



Access & Participation Statement

Introduction

Buckinghamshire College Group (BCG) was formed from the merger between Aylesbury College and Amersham & Wycombe College in October 2017. The College operates from three main campuses, in Amersham, Aylesbury and High Wycombe.

The College also has a separate Higher Education (HE) campus in Aylesbury, University Campus Aylesbury Vale (UCAV). As an evolution of our partnership with Buckinghamshire New University the College has created this joint venture in Aylesbury, an area with a number of low participation neighbourhoods. It is hoped that the new HE centre will support increased access to level 4 qualifications and higher education for local adults. This is in response to the fact that Aylesbury Vale is a 'cold spot' for adults undertaking higher education programmes. The campus has a focus on professional programmes and provides local residents, employers and employees access to undergraduate foundation degree courses and professional development programmes.

Buckinghamshire College Group is committed to widening participation in Higher Education amongst all under-represented groups. Our Big Ambition strategy sets out our vision, key milestones and our values by which we will achieve all our goals as a local college working for our local communities. In our Values we commit ourselves to equality, inclusivity, and fairness and place our students at the heart of everything we do. The cores values of inclusivity and widening participation are an integral part of our culture and systems and process.

Our Strategy can be access online: <http://buckscollegigroup.ac.uk/strategic-plan-2014-2020>

Buckinghamshire College Group is well positioned to provide our employers and businesses with easy, local access to high quality skills at the right level to meet current and future demand, supporting economic growth and development.

Our Strategic Priorities and aims for 2020 are:

Excellence -We are ambitious and impatient to be excellent in all we do.

Employability and enterprise -We have a culture of employability and enterprise, enabling positive and sustainable future for our students, employers and the wider community.

Growth and Development -We are highly responsive and have a positive impact on economic and social growth for Bucks and beyond.

Investment and sustainability -We are a sustainable College investing in sustainable futures.

The College prides itself on high quality HE provision with excellent teaching, learning and assessment. The College has achieved a bronze award from the Teaching Excellence Framework metrics system which is valid for up to three years.

Local context

Buckinghamshire presents a complex picture with a focus on selective education and high achieving grammar schools. The majority of upper schools now have Academy status. The proportion of qualified residents in Buckinghamshire is higher than the South East and England averages, and at foundation and intermediate levels is above these averages. The unemployment rate in the county is equal to that of that South East and lower than the national rate.

Buckinghamshire is a generally affluent county. Unemployment is low, with JSA claimants at 1% and the proportion of young people not in employment, education or training is also low at 4%. However, participation for females in employment is low and some wards in Aylesbury, Chesham, High Wycombe and Slough have areas of significant disadvantage. Outside of the main towns, the county is largely rural and has a very limited and expensive public transport system which impacts on student travel to learn patterns significantly. The proportion of students from minority ethnic backgrounds is 33%, compared to 8% in the local population. Academic qualifications are valued highly by both parents and students, but increasingly they are seeing the benefit of vocational education.

Over 89% of Buckinghamshire's residents are White British. The largest minority ethnic group is Asian or Asian British at 5.8%.

What our learners can expect from us:

We are committed to equality of opportunity for all our students and we regard all as being of equal value irrespective of ethnicity, age, disability, religion, gender, sexual orientation or marital status. The College has a shared ethos that places students at the heart of everything we do. The delivery of a consistently high quality student experience across all campuses is one of our overarching aims. Students will experience a College which places high emphasis on the needs of students and delivers a programme of study that is focused and relevant and which provides a range of progression pathways. The College will be best placed to deliver employer-focused, vocational, technical and professional programmes for young people and adults.

In the context of widening the participation of all Bucks residents we are investing in a coherent skills strategy to create a pipeline of suitably qualified people to meet current and future growth needs. Students' needs are central to our focus:

This includes:

1. Wider range of 19+ higher education and skills qualifications to include foundation degrees, full honour degrees and more apprenticeships at all levels to meet employer needs, providing a larger pool of suitably qualified people, ready for employment.
2. Sustainable and developing employer-focused vocational, technical and professional provision for 16-18 year olds in Buckinghamshire, preparing young people to be the future workforce of the region.

3. Identifying specific groups of students who currently achieve less well than their peers and creating enhanced opportunities for success, tailored to their needs.
4. Addressing financial barriers to success and creating focused support through bursary payments
5. Offering the range of courses that meet students' needs, ensuring that we support prospective students with any individual needs they may have at each stage of the application process, in addition to when they are on a course of study.
6. The process of gaining admission to college programmes will be clear and transparent and allow ease of access to applicants to gain places on programmes appropriate to their needs.
7. Engagement with local employers at all stages of education and training will provide accessible career pathways for all students in the local area.

How we support our learners:

Buckinghamshire College Group is committed to assisting students and ensuring that financial hardship is not a barrier to stay in education, particularly supporting those students who are most in need and economically or socially disadvantaged. Staff in Student Services are available to help with information and advice about financial support and the eligibility criteria for various packages.

The College provides our higher education students with information on the Advanced Learner Loans and bursary schemes. At enrolment and during Open Days, the College ensures that members of staff from the Student Services office are available to support students with the application of bursaries. Information on accessing financial support is also available on the College website.

What are learners say about us:

The student survey (Aug 2017) shows that 95.7% of students, who are aged 20 plus, agree that their course is preparing them for their chosen next steps. This may be progressing into employment, an apprenticeship, another course or university. 96.4% of students (in this age category) have indicated that they have received the support they needed to help them to progress. Teachers assess record and monitor learners' progress well with 94.1% of adult students agreeing their lessons are well taught and 96.1% agreeing that they know when and how they will be assessed.

There is an atmosphere of collaboration and mutual respect with teachers promoting equality and diversity. 98% of learners agreed that they are encouraged to have tolerance for those from different backgrounds, faiths and beliefs and 98% of learners feeling safe in college.

Our commitment to students' success:

The College invests in robust monitoring and evaluation to inform our ongoing approach to access and student success. Data from 2016-17 indicates that the percentage of males versus females on Level 4 and above courses is currently; Amersham campus Female = 69% Male = 31%, at the Aylesbury campus, Female = 71.6% Male = 28.4%. The percentage of students with a difficulty or disability - Amersham = 17.6% / Aylesbury = 11%. The percentage of students with a learning disability LLDD (Learners with learning difficulty and or disabilities and health problems) – Amersham = 17.1% / Aylesbury = 10.2%. The College has 17.6% BME students at Amersham and 13.4% BME students at Aylesbury. The attainment gap between male and females is Amersham Female= 53.5%, Male = 46.6% / Aylesbury Female = 88.8%, Male = 94.1%. The College runs a monthly Equal

Opportunities committee to review data and recommend strategies to address attainment gaps for students. Key interventions include additional workshops, tutorials and one to one support from the Learning Development units at the University.

We work closely with both of our HEIs who provide data from the Destination of Leavers from Higher Education (DLHE) to inform our position on employability.

The College monitors participation, progression and achievement of all students through an annual cycle of self-assessment reports. This allows us to consider the diversity and inclusivity of our students in line with the sector. We will continue to value and respect equality, diversity and inclusion and be committed to encouraging applications from prospective students from our diverse communities. The College will review and revise this Access & Participation statement annually to reflect the current students and address specific minority groups as applicable.