

Shrewsbury Colleges Group



Access and Participation Plan

2022-23 to 2026-27

Introduction to SCG

Shropshire is a Higher Education 'cold spot' without a dedicated county university. As a result, Shrewsbury Colleges Group has been delivering Higher Education for over 25 years, firstly working with the University of Wolverhampton and more recently in partnership with Staffordshire University. The college began delivery of Pearson qualifications with direct funding through HEFCE (now OfS) in 2015 for HNC and HND across a range of curriculum areas.

The purpose of the college's Higher Education provision is to support the participation of three groups of students. Firstly, the college provides progression routes for students who have completed advanced level courses and who want to continue their studies at a higher level, but also wish to study locally. Secondly, the college provides opportunities for adults who wish to return to study following a career break/change, or to develop their existing career. Finally, the college provides opportunities for employed people to enhance their skills, both for their benefit and for the benefit of their employers, increasingly through the provision of higher-level apprenticeships. Providing local, high quality, affordable Higher Education has helped the college widen participation.

The vision of the college is for "all students to make outstanding progress". The mission of Shrewsbury Colleges Group is to:

- provide outstanding academic and vocational education and training for all 16-19 students, and adults
- be a local centre of excellence for Higher Education
- be the college of choice

The purpose of the Access & Participation Plan (APP) is to set out how the college will provide and improve equality of opportunity for underrepresented groups through access, success, and progress in higher education. This plan will assess the performance and identify gaps and progress by the college to bridging those gaps, provide strategic aims and objectives and outline the strategic measures that are in place to demonstrate progress against the plan.

1. Assessment of performance

In May 2018, through the Quality Review process, the QAA determined full confidence in Shrewsbury College Group's Higher Education provision, with no specified areas for improvement. The review determined that Shrewsbury Colleges Group's policies, procedures, processes in relation to recruitment, selection and admissions met the expectations of the quality code. Throughout the year we periodically monitor and assess both our internal and our external data (Recruitment, Enrolment, Continuation, Attainment and Achievement, Student Feedback, TEF, DLHE, and NSS) to ensure we are meeting our KPIs. We report on our student population to ensure robust conclusions can be made and acted upon. We also assess and evaluate our performance in relation to access, success and progression for all groups, as well as underrepresented group and those with protected characteristics, by analysing available data and producing evidence informed action plans. Specific focus is given to the assessment of performance through data performance tools and a semesterised approach is used to focus on both full time and part time groups monitoring progress of each group to identify gaps relating to under-represented groups. To further support the monitoring, self-assessment reports (SAR'S) are completed annually and reported to the college quality team.

The A&PP focuses on four main areas:

- Higher education participation, household income or socioeconomic status
- Black, Asian and minority ethnic students
- Mature students
- Disabled students

Attainment rates for the students who enrol and complete their HNC and HND courses at Shrewsbury College has been very high. The following table demonstrates the spread of awarded grades over a three-year period. In the latest data for 2020/2021, the full-time students had a slightly lower attainment rate, however, due to small numbers this would provide a limited source of analysis. However, we have examined the analysis of the college data, specifically relating to under-represented groups; higher education participation, BAME, disabled, mature or care leaver students, and conclude that we are unable to present the information without the risk of identifying individuals but have internally assessed trends for the groups and will continue to do so annually. From analysis of the three-year trends, part-time students have achieved successive yearly improvements in achieving distinction grades, which has been a result of student consultatives which informed the college for the need to provide enhanced support specifically to mature students returning to education. We have also recognised that there has been an annual increase of full-time students being awarded pass grades. Our experience, and feedback from students, has led us to believe that the pandemic had a direct impact on study skills, levels of confidence, mental health and commitment for students below the age 21 and on a full-time course.

Please note, due to the small numbers of students collectively, we commit, throughout the A&PP, to performing a regular analysis of the college data, and further disaggregating the data for two groups; black, Asian and minority ethnics into individual groups and disabled learners through their disability, such as mental health, learning needs or physical impairment, so that we can analyse under-represented groups with a more thorough understanding of the categories. The analysis will also include a more general analysis of those living in areas of low higher education participation, Black, Asian and minority

ethnic students, mature students, disabled students and care experience learners. This will be monitored on a termly basis for some of the under-represented groups and annually for all. During this analysis, we commit to reviewing trends and comparing the college data to that available from the OfS.

TABLE: HNC/HND Attainment Rates by Grades Awarded:

	2018-2019		2019-2020		2020-2021	
	Full Time	Part Time	Full Time	Part Time	Full Time	Part Time
Percentage of Distinction Grades	33pp	18pp	40pp	36pp	21pp	46pp
Percentage of Merit Grades	58pp	9pp	20pp	36pp	25pp	27pp
Percentage of Pass Grades	9pp	73pp	40pp	28pp	46pp	27pp
Percentage of Fail Grades					8pp	

We recognise the use of terms may differ somewhat at times between HEI's and FE providers. The above table demonstrates the attainment of grades awarded. However, as an FE College delivering a HE provision, providing such specifics of attainment grades for under-represented groups may risk identifying individuals. Therefore, moving forward within the APP, the report uses the term 'success' as opposed attainment. In our case, success for the college is defined as the percentage of students who start the course and then complete with a pass, merit or distinction. It also takes into account those that fail and withdraw from the course.

1.1 Higher education participation, household income, or socioeconomic status

Access:

TABLE 1: Access and Success of Enrolled student in POLAR Quintiles 1-5

Sum of Enrolled Students	2018-2019			2019-2020			2020-2021		
	Combined %	%	Success %	Combined %	%	Success %	Combined %	%	Success %
Quintile 1	29.79	25.53	100	30.35	23.21	100	33.66	23.76	100
Quintile 2		4.26	100		7.14	100		9.9	100
Quintile 3		23.40	100		23.21	100		22.77	90
Quintile 4	46.80	31.91	100	44.64	33.93	100	42.57	30.69	93.33
Quintile 5		14.89	100		10.71	100		11.88	100
Quintile Unknown			100		1.79	100		0.99	100
Total		47	100		56	100		101	95.83

Through monitoring access to the HE provision from disadvantaged postcode areas, we can establish that the number of entrants has been increasing over previous years. Drawing from the most recent 2020-2021 college data, there were 101 active students within the scope of the A&PP. Combining quintile 1 & 2 and comparing to quintiles 4 & 5 would allow the data to be analysed with more scrutiny based on the smaller numbers. Furthermore, using current college data for 2020-21, this demonstrates that the gap between the two areas has narrowed each year from 17.01% (2018/19) to 8.91% (2020/21). Referring to Table Two, the latest local data from Office for National Statistics shows that the gap between the comparator groups is 11%, therefore, the college is already ahead of national data but is keen to reduce this gap further.

TABLE 1A – Access and Success rates of enrolled students in IMD Quintiles 1-5

Sum of Enrolled Students	2018-2019			2019-2020			2020-2021		
	Combined %	%	Success %	Combined %	%	Success %	Combined %	%	Success %
Quintile 1	19.15	8.51	100	25	8.93	100	20.79	8.91	100
Quintile 2		10.64	100		16.07	100		11.88	100
Quintile 3		27.66	100		28.57	100		27.72	100
Quintile 4	46.81	17.02	100	44.64	32.14	100	38.58	26.73	92.31
Quintile 5		29.79	100		12.5	100		11.88	100
Quintile Unknown		6.38	100		1.79	100		12.88	100
Total		47	100		56	100		101	95.83

Analysis of the access and success rates for students based on IMD quintiles 1 – 5 shows a similar situation in comparison to the POLAR 4 quintiles which demonstrates a closing of the gap between Q1&2 and Q4&5 over a three-year period. The gap for the most recent data 2020-2021 is 17.79pp which is higher than the OfS data dashboard comparison of 14.88pp. Combining IMD quintile 1 & 2 and comparing to IMD quintiles 4 & 5 has allowed us to analyse the data to recognise where trends are of maybe occurring. Using the latest three-year trend of college data, our analysis demonstrates that the gap between the two areas has narrowed each year from 27.66% (2018/9) to 17.79% (2020/21).

Whilst recognising a larger access gap for students from IMD Q1 than for students from POLAR Q1 we acknowledge that the college is taking the right steps towards its commitment to support the reducing of gaps in both POLAR and IMD quintiles. We have and continue to be successful in the contribution of the reduction of the POLAR and IMD gaps as identified in Tables 1 & 1a where this can be evidenced through the continual reduction in gaps for the three-year trends from 2018-2019 to 2020-2021. As a result, a decision has been made not to set a specific target for reducing the gap for the IMD quintiles and as a small HE provider, focus our resources on the analysing, monitoring and supporting the reduction of the gap within the POLAR quintiles. As such, there is not a requirement or need to introduce any new strategies in further support of reducing the gap as the three-year data trend demonstrates that existing strategies already in place continue to make positive movements towards narrowing the gap. We will continue to implement best practices in the form of rigorous monitoring and analysis throughout the duration of this plan.

Furthermore, in relation to both POLAR and IMD students, we commit to undertaking an annual collection and analysis of the continuation of students and would expect to be able to produce a meaningful analysis by 2026/27 particularly pertaining to under-represented groups.

TABLE 2: Latest Local Data on POLAR Quintiles (2016):

Sum of 18-90	Column Labels					
Row Labels	1	2	3	4	5	Grand Total
Shropshire	19410	35298	74521	97204	38689	265122
Telford and Wrekin (T&W)	48009	19157	42995	18420	11095	139676
Grand Total	67419	54455	117516	115624	49784	404798
% Breakdown						
Shropshire	7%	13%	28%	37%	15%	
T&W	34%	14%	31%	13%	8%	
Overall	17%	13%	29%	29%	12%	

As stated previously, the college commits annually to monitoring the data for POLAR quintiles and the IMD quintiles, to continue to narrow the gap for access between POLAR Q1 & Q2 and POLAR Q4 & Q5 and IMD Q1 & Q2 and Q4 & Q5 which are the identified comparators. Although for the A&PP Q1 and Q2 are a collective target, whilst not formally setting any strategic targets aligned to this, we will continue to commit to ensure that the monitoring of access data will be carried out for each to ensure that one does not improve at the expense of the other. The target set for access to Higher Education based on participation, household income or socio-economic status, specifically the POLAR quintiles is reflected in section PTA_1 of the Final Targets Investment Plan.

Success:

Table 1 shows the success rates for the students within the POLAR quintiles. All are very high, and the college commits to maintaining this standard. See target 3, section 2.2 of the APP.

Continuation:

The three-year college data for 2018-19 to 2020-2021, as shown in Table One, demonstrates that the continuation rates for all students, including under-represented groups, remained consistent over the previous three years. In 2020-2021 the continuation rate of the students who progressed to year 2 of their study programme was 83.3% which remained consistent with the previous year; however, it is notable that the number of students had increased by 50%. The OfS data <https://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/data-and-analysis/access-and-participation-data-dashboard/> shows that the continuation rates for POLAR Q1 & Q2 is approximately 88.5%, which is slightly higher than the college. Due to small numbers, continuation is measured collectively for all underrepresented groups so that the risk of identifying individuals is reduced. The college commits to monitoring the success and continuation of underrepresented groups on a monthly basis by tracking identified individuals that fall within the scope of the APP.

TABLE 3: Success rates for Continuation

	2018-2019	2019-2020	2020-2021
Success Rates for continuations	90%	83.3%	83.3%
Total Number of students who could continue	20	24	36
Total Number of students that did continue and succeeded	18	20	30

Non Continuation:

From Table 3, analysis of the data of non-continuing students in 2020-2021 shows there were a total of 36 students that could continue and 30 who did so, as stated previously. Due to the small sample size, we are unable to make any reliable conclusions based on this data without the risk of identifying individuals. Therefore, the college commits to supporting students and tracking their progress on a termly basis over an academic year, so that continuation opportunities are maximised.

Progression to Employment, Further Study or Progression into Highly Skilled Employment:

We recognise that as a college we require further data collection to analyse with confidence the future destinations and progression of all higher education students. We commit to collecting this data and would expect to be able to produce a meaningful analysis by 2026/27 particularly pertaining to under-represented groups, progression into employment, progression into further study or progression into highly skilled employment.

1.2 Black, Asian and minority ethnic students

Access:

According to data from the ONS published in 2016, the population of Shropshire is formed by 6.5% Black, Asian and minority ethnic (BAME). The following college data for 2018-2019 to 2020-2021 is available to help review the past three years and show trends from a provider perspective:

TABLE 4: Percentage of BAME Students across all HE Programmes

	2018-2019	2019-2020	2020-2021
Percentage of SCG HE BAME Students	10.6	8.9	7.9
Success Rates of BAME students who continue	100%	100%	100%

From the college data, the percentage of BAME students accessing HE at Shrewsbury Colleges Group (SCG) has been declining in percentage compared to the increase in overall student numbers. However, the small numbers can detract from a growing number of HE students and, from a headcount perspective, a growing number of BAME students overall. Therefore, due to the low numbers and preventing identification of individual students, the college commits to continuing to work with local communities, school providers and local authorities in ensuring the SCG HE provision is accessible to all BAME students. In addition to the commitment, we will continue to promote HE access opportunities to our existing BAME students within the College in supporting their next steps on completion of their further education studies aspiring to higher education. Such activities would include Higher Education fairs, University visits, University guest speakers, HE advice and guidance events etc. This would also be supported by providing a diverse and inclusive curriculum as well as surveying the current level 3 students to ensure that the progression routes are diverse, relevant, and attractive to learners in the local community. Establishing key relationships with other agencies, such as Higher Horizons, Uniconnect and local authorities to promote courses to a broader range of potential students will be key. We recognise the data decline of BAME students accessing HE at Shrewsbury Colleges Group; further evidencing the need for us to reflect on our approaches to increase engagement where possible. Therefore, rather than set numerical access targets specific to BAME, we will commit to enhanced targeting and implementing strategic approaches towards BAME with the aim of securing an increase in applications contributing to an increase in enrolments. Furthermore, we will monitor the impact of the strategies and interventions on a termly basis and then collectively each year paying attention to three-year trends starting from 2024/2025.

Success:

For BAME students, college data for 2020-2021 shows the success rate is 100%, which is higher than the comparator group of white students and the OfS Data Dashboard

<https://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/data-and-analysis/access-and-participation-data-dashboard/>

indicates a success rate of 69.3% for Black students, 78.6% for other and 81% for Asian. For the college, the previous success rates for 2018/2019 and 2019/2020 in which all students who were BAME completed and achieved their qualification, and the success rate was a consistent 100%. All white students at SCG have a success rate of 95.56% compared to the 100% for BAME. Therefore, the college commits to monitor the gap of success between the two groups through analysis of the data, semesterised award boards that will report on progress of individuals and regular tracking of under-

represented groups. Monitoring will take place on a termly basis each academic year and is overseen by the Director of HE.

Non Continuation:

As in section 1.1, Table 3 analysis of the data of non-continuing students in 2019/2020, there were a total of 36 that could continue and 30 who did so, as stated previously. Due to the small sample size, we are unable to make any reliable conclusions based on this data. The college commits to supporting students and tracking their progress so that continuation opportunities are maximised. This will be monitored through the college quality processes which include semesterised award boards, monthly tracking updates of under-represented students and termly updates to senior managers.

Progression to Employment, Further Study or Progression into Highly Skilled Employment:

We recognise that as a college we require further data collection to analyse with confidence the future destinations and progression of all higher education students. We commit to collecting this data and would expect to be able to produce a meaningful analysis by 2026/27 particularly pertaining to under-represented groups, progression into employment, progression into further study or progression into highly skilled employment.

1.3 Mature students

Access:

Mature students, aged 21+ form 50% of the HE student population according to the college data 2020-2021. This is a decline from 2019-2020 data where mature students totalled 60.71%. This decline has prompted further investigation and can be attributed to the increase in students aged 18-21 accessing HE at SCG and progressing from level 3 courses within the college. It was noted that although the percentage of mature students had declined, the number headcount has increased. According to the OfS Data Dashboard <https://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/data-and-analysis/access-and-participation-data-dashboard/> the college has a higher proportion of mature students than the national picture, with 32.8% of students who study at undergraduate level.

This decline has been explored further by the college, with current students and anecdotal evidence suggests that this could be due to the pandemic and young students opting to remain locally rather than accepting places at universities across the country. To support this evidence, a college HE Level 4 course was approved by Pearson and offered to students who were studying on a Level 3 course and wished to progress on to a higher level but were not yet ready to move to a university and commit to a longer programme of study.

TABLE 5: Mature Students

	2018-2019	2019-2020	2020-2021
Percentage of Mature Students	57.45%	60.71%	50.50%
Success Rate	100%	100%	100%
Headcount	27	34	51

Success:

Success of mature students is 100% for the three years compared to 90.91% in 2020/2021 for 18–21-year-olds and has remained consistent over this period. Although the percentage of mature students has declined, the headcount has increased, and success rates have remained excellent. The college commits to maintaining this high standard of success as detailed in section 2.2 of the APP.

Non Continuation:

Due to the small numbers, the college commits to analysing the data on a regular basis and under-represented groups will be monitored through the college data tracking processes.

Progress:

Many of the mature students are already in employment and in section 1.7, destinations, and progress of the students as a collective have been analysed.

1.4 Disabled students

Access:

The most recent College data for 2020-2021 indicates that for disabled students in table six, 13.86% of the students have declared a learning need, disability or health problem. This is an increase on the previous year, 2019-2020, where 12.5% declared a need. As table six shows, there has been an inconsistent trend regarding the numbers of students who do declare a learning difficulty at enrolment. Anecdotal evidence throughout an academic year and through student consultations, shows that more students come forward requesting academic or emotional support as the year progresses. This can be for two reasons; non-disclosure at enrolment or as the student starts to study at a higher level, they decide that they have learning needs, want support and are often then diagnosed as having a specific learning need whilst studying.

The OfS Data Dashboard indicates that 17% of entrants in 2020-2021 declare a disability for undergraduates for mature students and 35.3% for those that are under 21.

TABLE SIX: Disabled Students

	2018-2019	2019-2020	2020-2021
Self-Assessed as having a disability or learning difficulty	17.02%	12.5%	13.86%
Headcount	8	7	14
Achievement Rate	100%	100%	100%

Success:

All learners who declared a learning need/disability/health issue, successfully completed their qualification providing 100% success over all three years, compared to the OfS Data Dashboard which shows that students who declare a disability have an success rate of 83.1% for 2020-2021. To maintain the college's high standard, the college has a dedicated HE Support Tutor who meets with each learner who has declared a need and tracks their progression throughout the qualification. Support is given through one-to-one tutorials, diagnosis of learning needs, such as dyslexia and specific learning interventions. Feedback from the learners indicates that this support contributes to the success of the students. In the A&PP for 2020-2021 to 2024-2025, a target has been set to increase the number of disabled learners to 22%, thus doubling current numbers based on student intake. This is an aspirational target and will be retained for the 2022-2023 to 2026-2027 A&PP. The target to support this is PTA_2 in the Final Targets and Investment Plan.

Non Continuation:

Due to the small numbers, the college commits to analysing the data on a regular basis and under-represented groups will be monitored through the college data tracking processes.

Progress:

Many of the students with learning needs, disabilities or health issues are already in employment and in section 1.7, destinations, and progress of the students as a collective have been analysed.

1.5 Care leavers

Access:

Considerable work has been completed to attract Care Experienced Leavers to the college's HE provision. A dedicated working party has been set up with the sole objective of increasing numbers and collaborations with local social care providers initiated to further support the recruitment of Care Leavers. However, for both the 2019-2020 and 2020-2021 data, there were no recorded Care Experienced Leavers on the HE qualifications. As the numbers are extremely small, rather than set a target, as this would not guarantee that students would not be identifiable, the college makes a commitment to continue to work with local authorities, schools and care providers in providing supported access to the SCG HE provision. Part of this commitment will ensure that a structured strategic approach is used to monitor work undertaken and the outcomes. Reviews will take place termly and will be overseen by the Director for HE.

1.6 Intersections of disadvantage

Due to small numbers of students, the key areas of monitoring and analysis would not be a meaningful activity and would risk identifying individual students. Therefore, the college commits to monitoring and increasing the number of BAME students accessing higher education from POLAR 4 Q1 & Q2. This will result in meaningful data being collected to support the reporting and identifying of any gaps that may become apparent.

1.7 Destinations & Progress

A college survey for 2020-2021 shows the destinations and the progress to employment and/or further study of the 34 students who completed courses is as follows:

TABLE SEVEN: Destinations for 2020-2021

Destination	Percentage
Full time employment	55.88%
Part time employment	8.82%
Further Study	23.52%
Seeking employment	11.76%
Total	

Unfortunately, the OfS access and participation data is not able to provide destination data due to the small sample size of the college. The college acknowledges that data for destinations and progress is limited and commits to gathering more meaningful information that will support the monitoring and analysis of destinations and progression of students by 2026-2027.

2. Strategic aims and objectives

Shrewsbury Colleges Group's vision is, 'where every student makes outstanding progress'.

The college firmly locates its higher education provision at the core of its mission. Our mission is simple;

Provide outstanding academic and vocational education and training for all 16-19 students and adults;
Be a local centre of excellence for higher education; Be the college of choice.

This is underpinned by the following aims:

- improving the equality of opportunity for under-represented groups in higher education
- supporting the students as they embark on their educational journey.
- helping the under-represented students to succeed and gain a qualification that can lead into meaningful employment or enhance career prospects.
- committing to widening participation and offering a curriculum provision that supports the local community and needs of employers

These translate into the following strategic objectives for our higher education provision at Shrewsbury Colleges Group;

- Continue to provide a culture within Shrewsbury Colleges Group that is representative of the community we serve
- Provide high quality teaching, learning and assessment which is innovative, inclusive, and aspirational
- Ensure all under-represented learners develop personally and progress successfully into further training, employment, or higher education
- Provide a coherent range of higher education and higher-level skills which offers appropriate progression routes and widens participation by 2027

In summary, Shrewsbury Colleges Group values each member of the College community and recognises the contribution made to college life by students, staff, service users, visitors, partners and governors. The College will always seek to ensure that no member of the College Community will be subjected to discrimination, unfair treatment, or treated less favourably because of any protected characteristics such as age, disability, ethnicity or racial origin, gender, marital status, nationality, religious beliefs or sexual orientation. Shrewsbury Colleges Group's commitment to Equality, Inclusion and Diversity is paramount and it strives to go beyond its legal duty in order to promote social cohesion. The College continues to promote equality of opportunity and good relations throughout the College Community to encourage access and participation.

2.1 Target groups

The analysis of section 1 has identified specific groups and gaps that the college intends to improve or monitor to maintain standards. The target groups we plan to focus on are those who could participate in higher education from low-income households or socioeconomic status, and disabled students.

Through the assessment of the college performance and analysis of data in the previous section, these are the two main under-represented groups that would benefit from strong and ambitious interventions and targets from the college. Targets are set for the access stage of their lifecycle. A further target has been set for the commitment to continue and maintain the success of students aimed at retaining the high standards that have already set and benefit all under-represented groups. All targets are set over a period of 5 years. Finally, a further commitment has been made to review the data that is collected specifically related to progression and ensure that over the coming 5 years we are in a position to accurately report on the progress and destinations of HE students. Our targets are set out below and we aim to review and/or evaluate the following:

Access:

- 1. Continue to narrow the gap between POLAR Q1 & Q2 and POLAR Q4 & Q5
- 2. Increase the number of students with learning needs, disabilities or health issues accessing higher education

Success:

- 3. Maintain the high success rates for all students

Progression Data reporting to Employment, Further Study or Progression into Highly Skilled Employment:

- 4. Develop data sources that will support the effective reporting of destinations and progress for all higher education students.

2.2 Aims and objectives

Access:

Target 1 – Narrow the gap between POLAR 4 Q1 & Q2 and POLAR 4 Q4 & Q5
 PTA_1 (Investment Plan) – Continue to narrow the gap from 8.91pp to 4.5pp by 2027

Baseline Data	8.91pp				
Yearly Milestones	2022-2023	2023-2024	2024-2025	2025-2026	2026-2027
	8.5pp	7.5pp	6.5pp	5.5pp	4.5pp
We aim to reduce the gap by 4.41pp over a 5 year period by 2026-2027					

This aim considers the local population and what is aspirational based on current local population size. It also relates to the OfS KPM1 target measuring the overall difference in participation rates between those living in areas with lowest participation and areas with highest participation.

Shrewsbury Colleges Group shall target the underrepresented groups by engaging with local schools, local communities, and local employers across the Shropshire region where in general this population reside. Below is an annual set of objectives that are evaluated after the event and where needed, developed further to support the access of students into the higher education community.

Our annual academic year plans the following objectives that will consist of, but are not limited to:

- Continue to collaborate with local schools termly, using our HE ambassadors to promote HE access opportunities.
- Continue to promote HE Open Days to engage wider audiences across the Shropshire region
- Continue to host 'HE Taster Sessions' that will provide preparation for studying at a higher level; identifying and exploring key skills needed for success at higher education level study
- Raise the HE profiles via HE Campus tours providing HE insights termly
- Deliver 'Preparation for Higher Education' events annually. A programme for prospective students who will commence higher level study with Shrewsbury Colleges Group, whether they are progressing into HE for the first time, moving from another HE provider or returning to study whilst either unemployed or in employment. Starting to develop key academic study skills
- Continue to deliver HE transition courses to engage and support HE readiness for those seeking access into HE from September 2022.
- Host HE sector networking events for employers considering HE CPD investment of their employees.

Whilst annual evaluation and monitoring of the targets will be analysed and outcomes presented to senior managers, leaders and Governors, some of the activities are outside the control of the college, such as working with external organisations and funding available to those organisations, such as Higher Horizons and this may impact on the planned activities and their influence. However, we still commit to adapting the strategies to suit the purpose of meeting the set target and will make changes, as required, on an annual basis over the next 5 years.

Target 2 – Increase the number of students with learning needs, disabilities or health issues accessing higher education

PTA_2 (Investment Plan) – Increase the number from 13.86% to 22% by 2027

Baseline Data	13.86%				
Yearly Milestones	2022-2023	2023-2024	2024-2025	2025-2026	2026-2027
	15%	17%	19%	21%	22%
We aim to increase access by 8.14% over a 5-year period by 2026-2027					

Shrewsbury Colleges Group will continue to celebrate the values the diversity brought to it by all members of the community and is committed to providing a supportive, creative, and inspiring environment where everyone is treated fairly. In addition to fulfilling our legal obligations, we will actively promote awareness of an inclusive society and work with the local community, through FRESH, a registered society promoting equality, diversity and the elimination of unfair treatment and discrimination within and beyond Shropshire. We have a dedicated Higher Education Support Tutor, who provides advice and guidance to all HE students but has a clear focus on supporting those that are identified as being in an under-represented group. The interventions offered by the HE Support Tutor will play a pivotal role in supporting the increase in numbers of disabled students. Objectives for this target will include:

- Identify support requirements when applying for DSA and/or helping identify and source assistive technology and equipment
- Conduct termly monitoring measuring the progress of identified students in under-represented groups
- Deliver one to one support on all aspects of HE such as academic writing, study skills and critical thinking
- Deliver one to one support for students struggling with mental health issues
- Design and deliver workshops on issues that are topical within HE

All of the above objectives are evaluated throughout the academic year, are within the control of the college and formally reported to senior leaders and governors. Many of these interventions are already in place and the effects and impact are evidenced through the high success rates of the students in under-represented groups.

Success

Target 3 – Maintain the success rates for all HE students

Maintain the high rates of success of all students of 95% over the next 5 years

Baseline Data	95.83%				
Yearly Milestones	2022-2023	2023-2024	2024-2025	2025-2026	2026-2027
	95%	95%	95%	95%	95%
We aim to maintain the success rate at 95% over the following 5-year period					

We will continue to embed the Colleges mission statement which is to “provide outstanding academic and vocational education and training for all 16-19 students and adults; Be a local centre of excellence for higher education; Be the college of choice”.

We recognise that the views of students, individually and collectively, should inform quality systems with the purpose of improving the HE student educational experience to maintain the high levels of success rates both for current and future cohorts. We will continue to commit to engaging HE students in the aspects of the educational journey into which students will offer insight into:

- application and admission
- induction and transition into higher education
- programme and curriculum design, delivery and organisation
- curriculum content
- teaching delivery
- learning opportunities
- learning resources
- student support and guidance

Over the course of this A&PP, all students studying at a Higher Level at Shrewsbury Colleges Group will have the opportunity to be involved in quality enhancement and assurance processes in a manner and at a level appropriate to them.

To maintain the high rates of HE success, Shrewsbury Colleges Group is committed, but not limited to implementing the following objectives:

- Encourage active student participation in Shrewsbury Colleges Groups quality systems, inclusive of individual and collective feedback from students
- Implement transparent mechanisms, for the nomination and election of Course Representatives
- Provide induction and on-going support for students appropriate to their quality assurance roles
- Share and, where possible, acting upon student feedback.

All of the above objectives are evaluated throughout the academic year, are within the control of the college and formally reported to senior leaders and governors. Many of these interventions are already in place and the effects and impact are evidenced through the high success rates of the students in under-represented groups.

Progression Data reporting to Employment, Further Study or Progression into Highly Skilled Employment:

Target 4 – To identify and respond with a full dataset throughout the student lifecycle by 2024-2025 that effectively reports on the destinations and progression of all higher education students.

Here at Shrewsbury Colleges Group, we will ensure that our IT services are sufficiently resourced to maintain digital platforms and provide first class technical support to all HE staff to capture the recording of destinations and progression of all of our higher education students.

3.0 Strategic Measures

The college has a clear, carefully considered higher education curriculum which has been designed to meet a broad range of needs identified through stakeholder engagement. The curriculum is reviewed each year, both at senior level, where an overview is taken, including consideration of new areas where the college should be developing provision, and at individual course level, as part of the start of year quality review meetings.

The on-going appropriateness of curriculum is rigorously tested in relation to:

- the demand for the course
- the knowledge, skills and behaviours developed, and
- the quality of the destination

Curriculum, programme, and course leads are encouraged, and respond well, to the challenge to be:

- ambitious for their students
- provide a curriculum with additional opportunities, and
- to ensure that the curriculum meets the needs of all students

In addition to the taught curriculum, the college is committed to a broad enrichment and enhancement programme, including extensive work experience opportunities and competitions, which enables students to develop a wider range of skills, strengthens commitment to the main qualifications, and through enhancing motivation ensures success for all and drives social mobility.

This Access and Participation Plan is linked to a range of college strategies, including; the Equality and Diversity Strategy, the Additional Learning Support Policy, the Safeguarding policy, the Teaching & Learning strategy and the Student Engagement policy. In addition, the College has a Single Equality Scheme which is published on our web site and Shrewsbury Colleges Group values each member of the College community and recognises the contribution made to college life by students, staff, service users, visitors, partners, and governors. The College will always seek to ensure that no member of the College Community will be subjected to discrimination, unfair treatment, or treated less favourably because of any protected characteristics such as age, disability, ethnicity or racial origin, gender, marital status, nationality, religious beliefs, or sexual orientation. There is a strong belief in nurturing the potential of individuals through tolerance, respect, and education. The College recognises the importance of having a fair and just environment and is actively working towards promoting diversity.

- The College effectively promotes Equality and Diversity in the classroom. Teachers take notice of the individual learning strategies for students who have been assessed.
- Teachers and tutors work with the relevant areas, where appropriate, to provide materials, information, and advice and study aids to meet the individual needs of students.
- Progression opportunities and targets are regularly reviewed and monitored particularly for the under – represented groups.
- Annual observations of teaching and learning are conducted that include assessing the extent of integrating Equality and Diversity into the curriculum. These highlight areas of good practice and areas

where practice could be improved. In response to this, the College's Teaching and Learning Leads provide support and training in those areas where practice could be improved.

- The E&D Committee encourages curriculum areas to conduct regular impact assessments, where they consider issues such as rooming, resources and accessibility and then identify strategies to address any inadequacies. This forms part of the Committee's action plan.

Specifically, in relation to inclusion, the college is committed through Pillar 6 within our mission statement:

- Giving all our students opportunities to develop and succeed
- Valuing difference and responding to individual needs
- Promoting opportunities for all
- Communicating well

Through our A&PP strategic plan we aspire to remove economic, social, and cultural barriers that have prevented people from studying and succeeding at Shrewsbury Colleges Group, and to be recognised as best in the region in our approach to equality, diversity, and inclusion, for staff and students. Our strategic measures respond to any structural or situational barriers that impinge on the equality of opportunity for any under-represented group.

The evidence base that supported our selection of strategic measures to ensure we continually improve is broad. For example, when a programme is being designed, a full business-case will be presented to the Academic Leadership Team and the business-case must state how it will recruit from under-represented groups using local knowledge. This sets the tone for giving the College more control over the types of students who will be recruited to the programmes. At self-assessment, under-represented groups will be evaluated and where appropriate will feed into the Improvement Plan. This will be reviewed, and recommendations made, where appropriate, on recruitment, continuation, and achievement. A strong commitment to understanding our student bodies (through focus groups and Consultatives), gathering feedback from the under-represented groups and acting upon it is an important process, enabling us to improve year-on-year. The wider student body benefits from innovation projects that enable targeted action research, which is later disseminated to the teaching teams by way of a formal event and informally through good practice meetings at team level. The appointed Higher Education support tutor has added significant value to our disabled students, supports the strategies to meet the target set for disabled students in PTA_2, as detailed in section 2.2 and is key to successful widening participation for these students. Student feedback and regular consultations enable us to continually improve the deployment of this member of staff.

3.1 Whole provider strategic approach

Overview

Our Widening Participation (WP) Strategy will empower staff and students to understand the College's commitment and approach towards WP, social mobility, and inclusion, ensuring that there is a collective approach taken. We will ensure that our WP strategic priorities are recognised, understood, and valued by taking a whole institutional approach to this agenda. All access and participation work will be underpinned by an evidence-informed approach with an expectation that evaluation and impact is at the forefront of efforts.

Alignment with other strategies

As part of our whole institutional approach, we will:

- Demonstrate clear and explicit leadership and institutional commitment to access, student attainment and progression for under-represented groups
- Establish an approach to widening participation and social inclusion across the College community
- Promote best practice to harness innovation and enhance team approaches
- Build more effective approaches to engage with student voices from a diverse range of backgrounds
- Promote and celebrate our positive impact within Shropshire, Telford and Wrekin and with our wider communities and partners

Strategic measures

Our approach will employ a Theory of Change methodology, which is based on a range of information, including, the analysis of college data, the student voice and focus groups, senior level management support and scrutiny, Governor scrutiny and local employer needs. To provide the underlying rationale for our main strategic measures and to depict the pathways through which we expect this information set to enable strategic aims and priorities. These processes and inputs will support our strategic priorities and objectives by pre-entry (i.e., access) and post-entry to HE (attainment and progression) analysis. The purpose of this will be to illustrate how our institutional aims and objectives will be linked to outcomes and impacts.

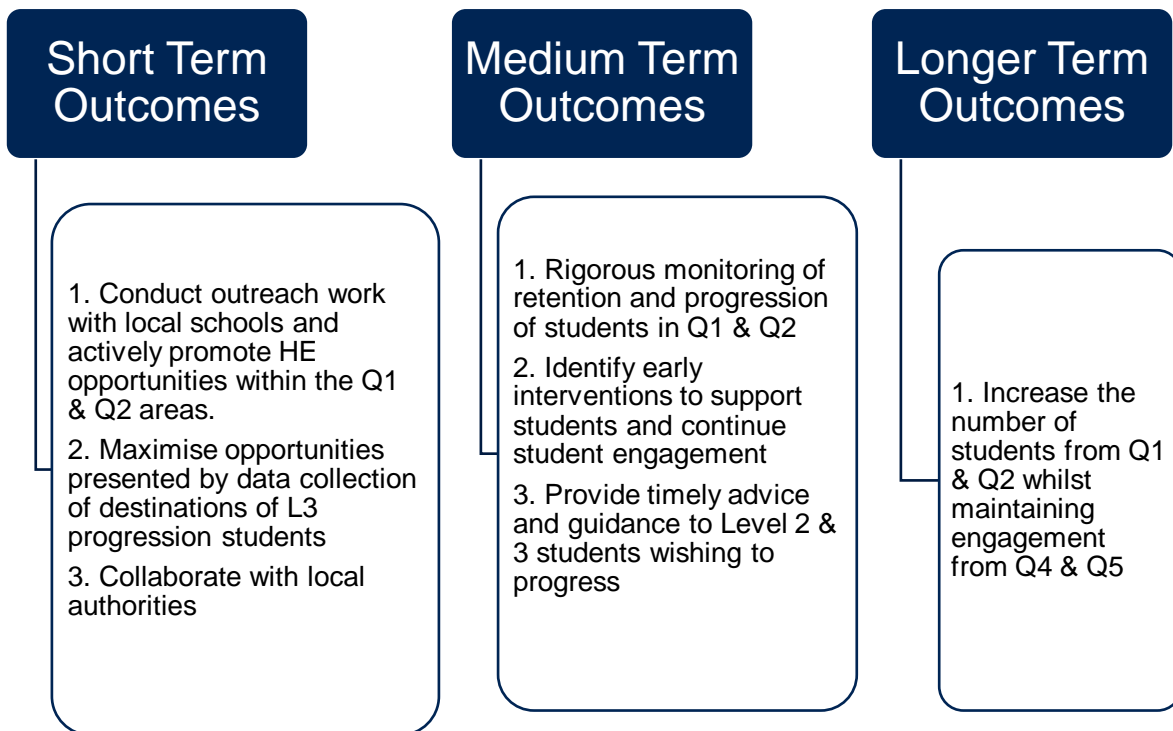
To meet the target for narrowing the gap between POLAR Q1 & Q2 and POLAR 4 Q4 & 5, the college recognises that financial restraints on some students which in turn, may hinder their access to higher education. Therefore, a hardship and bursary scheme is offered up to a maximum amount of £200 per individual. The bursary fund will be available for those students that fall in to the POLAR Q1 & Q2 category and is specifically aimed at supporting the target PTA_1 in reducing the gap between quintiles. The bursary scheme provides financial support to college students who are enrolled on a Higher Education course, subject to eligibility and in their first year of study. The college bursary can be used to support college-based resources or activities, such as technology, books, professional membership fees, trips or visits and/or travelling costs. The bursary is not automatically distributed and requires an application procedure for assessing eligibility. Student admissions will support all HE students making a bursary application with eligibility checks conducted on student postcode residence. HE students that would like help completing their bursary application can book an appointment with Student Services.

The hardship funding will be available to all higher education students who demonstrate exceptional hardship that may be a barrier to learning and participation, which will support disabled students for target PTA_2 as well as other under-represented groups. Hardship Funds play an important role in removing barriers for some students accessing and completing higher education courses. This fund is specifically used to support students with financial hardship. It is the aim of the College to use funds to make the maximum impact on recruitment, attendance, retention, achievement and success rates. The fund will be distributed in a consistent and transparent way and in accordance with the guidance issued by regulatory agencies. The Hardship fund can assist higher education students studying on a full or part time basis enabling support with living costs, travel, childcare, books, equipment and / or materials. Part of the college commitment has been to fund a higher education support tutor along with costs of support, hardship, and bursary funds. The bursary and hardship fund costs are absorbed by the college, and we recognise the value of the financial support available to students and where it has a direct link to our objectives as outlined in section 2; specifically PTA_1, PTA_2 and maintaining the high success levels. However, the costs will be monitored, which, in the future, may result in the need for a research and evaluation budget. Should this be the case, the current A&PP will be revised and submitted to the OfS for approval.

Shrewsbury College is proud of the commitment it makes to support students with financial hardships. We believe that this level of commitment contributes to our high levels of retention, achievement, and success. However, we have yet to formally analyse the impact of such commitment to recognise any trends. Therefore, we will commit to conducting an annual analysis of data of those in receipt of financial support to determine the impact linked to retention, achievement, and success. We would expect to be able to produce a meaningful analysis by 2026/27 particularly pertaining to under-represented groups.

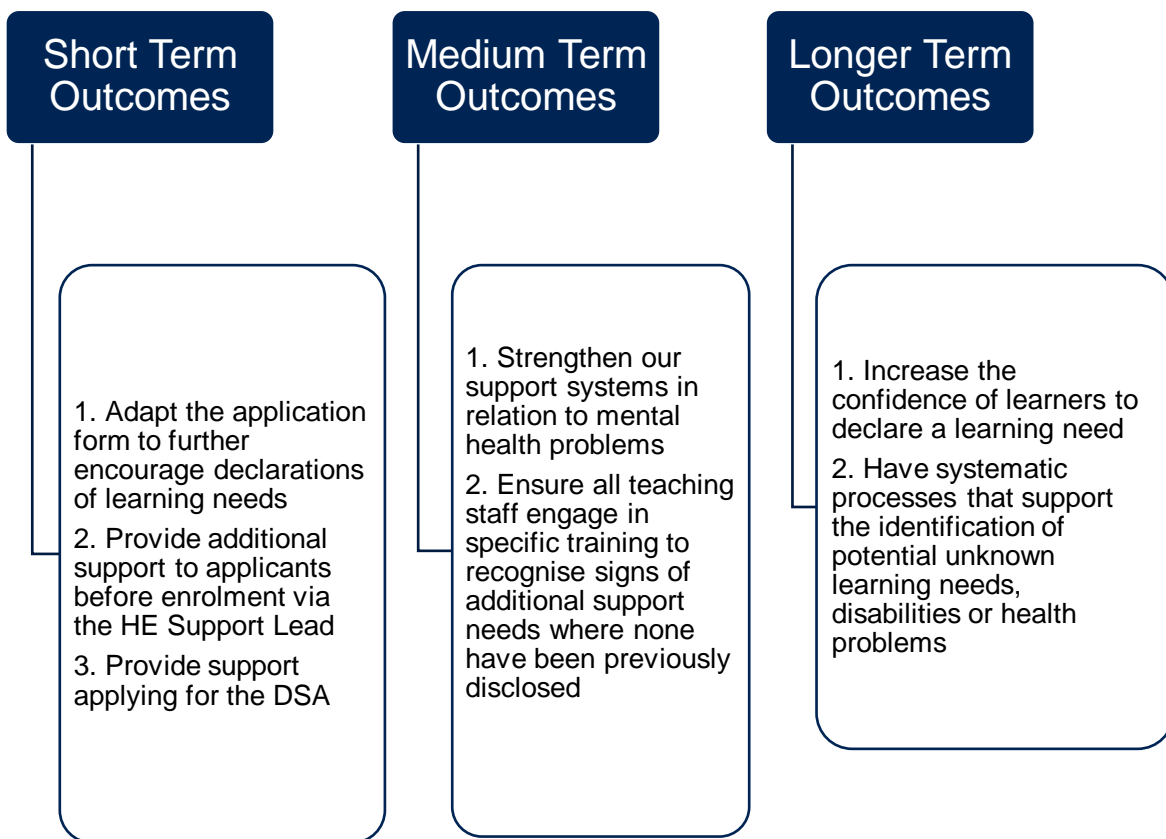
The college strategically plans to evidence the theory of change as follows:

Target PTA_1 Continue to narrow the gap between POLAR Q1 & Q2 and POLAR Q4 & 5



Through the admissions policy and procedures, the College will support the access, success, and progression of all students from underrepresented groups. As a college we are committed to being as inclusive as possible and will make reasonable adjustments to enable all students to access the curriculum. The College aims to enable individuals to achieve their full potential and provide access to Higher Education to those who will benefit from and widen participation, including POLAR Q1 & Q2. The policy is used in conjunction with our partner organisation, Staffordshire University's Higher Education Admissions Policy. The College offers an impartial Advice and Guidance Service to all prospective students. This will be provided through one or more of the following: face to face or telephone conversation with the Course Advice Team; face to face or telephone conversation with the Course Lead; Advice Event; Taster Event. The College will ensure that students are treated fairly, consistently, and only enrolled on Higher Education courses for which they have the skills, academic aptitude, motivation and commitment to succeed.

Target PTA_2 Increase the number of students who declare a learning need, disability, or health problem



Shrewsbury Colleges Group is committed to providing a rich, challenging and differentiated Curriculum in which students with learning needs, disabilities or health problems can achieve their maximum potential and advertises this through the Local Offer publicised by the local authorities. The College aims to equip all students with the skills to enable them to access, succeed and progress in higher education. Support offered is student focused and is available across all areas of the College. However, there is a dedicated HE Student Support Tutor who is available to provide general study skills, support for HE students with additional learning support needs and provide 1:1 support in educational areas. If additional or specialist support is required, it is the responsibility of the student to apply for Disabled Students' Allowance. The HE Student Support Tutor can assist with making these applications if required and help record and monitor the progress of students when named in receipt of a Disability Support Allowance report.

The strategic objectives for students with learning needs, disabilities or health issues are:

- to ensure that we are aware of students who may require additional support or access arrangements
- to ensure that students with special educational needs and disabilities can join in with all the activities of the College or appropriate differentiated activities that are advertised to Higher Education students
- to ensure that all resources such as assistive technology is available to promote independent learning
- to ensure that students express their views and are fully involved in decisions which affect their education
- to meet the training needs of all staff involved with learners who have support needs

This will be continually assessed for improvement, in particular the implementation of data dashboards following staff feedback so that monitoring is more rigorous and formalised.

All strategic measures will enable us to address gaps in achievement and will be considered through the HE self-assessment process, college evaluation strategy and resultant ongoing Quality Improvement cycles. The college has an accountable system in which the targets will be monitored and reviewed by the Curriculum Directors, Senior Leadership Team, and Governors throughout an academic year, concluding with an annual report to Governors that summarises key targets, progress towards those targets and intervention plans should they be needed.

3.2 Student consultation

Student engagement is a key component of the College's monitoring activities with student representation on the Academic Leadership Team (ALT), Equality and Diversity Committee, HE Enhancement Group and the Governing Body (Quality and Standards Committee). Implementation, monitoring, and evaluation of this Plan will be conducted through these groups alongside Student Consultatives which are undertaken each term with student representatives. Student views on the APP have been sought through discussion with student representatives from both full-time and part-time HE courses. Feedback from the students was limited and no strong views or changes were given. The consensus was that the plan was representative of the views and values of the college. However, students did express a positive view of the additional study support being provided declaring a disability. They were encouraged by the increased contribution towards Dyslexia testing and the policy and procedures to ensure the HE bursary scheme is administered fairly, in line with the College's existing scheme. This scheme is under constant review to ensure it is meeting the needs of the learners who need it most. The College ensures that all student's views are representative of the college community and views are sought from all four under-represented groups. Most recently, views have been sought from mature students and those under 21 on the shaping of the Harassment and Sexual Violation policy to ensure the policy supports both communities.

We value student feedback and when feasible, will act upon the areas of improvement that are identified. To support this through anecdotal evidence, a group of students, referred to previously, indicated that they would like a course to follow on from their level 3 studies. Many were students who were in under-represented groups, disabled and from deprived neighbourhoods and as a result the college gained approval for a HNC in Performing Arts and could provide an academic progression route for 10 students.

3.3 Evaluation strategy

Approach

Core to our approach is understanding the effectiveness of our work and responding to institutional and sector-wide priorities on access and participation. Relevant research, evidence and evaluation underpins our priorities, evaluate our practice, and provide a platform to promote best practice. The College continues to build on its approach to delivering an evidence-led strategy through effective governance, building a

supportive culture to optimise expertise across the institution, by linking available research and practice together.

The methodological approaches we follow are designed to align with OfS standards and use three types of impact evaluation to explore 'what works best', to improve the quality and usefulness of the evidence generated, and to understand what claims can be made from different types of evidence. However, while measuring impacts and establishing causes is important, we believe that it is also important to understand how interventions/programmes are implemented and perceived by participants.

We continue to enhance research and evaluative processes by facilitating engagement with diverse groups, as we continue to build evidence and subsequently develop 'action for change' strategies. Thus, different stakeholders (i.e., students, employers, staff, and practitioners) are involved as active participants in evaluation processes as opposed to passive recipients; data on how needs and expectations of all stakeholders have been met (or otherwise), together with an exploration of the barriers and facilitators to success, is included in our ongoing self-assessment reviews for all HE programmes.

Based on the previous two years with an APP in place, we have found that the following interventions support the college's strategic approach:

1. Developing and implementing an evaluation framework to underpin practice across the student lifecycle, providing a methodology that incorporates different approaches and methods that can be used in a flexible manner to explore the impacts, implementation, and delivery of interventions in a way that is relevant to their objectives and proportionate to intensity level.
 - 1.1 From September 2022, the Director of HE will meet termly with senior managers and student representatives to review the lifecycle of the student, determine which systems currently support the experience and implement any adaptations to enhance the student experience. This will be an annual expectation, throughout the lifespan of the APP for the year of 2026-2027.
 - 1.2 An annual report regarding the above will continue to be provided to key stakeholders, inclusive of senior college managers, curriculum staff and college Governors at the start of the new academic year (in September 2022) highlighting the process and validation for any changes.
2. Developing robust evidence to inform best practice across our provision and enabling an assessment of our strategic measures at an institutional and societal level.
 - 2.1 Termly (October, February and May), students will be asked their views and opinions on the quality of the higher education provision, including induction, quality of teaching, assessment and learning and where improvements can be made. A response to this feedback will be provided within one month of the analysis of the feedback and will be reported to students, managers and Governors. This will be an annual expectation, throughout the lifespan of the APP for the year of 2026-2027.
 - 2.2 Attendance at seminars and conferences relating to OfS, UCAS, OIA, AoC and other professional organisations that support the delivery of higher education will be undertaken with a view to gather information on best practice and disseminating across the higher education provision. Dates for this will vary depending on the provision by the professional organisations. However, we will commit for this to be a formal agenda item at the end of year final exam board where a critical reflection is conducted with curriculum lecturers, managers and directors for a

meaningful analysis supporting the completion of the SAR and informing the action plan moving forward.

- 2.3 Annually, senior leaders will review localised and demographical data with a view of improving the higher education provision to ensure that the current curriculum provides value for money and meets the needs of the local community. This will be completed in January of each year to coincide with the release of information.
3. Building more effective approaches to engage with student voices from a diverse range of backgrounds.
 - 3.1 The student consultative process will be reviewed on an annual basis, throughout the lifespan of the APP, and if any changes are to be required, will be implemented at the start of the next academic year. This will be reviewed by the Director for HE and the Vice Principal for Vocational & Technical Qualifications.
4. Ensuring subject areas have access to relevant data sets which are aligned to institutional priorities to enable effective decision making, collaboration and resource allocation.
 - 4.1 The Director for HE will commit to the continuation of meeting with the teaching teams on a half-termly basis throughout each academic year. Our commitment is to ensure relevant data and key information is continued to be disseminated to teaching teams with the opportunity to participate in a meaningful discussion, contribute to decision making and request additional information to be provided, if required.
5. We have an established enhancement group and where Widening Participation has more prominence. The group undertakes analysis to explore differences in student outcomes (participation and achievement) based on their background characteristics. With half-termly reports provided to demonstrate current data and identify if progress is being made.
6. Widening Participation data dashboards have been developed providing data on outcomes across the student lifecycle, including admissions, continuation, degree outcomes and graduate employability. The datasets are used to inform strategy monitoring and development and provide an overview of some of our key target groups. These will be enhanced to provide better information on progression.
7. Annual Self-Assessment Reviews are conducted by the Senior Leadership Team in which the effectiveness and relevance of the higher education programmes are scrutinised, and actions set for the next academic year

From September 2022, we aim to use the OfS financial support evaluation toolkit to assess the impact and value of financial support for students across the student lifecycle, using a range of qualitative and quantitative methodologies to evaluate and disseminate its findings. Results from our evaluations and research will be shared with stakeholders and externally to maximise our impacts and promote best practice in the field of Widening Participation.

Programme Design

Any new programme is required to have an approved business case that includes how under-represented groupings will be supported throughout the student lifecycle. This is presented and then approved by the Academic Leadership Team, along with an equality, diversity and inclusivity risk assessment. There is also a requirement for an integrated evaluation plan. Appropriate performance measures and proxy indicators and their alignment to clear objectives are considered and incorporated at an early stage so that we can monitor progress and evaluate impact. In terms of programme design,

initiatives are based on a range of internal and external evidence as well as the results of multi-stakeholder project scoping exercises.

Student surveys, consultative meetings have contributed significantly to the strategic decisions made in reference to programme and course design. Specific actions taken from the feedback received, is implementing a semesterised approach to all HE programmes to ensure a consistent and standardised approach. We will continue to monitor the impact of all HE activities to inform our programme design features throughout the lifespan of the APP.

Evaluation Design

We make use of a range of approaches and resources for designing evaluation, as detailed in the table below, along with the timeline. In terms of OfS standards of evidence, our evaluations incorporate a narrative component in that they are designed to test the assumptions set out in our action plans, which utilise theory of change principles. This allows us to strengthen the evidence base surrounding our assumptions and prioritise interventions on that basis. We are using empirical enquiry, along with statistical analysis, to form a broad evidence base for analysis and due to smaller numbers, ensure anonymity is maintained. Although more challenging to evidence, establishing causality is an aim, where possible, using triangulation of different sources of evidence and data. The outcomes will help to inform changes that can be made to improve the methods of evaluation adopted.

Here, at Shrewsbury College, we pride ourselves in implementing robust mechanisms linked to our evaluation approach. Our approach enables us to specify roles, responsibilities and resources required when need be as outlined in the table below.

<i>Timeline per academic year</i>	<i>Activity</i>	<i>Measure success in relation to</i>	<i>Accountable Process</i>
<i>September</i>	<i>Evaluation of the Induction Survey</i>	<i>Access</i>	<i>Outcomes are communicated to students and inform students termly consultations that follow with each action that is identified showing an outcome or a conclusion</i>
<i>September</i>	<i>Annual Report to Governors (1.2 & 2.1 above)</i>	<i>Access, Success and Progression</i>	<i>An annual report is provided to Governors with an overview of key information and outcomes from the previous academic year. Changes to monitoring, evaluation and policies will be reported with reasoning and evidence.</i>
<i>October (1st) January (2nd) May (3rd)</i>	<i>Monitoring Student Focus Groups and Consultatives (1.1 above)</i>	<i>Access, Success, and Progression</i>	<i>Areas to monitor are identified and explored in student meetings. Outcomes are reported to Governors with solutions. The key stakeholders for this process are the students.</i>
<i>January (1st) June (2nd)</i>	<i>Monitoring of Assessment and Award Boards – module attainment</i>	<i>Success</i>	<i>Monitored and integrated into the quality processes. Outcomes reported to Curriculum Directors and individual students who need extra support are identified.</i>
<i>January/February</i>	<i>Strategic evaluation of</i>	<i>Access, Success and</i>	<i>Senior leaders will review localised and</i>

<i>Timeline per academic year</i>	<i>Activity</i>	<i>Measure success in relation to</i>	<i>Accountable Process</i>
	<i>the HE provision (2.3 & 5 above)</i>	<i>Progression</i>	<i>demographical data with a view of improving the higher education provision to ensure that the current curriculum provides value for money and meets the needs of the local community</i>
<i>Monthly (academic year)</i>	<i>Monthly monitoring of attendance and continuation data (4.1 & 5 above)</i>	<i>Success and Progression</i>	<i>Interventions taken for individual students if needed and reported to Curriculum Directors through the HE Enhancement Meetings.</i>
<i>Monthly (academic year)</i>	<i>HE Update – Academic Leadership Team (2.2 & 5 above)</i>	<i>Access, Success, and Progression</i>	<i>Half termly report to Academic Leadership Team.</i>
<i>Monthly (academic year)</i>	<i>HE Update – Technical, Vocational, Leadership Team</i>	<i>Access</i>	<i>Quarterly report to Curriculum Directors to assess applications and potential progression from existing Level 3 programmes.</i>
<i>June</i>	<i>Evaluation of the Exit Survey</i>	<i>Progression</i>	<i>Information analysed to support new student’s induction and journey at the college with changes made to improve the experience for all students.</i>
<i>June</i>	<i>Annual HE Self-Assessment Review (3.1 & 7 above)</i>	<i>Access, Success and Progression</i>	<i>Annual meetings with the Senior Leadership Team identifying areas for improvement and completing an action plan to address the changes needed and monitoring and evaluation arrangements. Reported to the Governors with progression towards the targets identified in the A&PP</i>
<i>June</i>	<i>Evaluation of financial support</i>	<i>Access, Success and Progression</i>	<i>Use of OfS toolkit to evaluate the effectiveness of financial and learning support provided with an annual HE report being produced and presented to Governors, Senior Leaders and other interested parties.</i>
<i>November</i>	<i>Evaluation of Course Level Self-Assessment</i>	<i>Access, Success and Progression</i>	<i>The principal meets with Course Leaders, on an annual basis, to analyse outcomes and decide interventions if needed on moving the course forward</i>

Evaluation Activities

Each academic year, a number of key evaluation activities take place, which are overseen by the Director of HE, and capture the impact of the work we are carrying out in relation to widening access and participation for the targeted groups. The table above outlines the activities and how evaluation activities are reported to and are accountable for within the college processes.

As the range of outcome/activities are delivered, the College will evaluate periodically, and this will influence the activities that need to take place going forward each academic year from 2022 - 2027. Shrewsbury College will continue to collect and evaluate data at different points, before, during and after participation in the programme through the student surveys and consultative meetings. We commit to carrying out in depth analysis on the quantitative and qualitative data obtained to enable us to conduct detailed and meaningful analysis on the student lifecycle to determine trends, in particular those affecting under-represented groups.

Evaluation Implementation

Evaluations will be scoped appropriately before commencement to ensure stakeholders are engaged, milestones are in place, and relevant risks such as anonymity, data protection and safeguarding are mitigated. Involving students in evaluation activity is central to our approach to measuring impact and ensuring continuous improvement, for example, through student focusgroups (considering whole group feedback to course leads) and Student Consultatives (considering whole group feedback to the Director of HE). Our strategic use of electronic systems, such as Pro-Monitor, enables lecturers to formally record, hold and analyse data (attendance, punctuality, grades awarded, target grades) at an individual level enabling us to capture the outcomes of students.

Learning to shape improvements

The College commitment to student feedback and evaluation forms a strategic part of how learning experiences shape the improvements that are made to the HE provision. Students have many channels of feedback to suit their needs throughout the student timeline. The Director of HE meets with all learners at the start of their journey and then regularly throughout the duration of their course. Student surveys and consultative meetings are completed on a termly basis with consistent encouragement from Course Leads and Curriculum Directors. Information from the meetings is used to improve and shape the learning experience. Responses to the feedback are given to the students via consultative meetings and 'You said, we did' explanations are provided.

The Director of HE also has an 'open door' policy, is present in the social areas of the learning environment and due to smaller numbers, is able to be visible and approachable. This lead is followed by Curriculum Directors and Course Leads. The openness and presence of key staff ensures that students are comfortable discussing and feeding back information that supports improvement.

3.4 Monitoring progress against delivery of the plan

There are several strategic processes that ensure the regular monitoring of progress is assessed and accountable. This is outlined in the table of activity and accountable processes on page 20. However, in addition to this, Governors receive termly updates on student feedback and evaluation, progress against targets and how the suggested improvements are being managed. Half-termly meetings with key leaders across the college are used to highlight identified targets and progress towards these targets including an evaluation of the work that is being undertaken to support with allocated responsibility being analysed. The outcomes from the meetings are recorded and distributed regularly.

Responsibility for the monitoring of progress against the plan will be with the Vice Principal for Technical & Vocational Curriculum and the Director of Higher Education. The Principal and Senior Leadership

Team would assess the quality of the progress against the plan through a range of strategies listed in section 3.3. This will ensure that:

- We are meeting our targets
- Our financial allocations are timely and feasible
- Feedback from students is being acted on and monitored
- Improvements are being implemented
- Interventions, if needed, are supportive and developmental

Monitoring will ensure targets are met but will also aim to recognise if interventions are required should progress not be made. Intervention is an important part in helping every student maximise their academic potential here at Shrewsbury Colleges Group and it can be difficult to know exactly what actions to put in place that will make a significant contribution. Our dedicated team of staff have the experience of providing the appropriate intervention where need be. Such interventions may include academic support (*research, writing, Harvard referencing* etc), screening for additional learning support, periodic review of student progress, 1-2-1 support, curriculum adaptations (*where permitted*). All of which play a pivotal role in supporting students making progress.

4. Provision of information to students

The College provides a range of clear, accurate, accessible and regularly updated information to prospective and current students in a variety of formats:

College's website

The following information is published on the College's HE website:

- Overview of the Colleges Higher Education offer and accompanying support available to students.
- HE Courses available in each curriculum area.
- Details of fees payable by prospective and current students for the duration of their Course.
- Information on fees and financial support available in 22/23 through to 26/27, including bursaries.
- HE policies and procedures.
- Shrewsbury Colleges Fee Policy.
- Terms and Conditions for HE students.
- Regulatory Information.
- Shrewsbury Colleges Access and Participation Plan and Resource Plan 19/20.
- Shrewsbury Colleges Student Protection Plan 19/20.

In addition to the above, each course of study has a nominated Student Representative and this student's group will receive a termly briefing on the progress of the college's commitment to the A&PP which will be completed at the start of the student consultatives and will outline the underrepresented groups, the targets, a summary of the progress made and the outcomes.

Higher Education Prospectus

The HE Prospectus is produced annually in September.

Face-to-Face Information and Guidance

- Course Advice Team - provide information, advice and guidance (IAG) to prospective students in accordance with the HE Admissions Policy and Procedure.
- Higher Education Advice Events and Taster Sessions hosted by the Head of HE and supported by the HE Tutors and Support staff.

The College holds the Matrix standard for provision of IAG and all our documents are available in alternative formats e.g., large print upon request and are CMA (Consumer Markets Authority) compliant.

Investment summary

Table 4a - Investment summary (£)

Access and participation plan investment summary (£)	Academic year				
	2022-23	2023-24	2024-25	2025-26	2026-27
Total access activity investment (£)	£300.00	£315.00	£330.00	£345.00	£360.00
Access (pre-16)	£100.00	£105.00	£110.00	£115.00	£120.00
Access (post-16)	£100.00	£105.00	£110.00	£115.00	£120.00
Access (adults and the community)	£100.00	£105.00	£110.00	£115.00	£120.00
Access (other)	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00
Financial support (£)	£3,600.00	£3,800.00	£4,000.00	£4,200.00	£4,400.00
Research and evaluation (£)	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00

Table 4b - Investment summary (HFI%)

Access and participation plan investment summary (%HFI)	Academic year				
	2022-23	2023-24	2024-25	2025-26	2026-27
Higher fee income (£HFI)	£58,500.00	£64,350.00	£70,200.00	£76,050.00	£81,900.00
Access investment	0.5%	0.5%	0.5%	0.5%	0.4%
Financial support	4.3%	4.0%	3.7%	3.8%	3.8%
Research and evaluation	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Total investment (as %HFI)	4.8%	4.5%	4.2%	4.3%	4.2%

The College has fully accounted for the investment in staffing to deliver these activities. Appropriate time allowances and training has been considered. Research and evaluation are allocated time and/or remuneration through the 11 teaching and learning leads and the pre-determined innovation projects. However, this is not identified or accommodated within the college investment for HE as this cost is absorbed within the general college budget. The Director of Quality, Teaching and Learning and the Director of HE promotes and helps disseminate findings for the benefit of the wider college staff and student body through a variety of medium including termly all staff conferences, staff development days and sharing of best practice all day event.

Through the budget, we will provide:

- A £200 bursary to all HE students from areas of low participation (POLAR Q1 & Q2) with residual income of less than £25,000 in their first year of study to improve attainment rates
- A £2,500 Hardship fund for all HE Students in 22/23 and beyond which will be provided based on circumstances and educational need

The impact of our financial investment in widening access and participation will be evaluated by using the Financial Support evaluation toolkit developed by OFFA/OfS. Specifically, we will look to evaluate our offer once we have a multi-year evidence base (which started from 2021 for new students). Findings will be presented to the HE Enhancement Working Group for consideration and action. As a result of

this, should a change to our financial support need to be introduced within the lifetime of our APP for new students, the College will engage with our students and submit an APP change request to the OfS for approval in the first instance. Students with learning difficulties/disabilities should apply for the Disabled Students Allowance in the first instance. Students from POLAR Q1 & Q2 in receipt of the £200 bursary will be encouraged to use this funding as outlined earlier in the A&PP to provide the necessary support contributing to their learning needs. We have previously piloted this across all of our HE provision (including franchised) and in parts to our FE provision and have found that in many areas achievement rates improved or were sustained.

5. Appendix

The OfS will append the following items from the fees and targets and investment documents when an access and participation plan is published:

1. Targets (tables 2a, 2b and 2c in the targets and investment plan)
2. Investment summary (tables 4a and 4b in the targets and investment plan)
3. Fee summary (table 4a and 4b in the fee information document)