

**Greater Brighton Metropolitan College
Northbrook University Centre**

Access agreement 2017-18

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1. Merger

Greater Brighton Metropolitan College is the College arising from the recent merger between Northbrook College Sussex and City College, Brighton and Hove. The merger will result in a HE student body of about 950 in 2017/18. Both precursor Colleges have offered degree level provision for over 10 years in partnership with the same validating partner, University of Brighton. Both Colleges undertook QAA HE Review in the 2015/16 and have met the standards with a commendation for student enhancement for the Northbrook University Centre provision.

Both Colleges submitted separate Access agreements for 2017/18 in line with OFFA deadlines. This Access agreement outlines the approach to be taken to existing and prospective students in terms of financial support and outlines the actions to be taken across the newly merged College to widen participation and support progression.

The key principle applied has been to ensure that existing *and continuing* students are able to retain support at current levels and that new students will be offered financial support at levels at least equivalent to those outlined in the two separate precursor College Access Agreements.

2. Our vision for Higher Education

“Our vision is to offer Higher Education that is valuable, accessible and cost effective. To offer distinctive Higher Education that is of great benefit to the learner and also to society as a whole”

3. Higher Education strategic plan

The five strategic priorities for HE agreed through a consultation process are:

1. To involve students in the shaping of all aspects of their learning experience.
2. To create an HE ethos and culture for our HE students and in their teaching and support teams. This is informed by scholarship and professional practice and inspires and challenges students and staff to aspire to excellence.
3. To shape a high quality and distinctive HE curriculum offer which supports current and future economic and cultural demands and offers pathways to employment or progression to higher level study.
4. To lead in educational social inclusion and widening participation for HE in Further Education Colleges (FEC).
5. Invest in the physical, virtual and social learning environments to support high levels of student success and satisfaction.

Our HE Strategy document explores what this means for HE through the Northbrook University Centre and paints a picture of the characteristics of a graduate, who is:

- *Technically skilled in their field*

- *Knowledgeable about their industry*
- *Employable and enterprising*
- *Leaders of teams*
- *Analytical and able to critically evaluate*
- *Confident in presenting themselves and their work professionally*
- *Digitally literate.*

The development of the HE Strategy drew upon HEFCE data which shows that *'areas in Coastal West Sussex have many learners who are less likely to progress onto HE, compared to similar GCSE attainment scores of other surrounding areas. Locally we have a participation rate gap of around -4.7% which ranks the local area as 555 of 7,967'*.

We aim to provide timely and accurate information to UCAS and SFE, to allow them to populate their databases with the most up-to-date information for potential applicants.

3. Performance to date against our targets and milestones

We continue to make good progress in the achievement of our strategic milestones.

From the statistical analysis provided in section 5 it can be demonstrated that our student body is diverse with a significant proportion reflecting our Widening Participation priorities. Our current access activities and student success work is contributing to the achievement of these targets.

We recognise that more can be done to make further improvements. We are reviewing our access priorities and how we provide targeted support to HE students, particularly those from disadvantaged backgrounds, to ensure that we give them the best possible chance of completing their studies and progressing either into employment or further studies.

The re-focussing of our priorities towards Widening Participation and 'project based' activities driving success and progression will reduce the quantum of funds available for bursaries. We will continue to monitor the impact of these changes across the whole student body to ensure that our approach remains equitable and does not generate unintended consequences.

4. Coverage of the Access Agreement including Fee levels for 2017/18

This access agreement sets out the tuition fees and financial support arrangements for full time students UK and EU students entering Higher Education courses at Greater

Brighton Metropolitan College that are funded through the direct contract with HEFCE from 1st September 2017. It describes the proportion of tuition fee income to be spent on access and student success measures and how this income will safeguard and maintain fair access. The College is working towards the strategic aims of the National Strategy for Access and Student Success in Higher Education 2014 in seeking changes which focus on access, retention, student success and progression to further study or to/within employment. We continue to evaluate financial support and financial provisions made available to our learners.

Our individual student fees for full-time under-graduate qualifications for 2017/18 are set out in the table below for the following programmes;

- Two year Foundation Degrees
- Three year Undergraduate Bachelor Degrees (Honours)
- One year Top-Up Bachelor Degrees
- One year Top-Up Bachelor Degrees with Bridging
- Post Graduate Certificates in Education (PGCE).

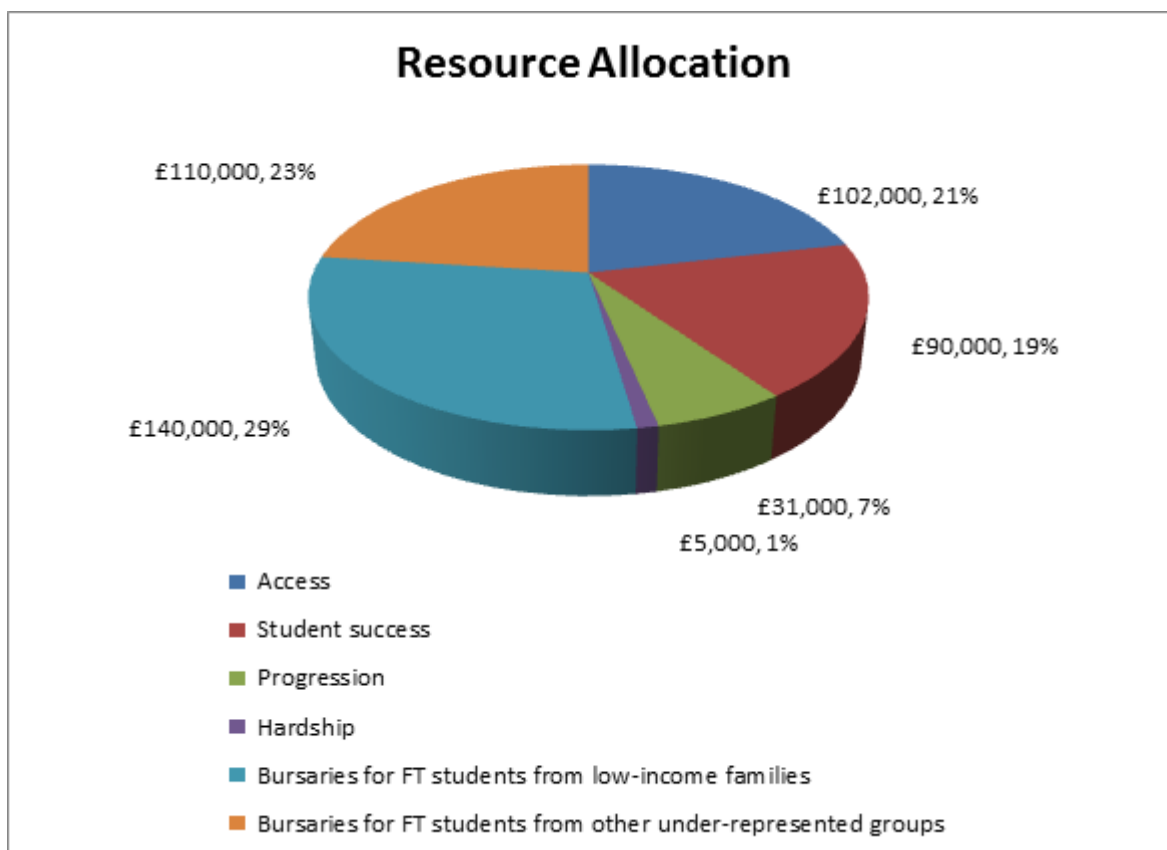
Existing students will remain on existing fee arrangements and levels of support in place at the precursor College where the student originally enrolled.

Fee Category	Annual Fee	Increase on 16/17
Foundation Degree Creative Industries and Motorsports	£8,100	2.7%
Foundation Degree Business and Service Industries	£7,750	3.3%
Three year undergraduate degree	£8,100	2.7%
One year 'Top-up' Creative Industries	£8,100	2.7%
One year 'Top-up' Business and Service Industries	£7,750	3.3%
One year 'Top-up' with bridging	£8,600	2.4%
PGCE	£8,100	2.7%

Part-time fees are set for each qualification and will all remain at £4,500 for 2017/18.

5. Our resourcing priorities for 2017-18

We have reviewed the impact of activity against our HE strategic objectives and the Government targets for widening participation. We have taken into account the whole student life-cycle and Government's expectation that a greater proportion of resource should be spent across that life-cycle. The chart on the following page outlines where we propose to allocate resources in 2017/18.



In total we anticipate spending £478,000 in the delivery of our strategy for 17/18.

In 2014/15, the HE student cohort (full and part-time) consisted of: -

- 22 % mature learners (25+)
- 25% from disadvantaged postcodes
- 24% with disability or learning difficulty
- 28% from households with an income of under £25K
- 13% from BME groups

Of the 945 college students that applied to study HE through UCAS for September 2015, 11% internally progressed to a Greater Brighton HE programme and 60% progressed onto a HE programme elsewhere. The fact that the College runs a large Access course provision into degrees not on offer in the College explains some of the difference, but there is more to be done regarding internal progression into relevant course in Creative Industries, Motorsport and Business and Service Industries. In 2014/15 80% of Foundation degree students, where a 'top up' pathway was available, elected to continue their studies with us.

The College expects to grow the level of outreach currently undertaken. It continues to prioritise strengthening its relationships with local schools and increase collaborative activity with HEIs.

WP activity aims to increase understanding of progression from school to further education to higher education and on to employment. This is supported by visual resources mapping out progression opportunities from Level 1 to Level 6 and on to employment in each of the curriculum areas. These resources are available on the College website and printed copies are used in outreach activity. They are also used internally for students progressing from level 3 to level 4 and from level 5 to level 6.

The College maintains productive links with industry. Industry days and weekly industry talks are available for current HE students. We continue to make these activities accessible to schools, evaluation shows that they support both increasing aspiration to study at HE as well as planning future careers. Development is also in place to support internal progression as to allow student success through FE, onto HE and into industry relevant careers.

Student Access

We maintain a collaborative network with schools and other FE and HE institutions across the Greater Brighton Region which runs from Littlehampton in the West along the Coast to Lewes in East and up to Haywards Heath in the North. We undertake activity to raise awareness of and aspiration to study at HE level; raise awareness of progression opportunities to employment post degree; to promote personal development and motivation and developing skills to progress to higher study. In 2015-16 the College is actively working with 43 schools and other education providers.

We are a partner in the Sussex Learning Network (SLN). SLN is a strategic partnership of universities, colleges, training providers and guidance agencies focused on ensuring the life-cycle of learners in the South East is accessible and transparent. The SLN is the single point of contact for those who support the whole learner journey and enable successful progression through education and on into the workplace. Its work brings together new research and curriculum development, widening participation and outreach activities, and careers education, information, advice and guidance.

Currently the SLN represents 3 HEIs, 8 FECs, 3 Local Authorities and 2 LEPs as partners and supports a network of 194 schools across the Sussex and South East regions, including Academies and Pupil Referral Units.

The SLN enables Greater Brighton Metropolitan College to be represented by the co-funded central members of staff, working on behalf of all the partners in the network, in and at a number of activities and events targeting low HE transitional areas, and who can operate as the regional single point of contact for educational resources; policy news; CEIAG resources; Labour and economic intelligence; CPD activities and funding opportunities which support the progression of learners successfully through education.

The SLN allows the College to improve the quality and range of its access work by being part of a collaborative regional community of practice. The SLN will be

extending its work through to 2017-18 providing its members the opportunity to draw on the strength of collaborative working to strengthen their work across the student lifecycle encompassing success, retention and progression work as well as outreach.

Our outreach programme incorporates a range of activities including campus tours, taster sessions, CPD events for teachers and STEAM events as well as open days with advice and guidance from experienced staff, and assistance with UCAS applications, especially for those from WP groups such as Care Leavers and POLAR 3 students.

The programme is delivered in schools or college; our HE ambassadors support the delivery of the outreach programme.

Activity has continued across curriculum areas in 2015-16 targeting local schools from year 9 onwards.

HE lecturers offer talks to potential FE to HE students on courses with direct progression routes. Taster sessions with information on UCAS application and financial advice and guidance are delivered across the College. Keep Warm activities including a welcome day are now established across the majority of curriculum. In the Art Design and Media department the impact of support given to students are effective in helping to remove anxieties around the transition from further to higher education.

The Sorrell Foundation is now well established within Art and Design, this initiative is aimed at young people interested in pursuing a career in Art Design and Media with engagement from year 9. Further activities targeting care leavers and home-schooled students are also delivered.

We collaborate with regional HEIs to offer activities for students from widening participation backgrounds across Sussex. In 2015-16 the College has maintained a productive relationship with STEM Sussex and the University of Brighton to deliver STEM including our own Big Bang event at our Shoreham campus in autumn 2015.

Our Widening Participation activity is being supported by relationships with the Universities of Chichester, Sussex and Brighton as part of the Sussex Learning Network and the National Network of Collaborative Outreach (NNCO).

We continue to participate in activities initiated by local schools which include talks, events and parents evenings often in collaboration with other regional universities.

The College Students' Union Association is an affiliate of the University of Brighton Students' Union (UoBSU) and since its conception in September 2014. We continue to work with UoBSU to develop the student experience, in particular the wider engagement of the student body in the development of our thinking around Widening Participation and support for students throughout the student lifecycle.

The College continues to build on successful links in the community that aim to raise awareness of opportunities in HE for mature learners who may have been out of education, nearly a quarter of our cohort are aged 25 or over.

Student success

Relatively small class sizes across HE enable tutors to respond to individual learner needs. Despite changes to DSA, the College will maintain excellent approaches to tutorial systems and effective levels of Additional Learning Support. A programme of study skills workshops to support students with their academic work continues to be effective.

Employability and enterprise is embedded within the curriculum. 90% of the HE offer is within Creative Industries subjects. As an example of best practice, our Fashion courses (Fashion Media & Promotion & Fashion Design) have strong links with employers both at a national and international level. Through validated work experience programmes Fashion students gain industry experience and are able to network and create opportunities for future employment.

Placements are offered with companies both blue chip/commercial and Independent such as Alexander McQueen, Marks & Spencer, Grazia, Daily Telegraph, Vivienne Westwood, Moschino, Modus PR, Irregular Choice, Doll, Wonderland, I-D magazine. Projects are run in conjunction with 'Pop Up Brighton' and industry competitions in conjunction with Caryn Franklin from All Walks Diversity Now' and 'i-D' magazine

We maintain strong long-established links with industry. Quality student placements are offered in nationally recognised cultural organisations such as Glyndebourne, the Royal Opera House, the National Theatre and Pinewood Studios as well as regional organisations such as Brighton Fringe, The Great Escape, Brighton Pavilion and Worthing Theatres. Art Design and Media students participate in London Graduate Fashion Week shows and agent showcases which result in exposure to industry contacts and employment opportunities. Students work on live briefs and commissions during their studies. The second year experience within Theatre Arts subjects supports students to plan their next steps, identifying strengths and areas of interest; this is used to plan for employment or further study. Music students are supported to develop themselves as recording artists and develop portfolio careers as freelancers. Additionally within music, there are strong alumni networks which support progression to employment for current students. College wide, 88% of learners completed their studies in 2014/15 with a 95% rate of achievement.

We continue to invest in our learning infrastructure. In October 2015 we completed the multi-million pound investment in our University Centre at West Durrington. Our Music, Theatre and Performance facilities are equipped to the highest standards and provide inspirational spaces for students to develop. Our music facilities are one of the most comprehensive recording complexes in Europe with over 25 recording studios, including live sound desks, air conditioned performance spaces, pre and

post production rooms along with dedicated compute clusters and sound synthesis lab.

Through student feedback there has been a significant investment in the creation of a dedicated HE study area within the City centre campus as well. The HE Hub is an area solely for HE students and is equipped with a state of the art computer suite and work areas to facilitate individual and group collaboration. The campus has also invested significantly in resources for Photography and Music courses in the City. This included the purchase of hardware such as Neumann Stereo, Dual Channel Equalisers, Fender Hot Rods, Re-Amplifier Reamping Tools, Measurement Microphones, guitars and keyboards.

Within the Service Industries the College operates a fully functioning restaurant and kitchen. The restaurant is open to the general public and as such students are able to access additional learning opportunities within a commercial setting that meets industry standards and expectations. The robust and well-established links with industry ensures all our students are able to access high quality student work placements such as the Charleston Trust and Brighton City Council. Sessions are brought to life through work placements and industry related experiences and tutors ensure learning points and experiences gathered from external visits and work placements contribute towards assignments. The HE Review identified that the College's link with employers contributes to student development and provides students with highly valuable live briefs and projects.

Student progression

Alongside our three-year BA programmes we run a number of Foundation Degrees, the vast majority of which have a progression pathway to a third-year 'top-up'.

In Creative Industries an extensive programme of Industry Specialist lectures inform students of career opportunities and what life is like working in particular sectors. We have a dedicated careers officer that works with students on CV development, portfolio support, interview techniques and application construction.

Our Motorsport Foundation Degree run a highly successful race team, the experience this provides is invaluable to those students looking to secure onward employment in Motorsport related industries or further studies.

In 2014/15 65% of Foundation degree students, where a 'top-up' pathway was available, elected to continue their studies with us. Over 90% of students who completed the DLHE survey after their 2014/15 programme were working and/or participating in further study.

In 2014/15 89% of under-graduate students returned to continue their next year of study.

Financial support for students

We anticipate spending £250,000 on financial support to students in the year. In setting this figure for 2017/18 we are mindful of the evidence relating to financial support and student success/progression. Our emphasis is now very much on improving our 'life-cycle' support for students linked to access, success and progression initiatives.

Priority will be given to the most disadvantaged. Awards are given on a first come, first served basis with no guarantee that all applications will be supported.

We will continue to offer support for students through the following schemes: -

1. Top-up bursaries: - low income.
Awards will be given to students; those with low household incomes - for those with a residual income of below £25,000 a bursary of up to £1,000 will be payable, for those with a residual income of below £42,600 a bursary of up to £500 will be payable. Bursaries are payable in instalments subject to engagement demonstrated by attendance. Students who sit in multiple categories will only be given one award.
2. Top-up bursaries – other WP characteristics.
Students who internally progress from FE to HE, from a BME background, care leavers and students with other WP characteristics may also be awarded bursaries up to £1,000. Each application is judged on merit. No award to an individual student will exceed £1,000 in any one year. Bursaries are payable in instalments subject to engagement demonstrated by attendance. Students who sit in multiple categories will only be given one award
3. There is also a bursary for any student who enters with a level 3 NVQ only or progresses directly from an advanced apprenticeship. This will be a maximum of £1,000 for the first year of study paid in instalments subject to engagement demonstrated by attendance. Students who sit in multiple categories will only be given one award.
4. Hardship fund: This fund is based on a learner's income and expenditure whilst at college. Learners must be receiving their full loan entitlement.

To support Student Success we are also offering an achievement bursary

We will offer a bursary of up to £200 to students who successfully complete their first degree subject to sufficient funds being available after priority claims have been processed. From 2017/18 this will only be available once i.e. on completion of the foundation degree or 3-year undergraduate programmes. This bursary is not available to students completing 1-year BA top-up courses or PGCE students.

6. Developing our monitoring and impact assessment capability

Current infrastructure for the collection, collation and reporting on HE related student data comprises a Widening Participation Co-ordinator, a designated admissions officer, a dedicated student finance team and marketing personnel.

We collect and analyse data from access events, this is used to inform future curriculum planning and potential future student interest. We collect information at enrolment that helps us identify the characteristics of our student body; this helps us to target support more effectively.

The WP Co-ordinator produces a summary report of WP activities that is considered by our HE Review Board (HERB). An example of where this leads to intervention is the delivery of 'progression talks' by the WP Co-ordinator to our level 3 students arising from the need to increase internal progression.

We recognise that our ability to demonstrate how initiatives lead to impact across our strategic targets and milestones needs further refining. Plans are in place for 16/17 to collect a broader data set that will be used by the WP Co-Ordinator to extend reporting on in-year indicators such as student body POLAR Quintile make-up, GCSE attainment, 'first generation' and low-income backgrounds.

Greater Brighton Metropolitan College is a partner in the Sussex Learning Network details of which can be found under 'Access' within Section 5.

7. Consulting with the student body

Greater Brighton Metropolitan College aims to be an outstanding organisation that welcomes the views of its learners in order to improve the educational experience; ensuring that the teaching, learning and assessment learners receive is personalised, challenging and relevant.

The College is committed to involving learners in its strategic decision-making and operational management processes.

We believe that by embracing student views and offering an opportunity for the student body to have direct involvement in assessing and shaping their own learning experience there will be a significant and effective impact on developing the College's quality improvement processes, leading to increased student success.

We believe that students have key roles to play in self-assessment, self-improvement and policy-making procedures.

The importance placed on Student Engagement by the College is highlighted in the first strategic priority of our HE Strategy '*To involve students in the shaping of all aspects of their learning experience*'. A rationale for this priority, together with the aims and key indicators, are detailed in the HE Strategy.

The Greater Brighton Metropolitan College approach to Student Engagement at HE is expressed in the Learner Engagement Strategy which describes the rationale and mechanisms for engaging students in feedback, quality and enhancement. The Strategy is introduced with the following explanation, which reflects the aim to embed Student Engagement in the enhancement of quality:

Student representation is embedded in the system at all levels of HE committee structures at the College; Course Boards, Department Boards of Study, Higher Education Review Board (HERB) and Governors. This has been the case at course level since HERB was first constituted.

The Partner College Review (PCR) identified a College ethos which is positive and fosters good working relationships in and between the student and staff bodies, reflects a strong foundation for the further development of the HE Strategic Priorities of creating an HE ethos and culture and empowering students to shape all aspects of their learning experience. One of the impacts of the merger will be to enable the commended approach to student enhancement from Northbrook's HER to be applied across the newly merged college to enable a consistent and positive student experience.

8. Equality and Diversity

The College is committed to providing equality of opportunity for all and this access agreement describes a strategy to provide fair access in the creation of a diverse student body which reflects the region.

The College reviews all policies and processes and impact assesses them to ensure no learners are disadvantaged (including but not exclusively) those identified as belonging to any of the nine protected characteristic groups. The College has published its Single Equality Public Sector Statement, a report on how it is meeting the general duty of eliminating discrimination, advancing equality and fostering good relations across the different protected characteristics. The reporting of the Access Agreement through the E&D committee facilitates the linking of widening participation to the E&D strategy

In 2014/15 students with a disability out-performed the overall student population, success being 2% above the overall outturn at 86%. The outcome for students in receipt of DSA was 97% - significantly higher than their peer group.

The gap between BME undergraduates and their peers still remains. While the numbers are small the gap needs to be closed. In addition, a gap of over 7% is widening between the outcomes for female and males students across the college.

Actions to improve the outcomes for BME students are:

- We have completed our analysis as to where current and new HE BME students are within college
- We have raised tutor awareness that these students are potentially at risk
- We have ensured that DSA is in place before students arrive in college

- Monthly monitoring is picking up those at risk of leaving due to poor attendance and any leavers are being contacted to see if there is anything we can do to prevent withdrawal.

Actions to address the outcomes gender gap are: -

- To improve the student experience for students in terms of consistency and quality in teaching and learning
- To work with students in certain departments to ensure better transition arrangements
- Monthly monitoring of attendance followed by timely intervention
- Referrals to support if required
- Targeted 1:1 tutorials
- Explore male student perception of routes to academic and pastoral support. Take appropriate steps to remove potential blocks

9. Provision for information to prospective students

The College publishes clear, accessible and timely information for prospective students on HE fees and the range of financial support available. Communication is through the College website, promotional materials; the UCAS website, HE admissions process, the offer letter and through HE information events and open days both at local schools and the College.

The College's website www.northbrook.ac.uk is the main communication portal for all of the College's publics. The website is a "AAA" DDA compliant accessible website which is structured and branded for our different curriculum offerings. It meets the requirements of the Key Information Set and UNISTATS. The website also comprises of sections that include governance, key policies, College strategies, key contact information, Freedom of Information, fees, finance, and funding and financial accounts information. The College Strategic Plan and HE Strategy are both available on the website as is the College's Fees Policy. The website is maintained by the Marketing Department.

Admissions staff, student finance support services, course tutors and the marketing team provide information and students are consulted on the effectiveness of this public information.