

NCG

ACCESS AGREEMENT 2016-17

Institution: NCG
Contact for access agreement: Ann Baxter
Post held: Director of Higher Education
Telephone number: 0191 200 4360
Email address: ann.baxter@ncl-coll.ac.uk

Introduction

NCG is committed to opportunity, choice and excellence in HE and seeks social mobility and future economic growth mainly within the North East. It promotes a student experience that is both enriching and inspiring for students wherever they study.

The customer demand is for seamless access to further and higher education opportunities, which are focused on skills and employability. The vocational HE curriculum has been developed to meet the needs of employers and also to articulate with the FE curriculum in order to promote progression for our Level 3 learners.

Over 91% of our HE provision is delivered in Newcastle College. Newcastle College is able to offer the best of both worlds: the resources, choice and location of a big college combined with the flexibility and responsiveness of a smaller community based institution.

The remaining HE provision is delivered at West Lancashire College, in response to student demand for a local progression route, Kidderminster College, who in 2013-14 commenced delivery of HNDs for directly funded students and in 2014-15 merged with NCG, and NCG Direct, which offers Degrees through distance learning, providing greater flexibility for students wanting to access Higher Education.

The strong organic growth of NCG brings together higher and further education opportunities and progression pathways in a unique way. NCG is able to build on the success of the individual divisions and take advantage of the opportunities for synthesis. It offers a vocational HE curriculum that articulates well with the further education curriculum enabling progression from these programmes of study. The emphasis on WP and improving progression into and through HE raises awareness and aspirations of all learners. NCG values diversity promotes equality and eliminates bias and discrimination from the way it operates. This commitment is outlined in a number of policies including the Single Equality Scheme.

NCG provides the opportunity to review, further develop and enhance previous initiatives in WP. The range of activities that NCG builds on covers the complete student life cycle and includes:

- Providing outreach activities, summer schools, taster days/master classes, talks and workshops for students, parents, staff and community to prepare students for higher education;
- Working with applicants in specific subject areas to ensure they meet the entry requirements by providing help such as information and guidance, diagnostic tests, Maths and English literacy sessions and study skills;
- Activities to promote successful induction and integration of WP students and on-going provision of information and guidance (IAG) for students;
- Providing a coherent service through counselling and learner support services;
- Developing a flexible innovative curriculum that meets the needs of learners in the workplace and supports employers through mentoring;
- Developing curriculum and projects to improve the employability of WP students.

NCG's purpose is:

Unlocking potential through learning.

Our objectives are to:

- put the needs of the learner and customer first
- innovate and support excellence in learning and employability
- promote diversity and social mobility
- value, involve and invest in our staff
- foster strong partnerships with employers, partners and communities
- secure our future through strategic investment and profitability

Advantage is taken of the unique contribution that can be made by the Divisions of NCG whether or not they are engaged in delivering HE. For example, activity in West Lancashire College is focussed on developing new pathways into HE whilst at the same time developing the capacity and capability of staff to design and deliver HE. A second example can be found in the Intraining Group Ltd which delivers a wide range of pre-HE and employability programmes across the UK. Here the major role is to raise awareness and aspirations for learners to enter HE which can be accessed through Newcastle College Division which has over twenty years' experience of working with non-traditional learners. The college continues to be involved in the development of Higher Level Apprenticeships (HLAs) which further demonstrates NCG's commitment to WP through the development of new and inclusive progression opportunities.

Widening Participation Position

We have reviewed our targets for 2016/17 and our target groups are

- Recruitment from low participation neighbourhoods
- Part Time and Flexible Study
- Mature Students

Percentage of student body recruited from under represented Target Groups

Target Group	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14
Recruit from low participation neighbourhoods	34.9%	29%	30%
Part Time Students	32.5%	25.9%	22.9%
Mature Students	55%	54%	52%

Recruit from low participation neighbourhoods

As you can see from the table above our recruitment from low participation neighbourhoods has declined since 2011-12. This is due to an overall drop in recruitment in 2012-13 with the introduction of the New Regime Fees but we will continue to promote Higher Education in these low participation neighbourhoods by conducting the outreach activities as detailed below.

Part Time and Flexible Study

Over the last few years, along with the rest of the sector, we have seen a significant decline in our part time numbers, as the above table demonstrates.

NCG Direct, which was established in 2012-13 offering degree courses through distance learning, has grown its provision over the last two years to 5 Foundation Degrees and from 2015-16 they will be offering a BA(Hons) Degree. They have steadily grown their numbers in 2013-14 and then in 2014-15 and by offering Foundation Degrees that are designed for the existing workforce and with the flexibility of study length and start dates, then this will have a positive impact on our Part Time numbers.

Another key to driving up our part time numbers is to ensure that our Foundation Degrees remain current and fit for purpose across all vocational areas and some of the ways that we do this are:

- Employers reviewing existing programmes, ensuring that the content meets industry standard and provides students with the necessary skills and knowledge to enter that industry.
- Gaining employer input prior to putting forward a recommendation for a new Foundation or Bachelor Degree, thus ensuring that we are looking to validate degree courses that industry require.

Mature Students

As you will see from the figures in the table the percentage of mature students has declined since 2011-12. This can be attributed to the decline in the number of Part Time students studying at NCG. Therefore targeting Part Time recruitment as an area to focus on will also have a positive impact on our recruitment of mature students.

Supporting students with Disabilities

The NCG Single Equality Scheme provides evidence of the strong commitment to equality and diversity. Equality objectives are designed to support the mission and achieve legal compliance across the organisation. Equality Action plans provide the opportunity to review data and activities in relation to equality and diversity at Group, Divisional and School level. The Institution regularly monitors and provides updates on the action plan via the Equal and Diversity Divisional Progress report.

The development of learning and teaching is integral to the institution and as such the organisation has adopted a robust approach to Equality Impact Assessments (EIA) which are designed to eliminate discrimination and promote equality through identification of actions for development and maintenance through the higher education committee structure. The process examines course design and approval processes and frameworks associated with admissions and assessment.

The College has a process that ensures a consistent practice in the support of assessment arrangements for HE students who have disclosed a disability or specific learning need. The 'Alternative Assessment Arrangements' process offers students an alternative assessment agreement which in partnership with staff and support teams allows students to plan and manage their assessment effectively.

In 2013-14, 66 students across all levels 4, 5 and 6 took advantage of the alternative assessment agreement this academic year, which is a decrease from the previous year. Data collected by the learning support team indicated an increase in the number of students was received support successfully progressing to level 5 (82%). At level 5 66% of

students either progressed to level 6 programme or into employment and 81% of level 6 student progressed into employment.

Level 4 students

Progression status	2013-14	2012-13
Progressed to Level 5	23	18
Enrolled on an alternative course	0	1
Progressed to Level 5 at another HEI	2	1
Repeat Level 4	0	1
Unknown	1	3
Employment	2	-
TOTAL	28	24

Level 5 students

Progression status	2013-14	2012-13
Progressed to Level 6	5	11
Employment	5	4
Apprenticeship	0	1
Further study	3	3
Unknown	2	23
TOTAL	15	42

Level 6 students

Progression status	2013-14	2012-13
Employment	17	10
Continuing studies	3	2
Unknown	1	3
TOTAL	21	15

Level 7 students

Progression status	2013-14	2012-13
Employment	2	n/a
Continuing studies	0	
Unknown	0	
TOTAL	2	

The Learning Support Service at Newcastle College provides support, advice and guidance for students with a wide range of learning needs. They help students across the college who have a range of additional support needs. They support students in a number of ways and are committed to providing inclusive education in a safe and positive environment.

Student Support

At present there are six support teams within the Learning Support Service (LSS) dedicated to assisting students across the college:

- Autism and Asperger Support Team
- Dyslexia Support Team
- Learning Difficulties and Physical Disabilities
- Sensory Support Team
- Wellbeing Support Team
- Assistive Technology

Kidderminster College and West Lancashire College have Additional Learning Support Teams who work inclusively, using a variety of methods to meet learners' needs across a range of difficulties and disabilities which includes:

- In-class Support
- Dyslexia and Coursework Support
- Learning Aids and Specialist Equipment

Level of fees

The fee levels for all franchised (indirectly funded) courses are those determined by the franchising institution and contained in their own access agreements.

For students commencing their studies from September 2016 a fee of £6,900 per year will be charged for all full-time programmes and £4,000 for 120 credits for part-time programmes. This applies to the following programmes:

- Higher National Certificates (HNC)
- Higher National Diplomas (HND)
- Foundation degrees
- Bachelor with Honours degrees
- Post Graduate Certificate of Education (PGCE)
- Professional Graduate Certificate of Education (ProfGCE)

The fee will apply equally to United Kingdom students and to students who are nationals of any other state of the European Union.

In addition to the tuition fees the College reserves the right to charge students for additional professional registration and/or sector skills requirements.

Bursaries and other financial support for students:

The level of tuition fee set by this institution takes account of the policy considerations which it has adopted to guide its thinking in relation to fee income. These considerations are:

- That the cost of full time higher education to students should not act as a entry barrier to those capable of benefiting from such an education and otherwise willing to engage in it;
- That income from tuition revenue should be managed to provide financial support for students, and to enhance their learning, and to encourage their progression and achievement.

Bursary Payments

All new full-time undergraduate students who enrol from September 2016 onwards will be entitled to apply for a bursary of £1000 in Year 1 of their study and in subsequent years dependent upon continuation of their study and successful completion of the previous year.

Bursary payments will be administered in the following way;

The table below highlights the financials for year 2016-17 within the agreement:

Total Bursary	Term 1	Term 2
£1000	£500	£500

Students receiving £1000 per year:

- An initial payment of £500 following census completion, which is the 1 November, in the first term of study. It is anticipated that this payment will assist students in acquiring personal learning resources for their programme;
- A subsequent payment of £500 in the Spring Term, to provide general financial support, and to act as an incentive to assist retention, achievement.
- The bursary is also used as an incentive for students to progress through levels as they entitled to this bursary should they continue their studies in subsequent years if they have successfully completed the previous year.

We will continue to conduct research to establish whether the bursary was a factor when students were deciding firstly, if they wanted to progress to Higher Education and secondly, their choice to study with NCG.

Outreach activities:

Primarily outreach activity engages learners who come within widening participation and interventions categories which are targeted at students in the 16-30 range. The target group is students studying within the North East in sixth forms, colleges of FE including the institution's own students and work based learners.

Activities will include:

- Open days aimed at the wider local population and for our own internal FE students.
- A monthly Information, Advice and Guidance event will be held which encourages applications to HE from a wide range of people.
- Targeted visits, organised by our dedicated HE School Liaison Assistant, by College staff to schools across the North East, especially those which serve low participation neighbourhoods, to promote the benefits of a vocational HE route.
- The "Careers Coach" which is a vehicle which visits deprived areas of Newcastle to encourage engagement in education and training, including HE.

At West Lancashire College they undertake the following activities:

- Monthly advice and guidance evenings on the first Wednesday of each month. During these evenings applicants and members of the community are welcome to visit the college to get advice on HE courses. HE applicants have access to IAG staff who could advise on fees, loans and bursaries, they would also be able to speak to Tutors about course specific information.
- 2 open events a year, one in November and one in March. In a similar way to the advice and guidance evening the community are welcome to visit but more of the college is accessible to them. So they are able to tour around campus and watch learner demonstrations, see displays and speak to current learners.

At Kidderminster College they undertake the following activities:

- Group and personal visits to the college where students and parents will be able to speak with Tutors and learners and find out about the facilities and services available at Kidderminster College.

- 1 open day and 2 open evenings, which are similar to that conducted at West Lancashire College.

Information on financial support available to students:

Financial information will be made available to all prospective students considering whether to join courses coming under this agreement. Such information will be guided by the principles of accessibility, transparency and clarity especially regarding offsetting bursaries against outstanding fees.

Information will summarise the annual and aggregate fee for the chosen course, bursary arrangements, and other sources of financial support available to students. It will also identify the sources from which students can obtain advice both within and outside the institution regarding the general financial framework applying to students undertaking full time higher education studies, so that they can establish the likely level of debt they will incur by the end of their studies. The institution is able to provide a full range of financial advice to prospective and current students through its Student Services department.

During induction all students will receive a presentation from the Student Services team which will, inter alia, cover issues associated with student finance.

All information relating to costs and means of support for students are available on the college website.

Expenditure of access measures:

The institution will direct additional revenue to support access measures in the following ways:

- Through bursary payments to students
- Through outreach activities, involving road shows, transport, and promotional materials;
- Through funding to provide additional support for academic tutors in relation to assessment of students and the provision of work based learning;
- Through capital spending to ensure that appropriate facilities are available.

Other direct expenditure is for a member of staff to work on outreach activity for HE, this costs £38k a year. A further 0.4 FTE member of staff is dedicated to working on the retention of HE students by providing advice and guidance to learners progressing on from their Foundation Degree to the Top up and they also attend events for our

internal level 3 students who are looking to progress on to foundation degrees. We will spend £15k on student success in 2016-17 and we also plan to spend £1.74 million on financial support, but this will largely be driven by recruitment and retention as this is driven by our full time bursary.

This OFFA expenditure represents 93% of the additional income for 2016/17, which largely attributed to the financial support for our students. However, there is also considerable indirect expenditure on promotional materials, academic and administrative staff time and on facilities for events.

Institutional milestones and objectives:

The institution has established milestones and objectives in relation to its higher education provision falling under this access agreement.

The primary is to meet the planned target for the proportion of students coming from the widening participation categories. They are, at baseline:

- 30% from low participating neighbourhoods
- 19% of our OFFA countable student population are Part Time
- 52% of our OFFA countable student population are Mature

The College also has other targets which have a positive effect on WP but will not be monitored as part of WP. These are:

- Recruitment targets: to meet the planned target intake
- Retention targets: to achieve an annual retention rate of 85% in each year on higher education programmes.
- Progression targets: to achieve an annual internal progression rate of 35% from completers of full time FE vocational level 3 programmes, and to achieve an annual minimum internal progression rate of at least 40% from completers of foundation degree onto honours degree programmes.
- Curriculum development: to respond to the identified needs of employers and students by developing new programmes and offering curriculum flexibility.

These will be monitored as part of the College's normal business planning processes.

Consultation with the Student Body

The NCG Higher Education Student Engagement Strategy enables higher education students at the college to actively participate in

shaping their learning experience and contributing to the future direction of the institution. The strategy includes all higher education students at undergraduate and postgraduate level, irrespective of location, mode of study, teaching delivery, or discipline. The college aims to provide an inclusive environment for student engagement which anticipates the varied needs of learners and aims to ensure that all students have equal access to educational opportunities.

The strategy aims to:

- Promote the concept of the 'engaged student' as an important driver for quality enhancement across the institution;
- Provide opportunities for effective student representation in decision-making processes including on governing boards and senior committees at college, school and course level;
- Promote and nurture a culture of belonging within the academic and social community;
- Facilitate the sharing of mutual information with students to enable meaningful discussions which promote educational enhancement and quality assurance;
- Actively engage students in shaping and developing quality assurance and the enhancement of higher education
- Ensure support and training are available to staff and students in relation to their roles as active partners in the development of quality assurance and enhancement;
- Provide fair and equitable access for all students to participate in a wide range of activities which promote enhancement and quality assurance;
- Recognise and celebrate the effort and contribute made by students who undertake a student engagement role;

The College engages with students on an on-going basis. They are active participants in HE committee meetings where the content of this agreement has been discussed. There is also a cross college student forum for HE where issues are discussed and reported through the HE committee structure. These discussions have included fees, student financial support and WP issues in general.

In 2013-14, Newcastle College introduced student internships, focussing on two specific areas of which student engagement was one. The aim of the student engagement internships is to gain a greater insight into the needs of our students and help develop a greater higher education learning experience within the College. Applications are invited from all areas of NCG that deliver Higher Education and from all programmes.

Market research was carried out by the College 2012/13 to identify from current undergraduates the reasons that they chose Newcastle College for HE study and to gain an understanding of the key influences on their decision. The research also set out to establish the importance of fees and bursaries when making the final decision. Following the introduction of the bursary in 2014-15 we will, in the future conduct, an analysis as to whether the bursary incentivised students to study at NCG.

The results of this survey fed in directly to the proposals for the level of fees and bursaries in this Access Agreement.

Equality and Diversity

The College has a Single Equality Scheme which replaced previous separate policies which addressed this area. This Scheme requires that all policies are subject to an Equality Impact Assessment. The Scheme also contains an action plan. Progress against this is monitored through the annual business cycle and governors and senior managers will be provided with a range of monitoring information.

Monitoring and Evaluation

Evaluation for the proposal

The fee and bursary proposals are based on evidence from different sources. These include:

- Feedback from the Student Forums
- Feedback from recruitment staff
- A market research survey in autumn 2012*
- Feedback from employers

For full-time students, a consistent theme was that the level of financial support was more important than the level of the fee.

It was therefore decided that a higher fee should be introduced to fund a bursary for all students with additional funds for those from low income households.

Monitoring of implementation

The institution will undertake annual monitoring and evaluation of this access agreement to confirm compliance and progress towards the achievement of the milestones it has established. Responsibility for the monitoring report will rest with the Director of Higher Education. The

* A telephone and questionnaire survey was conducted of a sample of first year enrolments. This found that only 7% chose the College because of the low fee (£5,800 at the time). However, 61% said that a bursary of cash instalments would be the most useful support. This was in the context that 88% received no financial support from family members.

report will be presented to the College Executive for approval, and following such approval be sent to the Academic Board and to the College Governors.

The annual monitoring report will be submitted to the Director of OFFA following its approval by the College Governors. The report will be presented to the Executive at such time as to ensure that OFFA will receive the report by its published deadline.

The report will incorporate the following sections:

- Financial data summarising recruitment levels, payment of bursaries, and other financial support made available to students;
- Outreach activities that have been undertaken during the year
 - Number of open days held
 - Number of schools/colleges visited
 - Proportion of schools/colleges in Low Participation Neighbourhoods (as a proxy for WP pupils/students)
 - Enquiries from those with a postcode for a Low Participation Neighbourhood
- Progression made in meeting institutional milestones and objectives.

As well as the institutional-level reporting, the Schools in the College which deliver HE have a quality review twice a year for their HE courses. This is in addition to the business planning that the Schools undertake.

As part of these meetings, Schools will be asked to assess their performance against the access targets. This will be not just in terms of enrolment but also retention, progression and achievement.

Retention is monitored by monthly reporting which looks at the current number of withdrawals and the trend across the year. High-level data is presented to highlight any patterns and trends and low-level data is made available so that HE Managers can investigate whether withdrawals are affecting any particular type of student, especially those from a WP background.

On an annual basis, at the HE quality review meetings, Schools are provided with high-level and low-level data on progression and achievement. HE Managers are asked to investigate whether any particular type of student, especially those from a WP backgrounds, have significantly different outcomes.

Table 7 - Targets and milestones

Institution name: NCG
 Institution UKPRN: 10004599

Table 7a - Statistical targets and milestones relating to your applicants, entrants or student body

Reference number	Please select target type from the drop-down menu	Description (500 characters maximum)	Is this a collaborative target?	Baseline year	Baseline data	Yearly milestones (numeric where possible, however you may use text)					Commentary on your milestones/targets or textual description where numerical description is not appropriate (500 characters maximum)
						2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	
T16a_01	Other statistic - Part-time (please give details in the next column)	Increase part time recruitment utilising vocational Foundation Degrees and working with employers	No	2014-15	19%	20.4	20.8	21.1	21.4	21.7	
T16a_02	Other statistic - Mature (please give details in the next column)	Increase in mature entrants to Higher Education	No	2013-14	52%	52.5%	53%	53.5%	54%	54.5%	
T16a_03	Other statistic - Location (please give details in the next column)	Recruit from low participation neighbourhoods	No	2013-14	30%	31%	32%	33%	34%	35%	

Notes

Alongside applicant and entrant targets, we encourage you to provide targets around outreach and student success work (including collaborative work where appropriate) or other initiatives to illustrate your progress towards increasing access, student success and progression. These should be measurable outcomes-based targets and should focus on the number of beneficiaries reached by a particular activity/programme or the number of schools worked with, and what the outcomes were, rather than simply recording the nature/number of activities.

Table 7b - Other milestones and targets.

Reference Number	Please select target type from the drop-down menu	Description (500 characters maximum)	Is this a collaborative target?	Baseline year	Baseline data	Yearly milestones (numeric where possible, however you may use text)					Commentary on your milestones/targets or textual description where numerical description is not appropriate (500 characters maximum)
						2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	
T16b_01	Outreach / WP activity (other - please give details in the next column)	Provide taster/masterclass days for internal and external students	No	2013-14	4 taster/masterclass days	5 taster/masterclass days	5 taster/masterclass days	6 taster/masterclass days	6 taster/masterclass days	7 taster/masterclass days	
T16b_02	Strategic partnerships (eg formal relationships with schools/colleges/employers)	Target secondary and schools within the Group with high proportions of non-traditional students.	No	2013-14	15 Schools	15 schools	16 schools	16 schools	17 schools	17 schools	

Optional commentary on milestones.

This box is character-limited to 1000 characters; however, we are happy for you to upload additional 'supporting information' as a separate Word/pdf document.