

HE Strategic Plan 2017-2022

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Executive summary

Greater Brighton Metropolitan College (GBMET) Higher Education strategy 2017-2022 sets out the direction of travel that will ensure we continue to deliver outstanding provision that is highly valued by our students and our communities as well as contributing positively to economic and cultural growth.

The strategy builds on our successes within higher education (HE) whilst ensuring the college continues to adapt to the changing needs of its environment at a local, regional, national and international level. Higher Education itself continues to change; the Higher Education and Research Act heralds the Office for Students (OfS) which replaces the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE), this change will also affect the HE Quality Assurance Agency (QAA). There is also a national decline of HE enrolments both within universities and FE colleges which requires GBMet to review and revise our offer to ensure we are in a strong position to adapt to the changing market.

We currently hold a TEF Silver Award and have a strong and vibrant HE community with high success rates and student engagement. We embrace these changes as it provides further opportunities to build on our successes and for us to be even more responsive and transparent in our continued commitment to put students at the heart of all that we do.

Background and context

At a national level there is a decline in the number of students undertaking first degrees and post-graduate degrees both for both part-time and full-time modes of study (Universities UK 2017). However, in terms of our local communities the demographic for 15-24 year olds is projecting an upward turn of 3% by 2026 within West Sussex and 1.5% for Brighton and Hove. For the 55-69 year old demographic the upturn is expected to be 13% and 28% respectively.

To ensure the College is in a strong position to respond to the changes in the marketplace and the changing demographic a priority for the college will be undertaking a thorough review of the products to determine what is fit for purpose, financially sustainable and resilient. In addition to this, the revised offer will need to be responsive to student requirements as well as the economic climate

To ensure we achieve these, our key priorities will be to:

1. Facilitate a **Student Experience**, which is outstanding whereby students gain sustainable employment through the development of work and life skills including digital literacy.
2. Review and revise the current HE offer and provide **Products** for students and employers that are consistently high quality and meet local and regional skills and education priorities in a sustainable way.

3. Ensure the deployment of our **People** provides leadership at all levels and develop the education, employer and community partnerships, which enhance and help grow the HE curriculum.
4. Ensure the **Promotion** of our offer fully informs students, parents/carers, employers and local communities including progression and career opportunities.
5. Provide a **Governance** structure that facilitates effective management and oversight of the curriculum.

Priority One

Student Experience – Quality

Facilitate a Student Experience which is outstanding whereby students gain sustainable employment through the development of work and life skills including digital literacy.

This will be achieved through:

- Empowering students to make informed decisions in partnership with staff. This will facilitate students in taking responsibility for their learning, in a co-creation model, which recognises students and staff as equal partners that together create an academic community. This approach enables our students to be involved in planning their learning experience, stretching and challenging themselves and their peers, as well as those who teach them
- The channelling of student feedback to further enhance the quality of the provision and draw on their experience and ideas that lead to change and development. This will initiate enhancement to their own and future students' experiences and will support the College to continuously innovate approaches to learning, teaching and assessment.
- Preparing graduates for a world where employment opportunities are dynamic and changing, where graduates may be required to bid for contracts, commissions and projects in a freelance capacity, and the ability to work effectively in teams to achieve common goals over a short timescale will be key to developing a successful career

We know we've got this right when:

- The learning and teaching is judged excellent by our students.
- Students are stretched to achieve their highest possible grades in their awards so that they realise their potential academically and professionally, this can be measured through the implementation of the forthcoming national measure of 'Learning Gains'.
- Students' views are channelled into decision making processes by the course teams with appropriate action set and monitored.

- Students engage with a range of Quality Assurance processes that lead to improvements and students participate in course development, including new course validation.
- The College and the Students Union work together to ensure that there is independent advice and support for students.

Priority Two

Products

Review and revise the current HE offer and provide products for students and employers that are consistently high quality and meet local and regional skills and education priorities in a sustainable way.

This will be achieved through:

- Curriculum developments being informed by national, international and local research into workforce trends, labour market intelligence, and developments in education and industry. Currently Creative, Digital and IT, AAT, Engineering, Health Care and Digital are areas for further development and growth.
- Effectively working with validating partners to provide Master's level progression routes for our students, for example within Engineering.
- Building on curricula, such as Theatre and Fine Art part time, that already have a strong reputation, are resilient and have unique selling points.
- The consolidation of smaller provision that is duplicated across multiple sites, bringing the offer to one location will ensure the offer is cost effective as well as freeing up much needed space for growth within the resilient areas.
- Extending our network of industry specialists and employers who contribute to the design and delivery of HE programmes, ensuring sector relevance as well as securing skills for progression to employment for our graduates. This enables the College to meet local, regional, national and international employer needs for an appropriately skilled and qualified workforce.
- The further development of appropriate Higher Education routes example the extension of the HNC/D offer, Higher Apprentices, alternative modes of study such as day release and distance learning and the development of part time provision to attract the 55+ demographic.

We know we've got this right when:

- Products are desirable and modes of delivery are flexible to meet employer and student requirements which leads to an increase in student recruitment
- We build on the delivery of qualifications and skills appropriate to enter employment, progress to higher-level study, set up as freelance or start a new business. This will

be reflected in strong progression to highly-skilled sector-specific employment, self-employment

- Facilities are maximised which in turn leads to growth within popular and successful curriculum areas for example within Theatre.
- Employers and sector specialists participate in and contribute to curriculum in all areas of HE delivery including content design and input

Priority Three

People

Ensure the deployment of our People provides leadership at all levels and develop the education, employer and community partnerships, which enhance and help grow the HE curriculum.

This will be achieved through:

- Recruiting leaders who deliver excellence and who are able to perform to the College's high expectations
- Ensuring course leadership is effective in delivering high quality education that contributes to an outstanding student experience
- Providing opportunities for all HE teachers to undertake further research and scholarly activities.
- The extension of our academic network through the joint sharing of pedagogic research with other academics from other universities
- Staff, who are themselves researchers and practitioners, work with students effectively to enable them to find things out for themselves and create original work

We know we've got this right when:

- Strong and effective leadership at all levels leads to an excellent outcomes for students
- Staff maximise their strong industry experience and links to further enhance student experience
- Teaching teams are skilled in creating curricula and pedagogies which suit the needs of their students and their sector
- Staff are recognised internally and externally for the quality and reputation of their work. This includes staff undertaking research, scholarly activity and continual professional development which enhance the quality of the students' learning experiences

Priority Four

Promotion

Ensure the Promotion of our offer fully informs students, parents/carers, employers and local communities including progression, career opportunities and value for money.

The portfolio of HE provision consists of 55 courses encompassing a broad range within Creative Industries, Motorsport and Engineering, Business and Computing and Hospitality. All have progression routes from further education as well as having clear progression routes to employment. Foundation degrees make up 58% of the offer followed by BAs at 34%, 5% HNC/D and 3% PGCE/Cert Ed.

In light of the HE product review (priority two), the development of new HE courses and the closure of less sustainable provision, effective marketing and recruitment is key to support growth in student numbers.

Growth, and therefore financial stability, will be supported by adopting a 'whole college' approach to marketing and recruitment which will include collaboration with widening participation and internal progression activities.

This will be achieved through:

- College staff (curriculum and support) seeing marketing and recruitment as a shared responsibility, are engaged with all recruitment activities and events and use every opportunity to positively promote the College.
- Targeted marketing activities and course teams providing engaging activities and excellent service for applicants at every point of contact.
- The continued development of vocational and academic routes from entry to higher levels that enables students to move through clear progression pathways, with a line of sight into employment.
- Ensuring the progression routes from Further Education to Higher Education are clearly mapped and communicated effectively to all stakeholders
- Building on our partnerships with schools, other colleges and community partners to further open up access to education for more of our community and to lead new developments in widening participation with our Student Ambassadors
- Through our dedicated widening participation team continue to build effective partnerships with schools, colleges, community organisations and care leaver teams offering impartial HE IAG and taster activities to students in our local community
- Identifying specific courses which might attract a wider interest from international students and promote these to a wider market
- Being transparent about our performance, this will include the publication of data, student completion and achievement outcomes.

- Ensuring our offer demonstrates good value for money through the quality of teaching, fair assessment and feedback and learning resources

We know we've got this right when:

- Course teams co-create content and are proactive in generating leads and maximising marketing opportunities which leads to increased student recruitment
- Conversion rate from application to enrolment across all markets and campuses increases by 3% year on year
- Internal progression to higher education is improved by 30% year on year. Positive destinations into employment at least meets College KPI of 94%.
- The MET continues to offer relevant courses to alumni who have moved into employment for them and/or their businesses.
- Targeted support for those individuals with protected characteristics and disabilities improves retention and achievement rates for students. Increased internal progression (FE to HE) for students who are under-represented in HE

Priority Five

Governance and Structure

Provide a Governance structure that facilitates effective management and oversight of the curriculum.

The internal governance of HE consists of range of boards, policies and measures to ensure continuous monitoring of the priorities set out above. The governance structure remains a crucial function for the college with accountability at all levels within the organisation. The structure ensures the Executive Team retain a clear line of sight on all matters related to HE from quality, recruitment and course approvals as well as shaping the priorities for HE, beyond this, the Board of Governors have final approval on the direction of HE and the overall strategy.

In addition to the internal governance infrastructure the College's maintenance of registration with the Government's Office for Students requires the adherence to the regulatory framework that is underpinned by the functions, duties and powers given to it in the Higher Education and Research Act 2017 (HERA). The regulatory framework sets out four objectives of which the college is assessed against by the Office for Students.

All students, from all backgrounds, and with the ability and desire to undertake higher education:

1. are supported to access, succeed in, and progress from, higher education;
2. receive a high quality academic experience, and their interests are protected while they study or in the event of a provider, campus or course closure;

3. are able to progress into employment or further study, and their qualifications hold their value over time;
4. receive value for money.

Further to this the College's validating partner, The University of Brighton, also has a regulatory framework for the assessment of the quality and standards of the degrees delivered by the College.

The table below sets out an overview of the internal and external bodies that form the governance and regulatory framework, which informs the quality assurance structure.

Internal governance	Purpose
Board of Governors	Approval body - strategy and policy
Executive function	Proposal body - strategic oversight
Senior Leadership Team	Research and Development body
Internal governance at course level	Purpose
HE Course board - also attended by UoB	Review of quality and standards
HE Exam Board - chaired by the UoB	Validation of grades
External governance - University of Brighton	Purpose
https://staff.brighton.ac.uk/reg/Pages/home.aspx	
UoB Academic Board	Quality and standards of awards delivered by UoB and their partners
UoB Academic Standards Committee	Senior reporting committee to the UoB Academic Board
Higher Education review board - membership includes UoB	Review of quality and standards of programmes within Greater Brighton Metropolitan College
External regulator for Higher Education in England	Purpose
Office for Students https://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/	Regulator for Higher Education in England
Quality Assurance Agency http://www.qaa.ac.uk/en	Designated by OfS to carry out quality and standards assessment functions