

Widening Participation Strategy 2016-2018

WLCBMS Widening Participation Strategy 2016-18

Introduction:

The College acknowledges the educational benefits that flow from a diverse student body and recognises the need to increase and widen participation in higher education so that the most able students and staff from any background are able to access and enjoy the best possible experience within our institution in order to succeed in graduate employment. The College also believes that it is part of our social responsibility to support community groups and raise aspirations and improve attainment among potential students and staff in order to sustain the industrial, commercial, and professional life of the country and thus make a long-term commitment to the future prosperity of our nation.

This strategy also takes national considerations into account and recognises that increasing social mobility, extending fair access to higher education and attracting a higher proportion of students from under-represented groups are key priorities.

WLCBMS has developed an integrated strategy for widening participation which aims to:

- To promote the principles of fair access and ensure that able students from any background are able to access this College without facing any institutional barriers to progression.
- To promote the enhancement of the overall student experience so that all students from any background enjoy the best possible experience within our institution, are successfully retained, and ultimately take up graduate employment.
- To develop robust measures of success to help determine current and future priorities for widening participation.
- Strengthen coordination between current activities such as the services provided by the college student support network, and activities undertaken as a result of its learning, teaching and widening participation initiatives.
- Ensure dissemination of best practice.
- Facilitate the development of collaborative initiatives.
- Broaden participation activity at WLCBMS concentrating on five main themes:
 - Recruitment & Retention
 - Progression
 - Widening access
 - Employability

Recruitment & Retention

- Enhance the college's monitoring and analysis of student recruitment, retention, participation by regularly accessing employment statistics.
- Increase student numbers by aligning the range of programmes on offer with the demands of employers.
- Continue to develop links with educational and non-educational partners to recruit students and pursue joint provision objectives.
- Increase the number of employing organisations who sponsor individuals on college courses.

- Increase enrolment onto certificate and diploma programmes.
- College analysis of student retention data has revealed that students are most likely to drop out within the first year of study, and their reasons for withdrawal are, in the main, not academic but personal, owing to changes in domestic or financial circumstances.
- WLCBMS aims to minimise withdrawal by providing a supportive and stimulating working environment for students, many of whom are already challenged by the conflicting demands of financial and domestic responsibilities. This will be achieved by:
 - Reviewing the network of support services to ensure that the college is offering the support required by its students.
 - Providing support and development for staff so that they are able to offer suitable guidance to students.
 - Increasing the flexibility in study methods.
 - Promoting excellence in teaching.

Progression

- Clarify the progression routes between courses.
- Develop the link between student experience in work and family and their learning experience at WLCBMS by giving credit for previous academic study and relevant life experience.

Widening access

WLCBMS already supports students and is now looking to widening access further by:

- Continuing to develop flexible and innovative teaching methods to attract students from a range of educational, social and cultural backgrounds.
- Developing flexible study modes and methods.
- Improving the advice and guidance services offered to potential students.
- Improving the personal and career development support offered to students.
- Arranging staff development events and workshops to raise awareness of student needs.

Employability

WLCBMS intends to develop its links with businesses and the community so as to:

- Develop an understanding of customer needs using alumni and existing business links to identify the needs of employers and to use this material to inform constructively the development of new programmes.
- Build on WLCBMS capacity to respond with alacrity to external needs by proposing changes to existing systems eg course development and approval procedures.
- Develop further WLCBMS capability to extend provision both in terms of refocusing the course portfolio and introducing more flexible attendance.

Academic Committee will receive the relevant report in order to evaluate the longer-term impact of widening participation across the College that will help determine the College's current and future priorities.