

Higher Education Strategy
Statement
2012/13 – 2016/17

1. Introduction to Bury College

Bury College is a large tertiary college in Greater Manchester. The College attracts students from a wide geographical area including Bury, Rochdale, Manchester and Lancashire and is graded as Outstanding by Ofsted. The QAA Integrated Quality and Enhancement Review in November 2011 made the following judgement about standards and quality for Higher Education provision:

- Confidence in the College's management of its responsibilities, as set out in its partnership agreements, for the standards of the awards it offers on behalf of its awarding bodies
- Confidence in the College's management of its responsibilities, as set out in its partnership agreements, for the quality of learning opportunities it offers
- Reliance can be placed on the accuracy and completeness of the information that the College is responsible for publishing about itself and the programmes it delivers

The College has, for many years, offered a wide range of full and part-time Higher Education qualifications designed to meet the needs of students who want to enhance their career prospects, are looking for a career change or simply wish to continue their education to a higher level. Table A details the profile of Higher Education students in 2013/14 – 2015/16

Bury College's mission statement is defined as:

Developing individual potential. Inspiring excellence. Promoting prosperity through knowledge.

The four key Higher Education strategic aims for achieving this mission statement are:

- To develop Bury as a university town through the co-ordinated development of new Higher Education programmes with key partners
- To ensure that Bury College's Higher Education offer remains relevant to the needs of the community and employers as identified through the external needs analysis report
- To provide opportunities for progression onto vocationally relevant Higher Education programmes
- To ensure continued high quality provision and further improve the Higher Education experience for learners

The College produces a comprehensive Needs Analysis each year as part of the development planning cycle. A wide range of national and local policies and strategies are summarised together with key recommendations for consideration and discussion by the College's Leadership team. This analysis is used to investigate opportunities for development, investment and change.

The College works in partnership with a number of Higher Education providers including the University of Bolton, University of Cumbria, University of Salford and Pearson. The Higher Education curriculum portfolio reflects the College's tertiary and community nature with qualifications available at Higher National Certificate, Higher National Diploma, Foundation Degree, Bachelor of Arts, Bachelor of Science and Professional Graduate Certificate level in both full and part time modes of delivery.

The decision for working in partnership with an existing university partner is governed by three key factors:

- There is a link between a Level 3 qualification delivered by the College and a level 4,5 or 6 qualification awarded by the University that can be franchised or, as a result of existing skills within the University, there is a potential to validate a programme that has been developed by the College
- The new programme enables students to progress onto higher level programmes
- The new programme does not create competition issues between the University and the College.

The decision for working with a new university partner or awarding body is governed by 3 key factors:

- There is no link between a Level 3 qualification delivered at the College and any existing level 4, 5 or 6 qualifications offered by the established university partners that can be franchised or the University partners do not have the expertise to facilitate a validation of a new programme developed by the College
- The new university partner has an existing qualification at level 4, 5 or 6 that can be franchised or, as a result of the existing skills base within the University, there is a willingness to validate a programme that has been developed by the College
- There is a strategic fit between the University and the College which is mutually beneficial and the proposed new programme does not create any issues regarding competition

Table A Profile of students studying on University Programmes 2013/14 – 2015/16

Category	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16
Age:			
18-20	85	127	144
21+	196	144	174
Disability :			
Student has a learning difficulty or disability	40	39	50
No learning difficulties or disabilities	233	230	250
No information provided	8	2	7
Gender:			
Male	70	48	59
Female	211	223	248
Students with a widening participation postcode			
Yes	119	138	148
No	162	133	159
Largest Ethnicity Category			
White British	216 (77%)	210 (77%)	233 (76%)
Asian/Asian British – Pakistani	27 (10%)	24 (9%)	26 (8%)

2. Strategic Approaches to Widening Participation

Pre-16 Outreach Activity

Bury College works with over 50 high school partners, offering a wide range of supportive activities to help school staff, their pupils and parents to make an informed choice when planning their future education and career. Masterclasses, taster sessions, mentoring programmes led by college students and workshop sessions are offered, where pupils can experience college life and gain a greater understanding of how their post 16 programme of study can eventually lead on to studying at a higher level. Bury College has also worked with the Children's University and it is expected that this partnership will continue to grow. Recent activities have included art workshops, sports events and a graduation ceremony for primary school aged children.

Post-16 Activity

As part of the planning for transition process for post 16 students, a range of activities takes place throughout the academic year to promote progression into Higher Education. Activities include presentations from Higher Education staff on the range of programmes available, support in writing UCAS applications, tours of the new University Centre and a bursary for internal students who progress directly on to a Bury College University Centre programme subject to satisfactory attendance and performance.

Information for prospective students

Communication with prospective students takes place throughout the application cycle and includes detailed information on course content, tuition fees, entry criteria and progression opportunities and is made available in a variety of formats including prospectus, a dedicated Higher Education website: (www.burycollegeunicentre.co.uk), course leaflets and open evenings. Applicants for full time programmes delivered in partnership with the University of Bolton and the University of Cumbria apply directly to the College through UCAS whilst applicants for programmes awarded by the University of Salford apply to the University of Salford via UCAS. Part time applicants apply directly to the College. If an interview is required, applicants are informed of the date two weeks in advance and that they will be required to complete a written task. Feedback is provided to the applicant after the interview and, if the applicant has been unsuccessful, advice and guidance is provided including discussing applying for alternative programmes including Access to Higher Education.

6. Supporting Undergraduate Students

Bury College has, in addition to its tutorial system, an established Student Engagement process that enables student representatives to take an active role in the management of Higher Education at Bury College. Specifically, the role of a HE representative is:

- To be the voice of students studying on their course.
- To be actively engaged with how decisions are made
- To liaise with their Tutors on a regular basis.
- To represent their peers' opinions and interests and address issues that impact on the quality of the educational experience at Bury College by attending various meetings and activities.
- To feedback information to their peers as appropriate
- To work with Bury College to develop policies and educate students about important issues regarding their education.
- To keep abreast of student issues regarding their course, through actively engaging the opinion of their peers.
- To feedback information to the University staff as appropriate.

A range of additional activities takes place throughout the academic year to support students including:

- Study skills sessions for new entrants and refresher workshops for continuing students
- Supporting students to make Disabled Students' Allowance (DSA) claims
- Early identification of at-risk students through the 'Self-Efficacy' survey and interventions put in place to support students with their academic studies
- Financial support via the Students' Opportunity Fund for students experiencing financial hardship
- Access to a free morning and afternoon coach service from a number of destinations in Greater Manchester and Lancashire
- Continued support through one to one sessions with a range of staff including counsellors, academic staff and the Director of Higher Education
- Presentations, workshops and research projects with partner universities.

7. Tuition Fees

Tuition fees are reviewed each year and published at the start of each recruitment cycle for the following academic year. Bury College reserves the right to change its tuition fees in accordance with the Office of Fair Access published Access Agreement for Bury College

8. Student Success Measures

Outreach

Bury College will continue to work with its partner high schools and primary schools through the Children's University to promote progression into Higher Education. Activities will include taster sessions, and master classes in subjects that are aligned to the current portfolio of programmes. Parents will also be actively engaged with to raise awareness of the benefits of Higher Education and the financial support available. Activities will also be targeted to ensure that all sections of the community have the opportunity to take advantage of this outreach work. Table B illustrates the 2015/16-2019/20 Access Agreement targets for widening participation

9. Transitional Activity

In order to support applicants with the transition into Higher Education at Bury College, online materials will be developed which will enable applicants to access information on a range of matters including study guides, academic referencing, subject reading lists and financial and learner support. These materials will be accessed through a dedicated website and will enable applicants to become familiar with the academic and practical aspects of their programme.

10. Enhanced Student Experience and Engagement

In order to further improve student engagement nominated student representatives will be provided with the opportunity to attend leadership training in 2015/16 and 2016/17. This will help the student representatives to achieve the objectives of their role as described above and to ensure that future policies are developed in full consultation with the student body.

Table B: Access Agreement targets 2015/16 - 2019/20

Target	Base line data 2014/15	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20
Students from WP postcodes gain access to HE	51%	52%	53%	54%	55%	56%
Increased enrolments from internal students	52%	53%	53%	54%	55%	56%
Students from ethnic groups	23%	25%	25%	26%	26%	27%
Learners over the age of 21	53%	53%	54%	54%	54%	55%
Learners entering part time programmes	32%	34%	35%	35%	36%	37%

11. Student Achievement

To improve student in year retention, achievement and success rates further work will be undertaken to support students identified as at risk through the Self-Efficacy survey undertaken by all new entrants at the start of their programme. Interventions will include support with Maths and English (including access to GCSE Maths and English classes), research skills, time management, advice on how to access financial support and on-going pastoral support.

12. Financial Support

In order to qualify for the financial support of a maximum of £500 per each academic year of a course, students must meet the following conditions:

- Commence an undergraduate course of study in September 2015 or later at the Bury College University Centre and be paying full tuition fees of £5996. Fees must be paid via tuition fee loan or self-funded
- Students must be a full time/EU undergraduate

- Students must have successfully completed a Level 3 qualification at Bury College in the academic year 2014/15 or 2015/16
- Payments will be made in two instalments (50% in October and 50% in February) of each consecutive academic year of undergraduate study subject to achieving at least 90% attendance and satisfactory academic progress
- Payments will be terminated if a student withdraws, suspends studies, transfers to another institution or fails their programme of study

13. Monitoring and Evaluation Arrangements

Compliance to these strategic intentions will be monitored through the existing college Higher Education Quality and Strategic Management Group. Student representatives are invited to attend these meeting and fully participate in the relevant agenda items. Widening participation activities and the impact on student retention are also reported annually through the overarching college wide quality assurance process.

Bury College Resources

Bury College has, in recent years, invested over £43 million in its estates and facilities including a £4.3million extension to the Enterprise Centre which accommodates the university level programmes. The four-storey University Centre contains a purpose-built lecture and conference facility, classrooms, study areas, seminar and meeting rooms and a social learning zone. The centre, which was designed in consultation with Higher Education students, provides a suitable environment for students to develop their knowledge and critical understanding of their subject and the wider academic skills required to achieve success.