

**ACCRINGTON AND ROSSENDALE COLLEGE**

**ACCESS AND PARTICIPATION STATEMENT**

**Introduction**

Accrington and Rossendale College is located in Pennine (formerly East) Lancashire and primarily serves the districts of Hyndburn (Accrington and adjacent areas), Rossendale and the Ribble Valley. The population of the college's immediate catchment area is around 206,000 and it draws learners from some of the most deprived wards in the country.

Accrington and Rossendale College’s mission is to raise access, aspiration and achievement and our vision is to be the first choice College for a career-focussed education. Our strategic aims therefore are:

• to be an outstanding College

• to provide inspirational teaching, learning and support which equips all our learners for their future careers

• to increase participation from our community and add value, economically and socially

• to be an employer of first choice for talented and innovative staff

• to maintain financial stability.

The college is committed to developing and ensuring a learning environment which provides learners with flexible opportunities, tailored to their individual goals and needs, within an equal opportunities framework. This includes:

• providing each learner with a learning programme which is coherent and appropriate to the individual’s specific goals

• providing access to inclusive learning opportunities at appropriate levels

• encouraging active learning and increasing students’ responsibilities for their own learning.

**Strategic Objectives and HE Strategy**

The college is committed to a stronger integration of higher education and higher skills within the further education sector providing our local community and employers’ wider access to improving life chances and opportunities for growth.

The college is committed to the continued delivery of Higher Education and Skills (NQF levels 4, 5, 6 and 7). The college will continue to develop, with local employers, its provision of high quality vocationally relevant qualifications.

Our mission for higher education is to engage with learners, employers and our local communities in the pursuance of excellence in standards, quality and enhancement of our higher education offer.

Such provision will facilitate the college aspiration of supporting local people to play an active part in the regeneration of their communities and by developing higher level skills. It will facilitate progression to HE, for students and trainees from level 3 programmes. The provision will continue to build on college wide excellence in employer engagement and learning in the workplace. In addition, it will allow the college to continue to actively pursue the widening participation agenda.

**Aims for College Higher Education**

1. Offer opportunities to access and contribute to the shaping of higher education for individuals, employers and our wider community.

2. Safeguard and drive improvements in standards and quality of higher education provision.

3. Strengthen progression into and through higher education raising each learner’s potential employment opportunities.

4. Increase learner choice in response to identified needs by sustaining growth and continuing to explore opportunities for expansion and development.

5. Establish expertise in niche areas of provision supporting regional as well as national demands.

6. Recruit, develop and retain appropriately qualified staff. Support scholarly activity and research to maintain academic standards and professional practice across all programmes.

7. Provide excellent space and learning resources in a way that minimises the College’s impact on the environment.

8. Increase access and flexibility in the delivery of Higher Education through maximising appropriate collaboration and partnership work.

9. Provide clear strategic and operational management to higher education enabling it to flourish.

**Admissions Policy and Equal Opportunities**

We operate an admissions policy which ensures equality of opportunity for all applicants and we aim to ensure that we admit applicants to a course suited to their ability and aspirations. The selection process therefore takes account of all aspects of an application and not just an applicant's academic profile and will normally include an interview.

We seek to widen participation in Higher Education and aim to attract applications from students from all sections of the community without regard to ethnicity, nationality, disability, sexual orientation, gender, religious or political beliefs, marital status or socio-economic background. We welcome applications from mature students and students who have suffered educational hardship or disruption (including students with disabilities).

It is the policy of Accrington and Rossendale College to provide all students with the guidance and learning support needed to enable them to achieve their personal education and employment goals. The aim of this policy is to ensure that effective arrangements exist to help individuals apply their knowledge, skills and experience to make well-informed and realistic decisions about their future. It seeks to improve retention and raise aspirations of all students across all levels and subjects of study.

This policy also ensures that arrangements exist for developing an individual's knowledge and understanding of self, role and opportunities in education, training and employment. It allows individuals to develop the skills necessary to access, interpret and use labour market information, to seek advice and guidance and to be realistic and ambitious about personal capabilities and aspirations, as well as to make informed decisions about future career progression. Therefore we:

• operate an Admissions Scheme, which is based on the ability to succeed and does not involve unduly restrictive conditions or requirements

• review the information that we provide about our programmes to ensure that it is clear, accessible and easily understood by all potential students

• ensure, through our quality assurance policies, that equal opportunities issues are addressed in the design and delivery of learning programmes

• review our portfolio of programmes to ensure that the range of opportunities provided reflects the needs of all sections of the community.

**Student Guidance and Support**

The College is firmly committed to providing the widest possible access and to removing barriers to those with disabilities and/or leaning difficulties while ensuring that confidentiality is maintained. A formal process is in place to undertake assessment of the student’s needs and students are strongly encouraged to disclose a disability or learning difficulty. The College has formally provided opportunities for disclosure and provides a screening service to all students during induction. Following disclosure and/or screening, staff will make every effort to provide reasonable adjustments to ensure that students are not placed at a substantial disadvantage in comparison with persons that are not disabled. Where a student does not disclose and where the College might not reasonably be expected to know about a student’s disability and/or learning difficult, the College might not make adjustments which it would otherwise have made.

The provision of Learning Support is recognised as an important factor in the College fulfilling its key strategic objectives for Students and Clients, as described in the Strategic Plan. Informed by the diversity of our student population, in age, ethnicity, level of achievement, support need and ability, our aim is to provide an effective and responsive learning support service which keeps up-to-date with changes in curriculum, syllabi, teaching and support methods. The Learning Services arranges individually negotiated packages of support that enable students to achieve their potential.

A means-tested higher education Access to Learning Fund (ALF) is also available to all students who can demonstrate an urgent need for assistance. This will be administered through the College’s Financial Support Committee using existing procedures. The College also distributes annual scholarships to level 3 students progressing to higher education both internally and externally.

**Outreach Work**

To build upon the College’s good practice for widening participation in higher education:

* the College will work with students in secondary schools with a history of low participation in higher education to develop links with both further and higher education
* the College will carry out a variety of aspiration raising activities targeted at local schools including primary schools (i.e. master classes/Junior University)
* the College will look to use its relationships with community centres in the educationally deprived wards of the boroughs served by the College to distribute information about the College’s higher education provision.
* the College will ensure a smooth transition for mature learners to enter higher education
* the College will promote progression for all learners including non-traditional entrants to HE such as vocational learners on apprentices programmes
* the College will ensure progression from higher education programmes by developing employer engagement and identifying further academic/training opportunities with partner HEIs
* the College will participate in various open days held at local and regional venues.