded. These will be reported to the College's Corporation on an annual basis. The College operates via a holistic approach to ensure equality of opportunity across the learner life-cycle. Its application and interview processes assist in the identification of disadvantaged students at enrolment. We then implement termly support measures to address areas of particular concern. Our student support mechanisms include the provision of dedicated student mentors and study support staff. These teams work closely with the DSA on Study Needs Agreements and in collaboration with Learning Needs Providers.

Central to our approach is the long-established collaborative relationship with LiNCHigher. LiNCHigher operates as an NCOP partnership of 11 education providers and organisations across the county, working with employers and awarding body partners to improve engagement within and from target wards in the local region. The Vice Principal – Higher Education of Grantham College sits on the LiNCHigher Steering Group and Governance Board. Through partnership service agreements, LiNCHigher and Grantham College implement progressive programmes of outreach activities including (but not limited to): schools professional

development support and baseline information sessions via online tutoring; parental engagement and Parent Champion activities; skills roadshows; family days; HE residential trips; inspirational speakers; masterclasses; and enterprise days.

A substantial research project – ‘Explaining the Gaps’ – is being conducted by LiNCHigher in collaboration with the University of Lincoln Research Institute. The findings will be shared amongst all the partner colleges and universities in December 2019. The ‘Explaining the Gaps’ project manages the database of responses to the NCOP national survey from Lincolnshire students. There have been two iterations of the survey to date: a baseline conducted in Autumn 2017 (2400 responses), and a Wave 1 follow-up conducted in Autumn 2018 (9780 responses). The Wave 2 follow-up is due to be implemented in Autumn 2019. In Wave 1, 9780 responses were collected from students from more than 30 Lincolnshire schools, of which NCOP-learners comprise 23%. The survey questions address various aspects of learners’ education journey including grade requirements, awareness of HE including alternative routes such as apprenticeships, and an appraisal of study skills. Pupil characteristics are recorded including year group, gender, ethnicity, and disability. The questions broadly address six areas and generate the following categories: application knowledge; participation knowledge; confidence; study skills; personal benefits of HE; and aspiration for further study. The data is being used to identify gaps at school level by comparing the scores by year group, within each school against the overall year quartiles. This will lead, for LiNCHigher, and for Grantham College, to a targeted approach to the delivery of outreach and engagement activities. A RAG rating system is used to present the data to schools. Each activity is linked to one of six learning outcomes, broadly aligned to the six survey categories. Destination data will also be captured, as well as distance travelled over the course of an academic year. ‘Explaining the Gaps’ will provide evidence, datasets, and measures to inform our Access strategies for all target groups of our APP.

#### **b. Alignment with other strategies**

The plan complements our Equality and Diversity strategy and the extensive work already undertaken to engage with the local community, schools and employers. Our Equality Objectives and Policy are part of our wider commitment to meet our specific duties under the Equality Act 2010 and cover all of the protected characteristics including age, race, sexual orientation, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, religion and belief or lack of belief, and disability and learning difficulties. The College is committed to effectively manage and embed equality, diversity, and inclusion. In October 2011, we signed a pledge to take action to reduce mental health discrimination and stigma as part of the national campaign ‘Time to Change’. In our Equality Duty, we aim to eliminate unlawful discrimination and other conducts, advance equality of opportunity, and to foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.

The College has an Equality and Diversity Committee which meets quarterly across the academic year. The Equality and Diversity Committee is chaired by the Vice Principal – Higher Education. It works to an action plan and reports to the Senior Leadership Team. We will monitor and evaluate the impact of our associated activities via an equality impact assessment to be undertaken in January 2020. This will enhance our already robust system of monitoring impact.



The alignment of WP and E&D strategies is measured and managed through regular meetings of the Disabled Students Officer and the Student Engagement Officer, and via the Equality and Diversity Committee. Widening Participation and Equality and Diversity drivers are mapped across the College annual report, strategic objectives, and policy documentation. Central to the alignment of Widening Participation and Equality and Diversity at the College is (a) a recognition of the complexity of targeting broad groups of social composition and (b) a belief that both areas concern underrepresented groups and hinge on encouraging wider uptake in HE in vocational areas, and in meeting the needs of employers.

The College has an Employer Engagement Team, offering training to individuals seeking a return to employment and an enhancement of employer-facing attributes (such as IT upskilling). Local businesses currently involved with the team include Anglian Water, BGB Engineering, and Quality Furniture Company. The engagement draws together strategic developments around degree apprenticeships, initiatives from Skills Support for the Workforce, and those of the SIEP (Specialist Industry Educator Programme). We consult with employers, our staff and our learners to obtain views on Widening Participation and Equality and Diversity policies, procedures and practices throughout the College, and to promote an inclusive environment. The College will continue to consult with students from a range of backgrounds in the development of the plan and to work with them to deliver it through established groups that contain HE student representation. These comprise student focus groups, student representatives' termly reports, student involvement in Subject Assessment Boards, and ongoing dialogue with the Student Union.

### **c. Strategic measures**

As part of its strategic commitment to widening participation, the College acknowledges that within the community many prospective students, particularly the more mature, non-traditional students are either unwilling or unable to study outside the local area due to personal or work commitment. To facilitate access to HE for this cohort, the College offers competitively priced courses on a full and part-time basis; utilises blended learning; adopts varied patterns of delivery; and embeds accessible modes of teaching, learning and assessment designed to meet each cohort's needs. As part of its ongoing commitment to HE in the region, the College has re-focussed its higher level provision to ensure that wherever possible progression routes from its HE courses are available at HEIs offering Level 6 top-up courses within the local area. The College is committed to expanding a high quality, locally-based HE provision. It has invested in a dedicated Higher Education Centre to provide facilities and a standalone space for its university-level learners. The Centre opened in September 2018, and is designed to (a) promote the particularity of the College's HE identity, culture, and community; and (b) to act as a catalyst for collaboration across the disciplines and subject areas. In April 2019, the College was part of the successful Lincolnshire bid for Institute of Technology (IoT) status and capital funding by the DfE. The IoT is designed to increase and broaden HE participation. It affords more Level 4 and 5 teaching spaces, equipment, and resources, as well as the prestige, branding and attraction of Institute of Technology status. As an IoT satellite, we will expand our HE provision in Engineering and Computing subjects with a forecast of 207 additional learners across five years. The DfE has embedded cross-college collaboration, widening participation, and employer engagement as prominent aspects of the IoT project. All key milestones will be monitored and tracked, progress against target, by the Lincolnshire partnership. Across the whole delivery partnership a model based on Prince II Programme Management principles is to be utilised for the implementation of the IoT. The

project is being delivered across five years of provision, and to a realistic timeline organised around specific work-streams.

Levels of access, success, and progression are subject to measurement across all stages of the learner lifecycle via annual monitoring reviews, termly course reviews, and quarterly standardisation meetings (including the BTEC Working Group). Continuation, progression and completion rates are measured on a termly basis, and are considered alongside NSS and DLHE destinations and outcomes data. Measures informed by evidence also include evaluation of the bi-annual student survey (issued at induction and mid-course); end-of-course student feedback questionnaires; the Summer release of Pearson's BTEC Higher National Annual Student Survey and comparator data from other UK and International Centres; and termly PAT reviews undertaken with Heads of Curriculum to analyse improved access, retention rates, grade outcomes and learner attendance.

On achieving its TEF Silver award, the College received favourable comments from the Panel in APP-relevant areas. The TEF Statement of Findings notes, "The provider metrics supplemented by the submission indicate that students from all backgrounds achieve excellent outcomes. In particular, the Panel noted rates of progression into employment and further study or highly skilled employment consistent with the provider's benchmark." The Panel also highlighted our "provision of a comprehensive, personal pastoral support package for all students augmented by a well-resourced, non-academic student support network."

We will continue to invest in the above activities and to continue to be an active partner in the LiNCHigher project. The College already undertakes a significant amount of work in community engagement including extensive collaboration with primary and secondary schools, other colleges and employers, universities and the local authority to support access to higher education and it intends to continue and extend these activities. For example, the College provides outreach with and for local schools in the form of HE Fairs, life-skills talks for assemblies, and stands at parents' evenings. It also organises an annual Careers Fair featuring representation and workshops from local and national employers.

From 19-20 onwards, the College has made the following financial support available:

**(i)** A £5000 (rising to £5500 by 2024-25) financial hardship fund to support success and progression. The Equality and Diversity Committee will monitor the use of these funds to ensure disadvantaged students are supported appropriately. It is available at the start of each academic year of the learner life-cycle and its effectiveness is measured by an annual review and in student feedback. We encourage and prioritise applications to this fund from underrepresented groups in the first instance to support our listed targets PTA\_1 and PTS\_1 – mature learners, as well as the groups associated with our commitments (i) and (ii) – BAME learners, and care leavers. The funding is open to HE students who have a household income of less than £31,000. The Student Finance Officer manages the application forms and process. Funds of £500-£1000 per student are available on an annual basis as a one-off payment. The strategic intent of this fund is to reduce, in so far as is possible, HE students leaving their course of study due to financial emergency. Through exit interviews and student consultation via focus groups, we have identified that some learners withdraw from their studies due to financial pressure, in particular in the early stages of their courses. Consultation with students in focus groups has supported the implementation of a financial hardship fund as a strategy to improve retention and continuation. The funding and process are evaluated annually to assess

impact on continuation, attainment, and progression via our internal data. From November 2019 onwards, we will supplement the data and focus groups with individual recipient surveys to evaluate the effectiveness of the financial support in terms of success and progression.

As the financial hardship fund for HE was first implemented in the 2018/19 academic year it will not be possible to show impact until destination data is available. Through focus groups we have identified that some learners are deterred from applying for funding through perceived barriers to accessing support. Consequently, we are working to clarify and simplify the paperwork and process as well as widening awareness of its availability in induction talks and via social media, and signposting eligibility criteria in clear terms. We will monitor the uptake for 2019/20 to measure the effectiveness of the funding in terms of continuation and progression. This will be done by focus groups – the questions for which will be guided by the OFS financial evaluation interview tool – and internal data collection. This will be further supported by an individual award recipient survey, the design of which will be guided by us using the OfS survey tool. The College has explored the use of the OfS statistical evaluation tool, but has been ruled this out due to our very small HE cohort, and the tool's focus on first degree students.

**(ii)** £5000 (rising to £7000 by 2024-25) access investment divided across pre-16, post-16, adult/community, and other (as per our Targets and Investment spreadsheet, under 'Access investment forecast').

The access investment supports our listed targets PTA\_1 mature learners; as well as the groups associated with our commitments (i) and (ii) – BAME learners, and care leavers. The investment is allocated to marketing and community outreach activities promoting Access to HE (for mature learners and care leavers) and raising awareness of HE opportunities in the College to BAME students via collaborative schools diversity projects (including cultural enrichment workshops). This is to achieve enhanced access for the listed target groups. As these forms of investment have been shown to be working for the College in relation to access for mature learners via our Access to HE cohort intake data and progression results, we will be doing them again. The College has also allocated £5000 per year as a research and evaluation investment forecast. This figure equates to time spent by the Vice Principal – Higher Education on internal evaluation of the APP.

### **3.2 Student consultation**

The integration of the learner voice in the co-creation and ongoing evaluation of our access and participation plan from the outset is essential. The Vice Principal – Higher Education has consulted the Student Voice forum via quarterly meetings of the SU and student representatives on all aspects of the APP. Student Governors are invited to all Corporation and Standards Meetings at which the APP is discussed. Students from a wide range of backgrounds and representation have provided feedback via survey responses to questions about the APP (template attached in Appendix). The survey results – with a 90% return rate – have been analysed and an action plan has been drawn up to enhance awareness of the Student Union; to implement from 19/20 subject-specific HE taster events for Level 3 learners. The HE students unilaterally voiced their satisfaction with, and knowledge of, available feedback channels.

### **3.3 Evaluation strategy**

The College has used the OfS self-assessment tool to assess our current position for evaluation, and to inform what future evaluation changes will be made to support an overarching theory of change. Where an activity or strategic measure is seen not to be working, or an inconsistency becomes evident, we can review our practice to ensure progress to the achievement of targets is being made successfully.

Our overarching theory of change considers the diachronic relationship between:

PROBLEMS (performance gaps of underrepresented groups in relation to their peers) to

ACTIVITIES (outreach, engagement and enhancement actions and events determined in consultation with staff and students) to

OUTPUT (resources to support the different needs of students) to

OUTCOMES (improved access, success, and progression)

Feeding into all points of the above, CONTEXT guides our changes, including mental health and wellbeing, and employability.

Our HE students fill out induction and mid-year surveys, and end-of-course questionnaires. They also complete their academic and professional targets in their Individual Learner Plan via the ProMonitor system. The results of these completions inform annual 'You Said, We Did' exercises and are fed back to curriculum areas to support content, delivery, and the student experience. In addition to this, the tutorial teams complete a Self-Assessment Report (SAR). The annual SAR produces a number of action points to carry forward into the following academic year. From 2019 onwards, this self-assessment will inform future Access and Participation Plan programme design. Any quality improvements required will feed into our annual Higher Education Quality Improvement Plan, which is approved by our Corporation. This will ensure that Access and Participation measures are reviewed and may change during the duration of the plan. Changes made will be underpinned by the key driver of ensuring that the plan continues having a positive impact on reducing gaps in access, success, and progression. When available, we will also make use of the Evidence and Impact Exchange.

#### **a. Strategic Context**

The APP will be a standing item on both the Equality and Diversity Committee and the HE Group agendas (November 2019 onwards). It will also be a standing item on the HE Report at our governors' Standards Committee Meetings (November 2019 onwards). There will be an Access and Participation Plan Working Group established to oversee the implementation and monitoring of the overarching plan to review and improve student support (December 2019 onwards). This will report into the Equality and Diversity and HE Group meetings. The Vice Principal – HE will ensure the relevant skills base is represented in the Working Group and supplement areas where relevant via opportunities for CPD in widening participation events. The OfS self-assessment tool has identified a recommendation for us to formalise a budget line for evaluation in programme budgets to allow fixed allocations. We will discuss this recommendation with the Finance Committee in November 2019.

#### **b. Programme Design**

The programme design will be overseen by the APP Working Group and will be monitored through the Equality and Diversity and HE Group Meetings. Targets are set each year in relation to College KPIs and the implementation of the plan will be measured against these targets. We have clear outputs for the plan which can be measured in relation to access, success, and progression. We will draw on the collaborative findings

of the LinCHigher NCOP group making particular use of the conclusions from the 'Explaining the Gaps' research project.

### **c. Evaluation Design**

We are continuing to develop our evaluation design. The programmes are designed using a theory of change model. The programmes will be evaluated quarterly in SABs (subject assessment boards) to ensure that the best outcomes are being achieved and to enable positive change. This evaluation will use both performance data and student feedback through the course representatives. The evaluation strategy will be to look specifically at performance against the aims, objectives and targets outlined in the plan.

### **d. Evaluation Implementation**

We have identified how we will access the data required to measure outcomes and impacts via enhanced use of our ProMonitor, ProAchieve, and Learning Assistant monitoring systems as well as self-reporting surveys. We will explore data sharing and associated protocols with LinCHigher from November 2019 onwards. Our approach to data complies with the requirements on data collection and data sharing, with procedures in place for ethical considerations. Enhanced use of our digital monitoring systems will allow for measurement of individualised change as well as group analysis – to be actioned for use in January 2020 onwards, including tracking outcomes over time. The evaluation budget will be formalised as a stand-alone item with Finance (December 2019 onwards). We will draw on good practice operating at curriculum level across the College in providing evaluation risk-assessments (November 2019 onwards).

### **e. Learning to Shape Improvements**

Our evaluation will take into consideration the limitations of the design. The evaluation will be disseminated at our Annual Staff Development Week (July 2020). Periodic updates of performance and good practice will be disseminated through the monthly HE Group meetings.

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

The College commits to monitoring progress against delivery of the plan through its established quality cycle. Our monitoring systems are informed by internal and external processes. Internally, we have invested in ProMonitor software to identify at-risk students, monitoring personal termly grade counts and targets, and tracking the Individual Learner Plan through SMART targets (measuring effort and support) to plan provision for additional support requirements. ProMonitor is embedded throughout the College and is used by all HE tutors. It forms a central part of our annual monitoring timetable with audit and review deadlines in October, December, March, and June on an annual basis. The audit and review processes will identify any gaps or failures in progress to be reported immediately to the Vice Principal – Higher Education. Externally, we use DLHE analysis to track the progress of HE learners.

The Vice Principal – Higher Education is responsible for monitoring the plan, reporting the College HE Group and Standards Committee, and as a part of the Senior Leadership Team. The governing body oversees the plan at Corporation and Standards Committee meetings on a quarterly basis. It monitors progress against its targets under the standing item 'Access and Participation'. The Higher Education Steering Group – chaired by the Vice Principal – HE – will have responsibility for the monitoring of the targets and commitments of the

Access Agreement through inclusion within the College's HE Quality Process structure. The Vice Principal – HE monitors enrolments, achievement, retention and continuation rates on a monthly basis and reports the findings to the HE Group. Both the HE Group and Equality and Diversity Committee have responsibility in planning APP-related activities including employability fairs, and entrepreneurship events. To ensure robust evaluation of the measures set out in our plan we will undertake a detailed annual review of the impact of our access, success and progression activities and financial support. This will focus on impact and will look at continuation, attainment, access and destinations.

The APP will be added as a category in our AMR process and the compilation of our self-assessment report (SAR; December 2019 onwards). The SAR is compiled and submitted on an annual basis, and is monitored and moderated by our Governors in the Standards Committee meetings. The SAR allows for a full review of the previous year's results and data. It draws on statistics via the RCU (Responsive Colleges Unit) including those of deprivation band learners living within the selected district (based on 16-19 EFA funded numbers). It considers pass rates following enrolment and qualifications on entry. The SAR uses header themes of 'overall effectiveness', 'effectiveness of leadership and management', 'quality of teaching, learning and assessment', 'personal behaviour, development and welfare', and 'outcomes for learners'. It makes use of supporting evidence including QAR reports, internal analysis of achievement rates, and value-added progress scores.

Areas that are worsening or require development identified in the SAR – including Access and Participation targets – will be addressed via a QIP: Quality Improvement Plan, overseen by the Vice Principal – Quality and Curriculum. The QIP headers address the consistency of outcomes for achievement, pass and retention rates. Actions to address inconsistencies include weekly attendance meetings, intervention of student mentors and course leaders; scheduled value-added activities; closer engagement with employers; and the running of focus groups and experience days. Other areas of focus include ensuring diverse curriculum development via employer engagement strategies and close links with awarding bodies; and robust peer observation formats to ensure desired impact of progress is evidenced.

Our governing body is involved in monitoring and development through regular updates to the Standards Committee (via the APP standing item) and in an annual monitoring report to the Corporation Board. Students are involved in monitoring through the student representatives for all HE courses at the College. All representatives take part in an annual focus group review session in which students look at progress to date, making any recommendations they feel appropriate to ensure that the College meets its targets. They also provide feedback at the quarterly HE SABs (subject assessment boards). It is essential that students are consulted as they are best placed to understand barriers that may exist to prevent the closing of any gaps. Monitoring is embedded across the HE structure involving course leaders, tutors, and support services.

#### **4. Provision of information to students**

The College will give prospective and current students information on levels of fees as well as financial, academic and pastoral support available to them via our website, at open events, at interview, during induction and in written communication to those enquiring or applying. The College offers comprehensive advice and guidance on these matters by dedicated staff. We also ensure a timely submission to Unistats and course information will be linked from the Unistats website. Tuition fees are widely published on our website. Following the governing body's approval of fees, information is updated annually on all sources including our website, prospectus, UCAS and the Student Loans Company. The College will publish our approved APP on our website in a way that is easily accessible to both current and prospective students and will provide copies in alternative formats as required.

## **5. Appendix**

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)
4. Student survey template