



Southport College University Centre

Access and Participation Statement

2020-2021



College context and the key areas we are seeking to address

Southport Technical College opened in 1935. This institution brought together a number of technical courses which had been offered throughout Southport since 1887. In 1938 Southport School of Arts and Crafts was founded. The two institutions were amalgamated in 1989 to form Southport College. In January 2018 Southport College merged with King George V College, a local sixth form college also based in Southport.

Southport College offers a range of courses to students from Southport and the surrounding area. These courses include Diplomas, NVQs, BTECs, A Levels and Access courses. In addition, Southport College has a small, sustainable portfolio of higher education courses awarded by the University of Central Lancashire (UCLan), the University of Cumbria (UoC) and Pearson.

Southport College is situated in a seaside town with a population of about 91,000 (2011, Census). It lies within the Metropolitan Borough of Sefton, which had a population of 275,400 in 2017. Sefton is a coastal borough. Sefton lies at the northern end of the Liverpool City Region. Sefton is one of five metropolitan districts within the Liverpool City Region. Sefton shares close economic, social, cultural and transport links with Liverpool City Region. Sefton also has important links to Preston and West Lancashire. Sefton adjoins the City of Liverpool to the south, the borough of Knowsley to the southeast, and the largely rural West Lancashire elsewhere. The local catchment area for the College includes part of West Lancashire. The indices of multiple deprivation, produced as a means of comparing measures of deprivation in different areas, rank Sefton as the 76th most deprived district out of 326 in England (Office of National Statistics, 2015).

Higher Education is important for the local area as it provides a pathway into higher level study that would not otherwise be available to many students. Progression to higher level study in Sefton is significantly below national rates: according to the NOMIS report January to December 2019 33.9% of people of working age within Sefton are qualified to Level 4 or above compared with 36.1% in the North West and 40.3% in the Great Britain. The College has a dynamic HE strategy, one of the most significant objectives for HE states the following *“to enhance the personal growth, confidence and employability of young people and adults by significantly expanding opportunities for university level study whilst maintaining high standards”*. Directly related to the widening participation agenda, the College HE Portfolio has the potential to improve social mobility for the residents of Sefton and the outlying catchment areas.

The College has maintained a modest and sustainable HE provision, including full-time, part-time students and higher apprentices. Degree programmes are aligned to Liverpool City Region LEP priorities including Health and Life Sciences, Digital and Creative and Financial and Professional. Clear pathways into HE are facilitated through Advanced Level and Access to HE programmes in related subject areas, delivered at the College and at its partner King George V College.

Higher Education provision at the University Centre Southport College endeavours to be aspirational, inclusive and purposeful; reflecting the institutional vision of *'supporting individual dreams and ambitions'* and mission *'to provide excellent, sustainable, education and training.'*

The College has an HE Strategy that provides an overarching strategic framework for quality assurance and continuous improvement. This is extended and enhanced through: the HE Learning and Teaching Strategy, the Student Engagement Strategy, the HE Quality Strategy and the Quality Development Plan.

The Strategy sets out the College's aims to widen access to higher education, to meet the needs of key local employment sectors, and to support the economic and social regeneration of the sub-region. In particular, it seeks to take full advantage of the opportunities afforded by the College's dedicated University Centre, which opened in 2012 and was further developed in 2018.

The Strategy aims to ensure that the planned growth of higher education provision is accompanied by an equal emphasis on maintaining high quality teaching, learning and support which enables students to achieve their full potential. It combines the distinctive advantages of locally delivered HE in a supportive FE College environment with the higher learning and research ethos of a University.

As set out in the HE Learning and Teaching Strategy, the College operates in an increasingly competitive environment and our aim is to appeal particularly to those students who are attracted by the personalised support and guidance that is a unique element of the provision within a small University Centre. This means that learning and teaching needs to be highly differentiated, draw on a wide range of learning support strategies and achieve the level of intellectual stimulation and engagement that is expected within a higher education experience.

The HE provision supports the wider institutional teaching and learning aims of Southport College in seeking:

- ✓ Excellent teaching and learning which actively engages students
- ✓ Supportive and aspirational teaching environments
- ✓ Self-evaluative approaches to the development of teaching and learning which impact on continuing improvement

We seek to foster a culture of staff and students working together to shape the higher education provision and experience, with students having a clear role in decision-making and opportunities to develop and improve all aspects of the College's HE curriculum and experience.

Widening participation is embodied in the HE Strategy, which confirms the aim of providing a local offer of Higher Education, demonstrating a strong commitment to fair access, including the minimising of barriers for applicants and widening participation to HE within the local area.

A review of access and outcomes data identifies the following:

- ✓ The College is successful in attracting mature learners and those with non-traditional qualifications and experiences
- ✓ The College is successful in securing good progression outcomes for the very large majority of HE learners who complete their studies
- ✓ Employer engagement was cited as an area of good practice by both the QAA and Matrix and continues to be a strength
- ✓ The ratio of learners from deprived areas continues to grow.

Whilst outcomes for students are improving they remain an area for further improvement. Actions to improve retention include: further develop the resources available in the University Centre, creation of a student ambassador role, further development of the Academic Tuition programme following evaluation, improved IAG and validation of Foundation Degrees better suited to student progression.

Access and Success

The College has continued to attract a significant number of learners from deprived areas. In 2018/19, learners from deprived wards accounted for 34% of leavers and achievement for these learners was 89%, which is above the College overall rate.

The proportion of mature learners remains high at 67%, with an achievement rate of 84%.



Conversely, achievement for 18-20 year olds was lower, at 71%, and IAG and curriculum design for 18-20 year olds remain areas for improvement.

Learners with learning disability account for 21% of the student population with achievement in 2018/19 at 86%.

BME learners made up 6% of the learner cohort in 2018/19, in the context of 4% of the Sefton population as BME.

Outcomes for males and females over a three-year period show there is no achievement gap .

The College employs a dedicated Quality and Support Officer for higher education programmes. Students with a known learning difficulty or disability account for 22% of the current cohort and the achievement rate for these students is in line with that of students without a declared disability or difficulty.

Progression

In 2018, the DLHE survey found that 89% of the leavers progressed to employment or further study. As part of our HE strategy a key focus is to improve the numbers of students progressing to Level 6 and postgraduate study.

Recruitment in 2019/20 saw a 20% increase in new learners benefiting from the focus on: enhanced resources in the study zone, a new social provision of an HE student specific kitchen facility and welfare support including free travel passes for eligible students

Ambition and strategies

The focus of the Southport College Higher Education Strategy promotes further the aim to widen access to higher education by taking into account the importance of meeting the needs of key local employment sectors, and to support the economic and social regeneration of the sub-region. In particular it seeks to take full advantage of the opportunities afforded by the establishment of the University Centre which opened in September 2012. The Centre is intended to provide a distinctive higher education experience and, at a cost of £1.6 million, demonstrates the College's commitment to the development and enhancement of the HE experience for local people.

Overall ambition

As a College of FE with higher education provision, we are fully committed to widening participation. As set out in the strategic plan, our approach is underpinned by a number of basic principles:

- To enhance the personal growth, confidence and employability of young people and adults through excellent vocational and academic education;
- To make a significant contribution to the local and national economy by building positive and productive partnerships with employers, supporting the skills needs of priority areas, and encouraging enterprise and endeavour;
- To enhance the personal growth, confidence and employability of young people and adults through excellent vocational and academic education;
- To ensure all programmes enable students to succeed and progress;
- To provide excellent and inspirational teaching and learning;
- To create a safe and secure environment in which equality of opportunity, diversity of backgrounds and experiences are valued;
- To develop and implement an accommodation strategy which ensures the College estate is fit for purpose and meets curriculum and business needs.

Key groups

The College aims to widen access and participation for particular groups and individuals, and to positively impact on the performance of its HE programmes:

- Further education learners progressing to higher education;
- Under-represented groups and non-traditional local learners, including those on low incomes, those living in deprived areas, care leavers and carers, those whose families have no experience of higher education, people with learning difficulties and disabilities and those from different ethnic groups;
- Mature learners re-entering education;
- Part-time learners in employment.

Equality and diversity is central to everything we do as a college and our approach to that is described in the College's Equality and Diversity Policy.

Working in partnership

The College works closely with a range of organisations and employers in the design and delivery and IAG of its programmes, including the National Careers Service and local NHS Trusts.

In supporting student success, the College works with local welfare trusts including: J J Rowe and the Pinecone Trust

The work placement team work closely with employers and students to secure high quality placements for students.

The College work closely with local schools to ensure a clear focus on access and participation, through tailored IAG events, presentations and workshops.

Employers play an active role in the College's HE specific focus on careers and employability, with a programme of events built into the Academic Tuition programme.



Student involvement

In the National Student Survey (NSS) 2019, College students scored: · *Student Voice* at 73% (-10% on National Benchmark); although below the National Benchmark, this was an improvement of 10% for the College from 2018. Alongside this, 2019 NSS result for Q24: *Staff value students' views and opinions about the course* scored 80% (5% above the National Benchmark).

In 2018/19, a thorough approach to ensuring that student representation was made at all levels of the College and the roles of HE Student Governor and HE Student Lead Rep. were reviewed and

recruited. These roles have ensured that the student voice has contributed to quality review and strategic planning across the College, including at the governance level on the Corporation Board.

The Higher Education Quality and Support Officer (HEQSO) undertakes and supports student voice, reporting back through the College’s quality assurance processes. The focus on ‘closing the feedback loop’ is linked to ensuring that students are provided with summary responses from the College to show how actions are focusing upon addressing and improving identified areas. A range of methods are used to support regular student voice engagements. For example, Survey Monkey surveys are popular and effective. In the support of the ability to provide confidential and anonymised feedback, if required, the College has a ‘Student Voice Post box’ located outside of the Quality and Support Office. Comment cards are available with this post box and any submissions are monitored by the HEQSO and the Head of Higher Education. The College also ensures that regular quality feedback is garnered from students in accordance with the expectations set out for module evaluations. Such informs review and planning processes. The College pro-actively seeks student engagement when undertaking projects in order to ensure that the student perspective can be taken into account at the outset of such projects. Students are valued as active partners in the development of existing programmes and in the approval of new provision.

The College is committed to equality and diversity. The College is dedicated to the active pursuit of an equal opportunities policy which addresses the need and right of everyone in the College to be treated with respect and dignity, in an environment in which a diversity of backgrounds and experiences is valued. An example of the HE students’ engagement with this was that a focus group of HE students completed a review (March 2019) of the College’s Equality and Diversity policy, with feedback provided to the College Executive Team via the HEQSO. The same consultative approach has been taken in constructing the Access and Participation Statement for 2020-2021, with student representatives providing qualitative feedback.

Activities and support for students

The following activities have been put into place to improve access and participation in HE. There have been a number of successful initiatives resulting in a steady growth in HE students at the College, as described below.

Inclusive Recruitment	
Targeted recruitment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Careers events • Taster events • College Open evenings, including HE specific Open Evenings • All HE students are interviewed for the course they have applied for • Use of social media • School liaison work

Adult engagement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pre-Access to HE, Advanced Level Diplomas and Access to HE programmes in pathway subjects provide pathways to adults re-entering education • Student Ambassadors • Adults entering through higher apprenticeships are supported to achieve HE qualifications • Information, Advice and Guidance for applications to HE programmes, includes support for students making UCAS applications and HE funding
Partnership with HE institutions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Southport College is working with its partner Higher Education Institute partners, University of Cumbria and UCLan providing a joint approach where appropriate to offer a range of HE courses to accommodate students' needs academically in an easily accessible location in their local community.
Access to course information	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prospective students can access detailed course related information a number of ways via the college website, the HE prospectus, programme specifications and open evenings; • All full time applicants apply through UCAS, part time students apply directly to the college. One to one support for UCAS and loan applications is provided by the guidance team.

Initial Advice and Guidance

Student Guidance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pre-course advice and guidance, including school liaison activity • Individual tutorials • UCAS application advice and guidance for Level 3 students • HE funding advice and guidance • Information for employers • Annual prospectus
Learning Support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learning Support Interviews prior to enrolment and regular reviews • Disability and technological support and communication on teaching and learning strategies for teaching staff • Specialist tutor support • Support for vulnerable learners such as care leavers and carers
Application	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Level 3 students are supported through UCAS application workshops, personal statement writing support and mock interview sessions are facilitated by internal pastoral staff and outreach staff from partner HE Institutions. • All students are interviewed and robust independent advice and guidance is given to all perspective students during the interview. If the interview is unsuccessful the student is then directed to student

	guidance for further advice and guidance on alternative programmes that are available.
--	--

Improving retention and success

Support for transition into HE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Transition Event (pre HE academic year) for all HE applicants • Student Ambassadors who provide specific support with the management of IAG, induction and peer mentoring • Robust induction processes, including learning support interviews and reviews • Provision of information (micro-website for HE, main College website, written information, social media) • Monthly subject-related careers events staffed by Progress Co-ordinators and guidance staff with representatives from HEIs and local employers. • Dedicated counselling service, with 1-2-1 programmes and drop-ins
Enhancement of student experience	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dedicated University Centre providing high quality learning environment incorporating classrooms, a silent study area, a lapsafe, a subsidised HE student kitchen and a Library Learning Centre which features an Academic Skills and Knowledge (ASK) Centre for HE students • Free Travel passes for eligible students • Work placement or work-related experience • Courses are designed and planned in conjunction with students, higher education partners and employers • Small class sizes with good tutor to student ratio for all HE programmes • A one-to-one focused academic tutorial programme supporting Personal Development Plans (PDPs) for all HE students

Progression to further study/employment

Support for transition into HE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Working with university partners, students and local employers to improve the curriculum, including course design, assessment design, effective and efficient use of resources and College's range of HE programmes and routes into them.
Work placement/ experience	<p>All HE students will have the opportunity to experience at least one of the following as part of their course:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • a work placement or internship • a live brief linked to an external client • a research project

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • a careers module • Practice/mock interview sessions and additional careers material <p>Progression rates for HE students are consistently at or above benchmark.</p>
Support for next steps	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advice and guidance for post-course destinations with support provided by HE partner institutions and local employers. • Vocational HE curriculum with programme of personal development or professional practice for all students • One-to-one tutorials built into the programme of Academic Tuition to identify next steps • Consistently good progression rates for HE students • A focused careers and employability experience week is built into the academic tutorial programme

Appendix 1 – Transparency Data

		Full-time				Part-time				Apprenticeships				
		Total number of applications	Offers made	Offers accepted	Registrations	Total number of applications	Offers made	Offers accepted	Registrations	Total number of applications	Offers made	Offers accepted	Registrations	
Ethnicity	Asian	1	1	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	
	Black	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	
	Mixed	5	4	4	4	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	
	Other	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	
	White	177	130	101	83	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	
	Unknown	9	4	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	
	Total	193	139	107	89	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	
EIMD 2019 quintile	1	46	32	26	23	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	
	2	30	25	21	16	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	
	3	55	38	31	24	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	
	4	36	26	17	16	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	
	5	21	17	12	10	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	
	N/A	0	0	0	0	https://www.s	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	Unknown	5	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	Total	193	139	107	89	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	
Gender	Female	131	87	64	52	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	
	Male	60	51	43	37	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	
	Other	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	
	Unknown	2	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	
	Total	193	139	107	89	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	