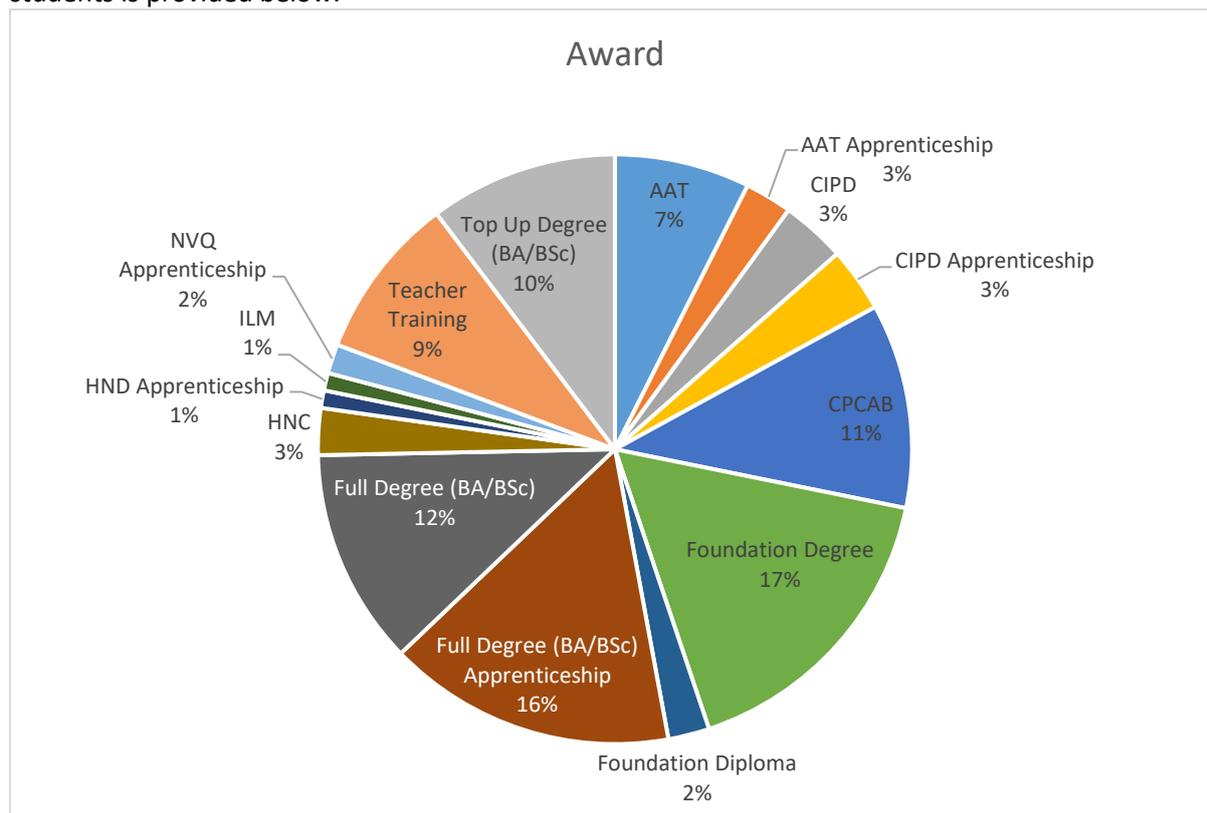


Abingdon and Witney College is a medium sized, general further education college operating mainly from three major sites across south and west Oxfordshire. The College offers a broad range of Higher Education (HE) provision in partnership with the Oxford Brookes University Associate College Partnership (ACP) and its own directly funded provision in the form of Higher Nationals. In addition, the College has a number of professional qualifications at level 4 and above such as AAT, CIPD, ILM, CPCAB, DET and CET. The College is committed to meeting local and regional needs to widen participation in HE by under-represented groups. The focus of provision is vocational education and training and the College takes account of local skill needs and progression into higher-level courses when determining its curriculum offer.

QAA judged that the College meets UK expectations across all aspects of the Quality Code and with commendation for the enhancement of student learning opportunities. The QAA noted that an accessible, supportive and responsive ethos empowers students from different backgrounds to develop and succeed. HE provision is of high quality, and significantly and consistently exceeds the baseline quality threshold expected of UK Higher Education.

In 2021-2022 the College had 311 Higher Education students. The breakdown of the types of HE students is provided below.



The data shown within this plan encompasses our full HE offer (including partnerships) in order to give a broader understanding of our student profile.

The continuation rates and progression rates into highly skilled employment or further study, particularly for those students from lower POLAR quintiles, are significantly above benchmark.

Higher Education courses at Abingdon and Witney College are designed for, and targeted specifically at, those groups of potential students who do not follow traditional routes into higher education. Curriculum design and timetabling takes into account the additional responsibilities of students from vulnerable groups who are more likely to have caring responsibilities, childcare arrangements and the need to work alongside study. For example; 1 day per week, courses that start at 9.30am and finish by 3pm, part time opportunities etc.

Governors are responsible for the strategic direction of the College. Working with the Principal and the Senior Management Team, the mission, strategic aims and annual objectives are set out in the Strategic Plan “Changing Lives and Communities”. In addition, the strategic direction of HE is guided by the HE Strategy, which is aligned to the College Strategic Plan and sets aspirational targets for the College’s HE provision.

How did we do?

Participation 2021-22

- Participation in HE within Abingdon and Witney College shows greater access opportunities to those in under-represented groups than reported nationally in two key areas; POLAR4 quintiles 1 and 2, students who declare disabilities and mature learners (aged 25+).
- POLAR4 participation is 11.5pp above the national average, those that declare disabilities are 9pp above the national average and mature learners are 21.6pp above the national average, showing a broader range of students studying on our programmes from those hard-to-reach populations.
- The majority of HE students are local to College and therefore a comparison with Oxfordshire data is helpful in relation to BME. The proportion of BME learners accessing College HE provision is 4pp above the local demographics
- Our male demographic has reduced significantly this year which is largely to do with the cancellation of male dominated programmes such as Engineering.

Widening Participation Area		2018-2019 HE Student Population	2019-2020 HE Student Population	2020-21 HE Student Population	2021-22 HE Student Population	HESA Data (2020-21)	Oxfordshire Data*
Ethnicity	White	85%	82%	86%	85%	74%	91%
	BME	14%	16%	14%	13%	26%	9%
EIMD Quintile (POLAR4)	1 and 2	22%	26%	23%	23.5%	12%	
	3 to 5	77%	74%	77%	76.5%	88%	
Gender	Male	41%	37%	34%	23%	43%	
	Female	59%	63%	66%	77%	57%	
Age	20 and below	52%	34%	38%	25%	38%	
	21-24	30%	40%	30%	22%	28%	
	25-29	8%	10%	10%	12%	12%	
	30 +	10%	17%	22%	41%	22%	
Learning Difficulty/ Disability	No LDD	75%	78%	78%	71%	85%	
	Yes LDD	21%	19%	18%	24%	15%	

Achievement rates by different student groups 2021-22

- Achievement rates of different groups of students have improved across the board, with significant increases in the achievement of BME students of 20pp and those aged 30+ of 17pp.
- Areas that have declined are those aged 20 and below which sees a reduction of 2pp and those with LDD have seen a reduction of 8pp. This equates to 2 out of 17 LDD learners and 1 out of 21 learners aged 20 or below, which reduces the statistical significance.

Achievement rates by different groups		Achievement Rate 2018/19	Achievement Rate 2019/20	Achievement Rate 2020/21	Achievement Rate 2021/22
Ethnicity	White	92%	97%	93%	94%
	BME	95%	97%	80%	100%
EIMD Quintile	1 and 2	95%	100%	92%	100%
	3 to 5	92%	97%	91%	92%
Gender	Male	92%	100%	92%	93%
	Female	93%	96%	89%	95%
Age	20 and below	82%	97%	88%	86%
	21-24	89%	99%	94%	97%
	25-29	94%	100%	94%	100%
	30 +	95%	95%	83%	100%
Learning Difficulty/Disability	No LDD	95%	96%	89%	96%
	Yes LDD	81%	100%	96%	88%

Widening Participation Priorities

Our key priorities for widening participation are as follows:

1. Continue to raise awareness and expectations about participation in higher education among the local community in order to further improve access for underrepresented groups.
2. To maintain participation in higher education, especially for specified target groups:
 - a. Mature students returning to study with non-traditional entry qualifications,
 - b. Students from black and minority ethnic groups,
 - c. Students from deprived postcode areas.
3. To improve the non-continuation rates for students from black and minority ethnic groups.

Widening Participation Activities

Examples of activities undertaken by the College to widen access to HE include:

1. Providing high quality pastoral support to help more vulnerable students throughout their time at College. Every course timetable includes weekly tutorial slots to ensure that any student concerns or barriers to achievement can be resolved swiftly and appropriately.
2. Providing access to the Student Services team and wide-ranging support to help vulnerable students through their time at college. Students have access to student advisers, BACP registered counselling services and behaviour support.
3. Maintaining high levels of academic support through the management of small groups and ease of access to academic tutors.
4. Providing a virtual learning environment via MS Teams to all HE students to ensure that additional resources are available outside of classroom study and where students are not able to attend college due to additional personal, family or work pressures.
5. Working closely with local schools to raise aspirations and promote lifelong learning, targeting progression to HE courses.
6. Working with the College Adult Learning faculty, through its community outreach work, to promote the benefits of HE study to adult students and ensure smooth transition.
7. Providing pre-HE study courses for students entering higher education after a break in learning and those from non-traditional vocational qualification routes into higher education. These courses are aimed at breaking down barriers and increasing confidence in the ability to succeed. This includes a well established Access to HE provision. From 2021-22 we also plan to increase this provision further with the inclusion of a Access to Business programme.
8. The College offers further HE experience events throughout the academic year targeted toward students identified as having the potential but currently not the appetite or stated intention to apply for higher education study.
9. Ensuring students with protected characteristics are more closely monitored during periods of disruption.

Monitoring and Evaluation

The College reports the performance of students undertaking HE courses both during and at the end of programme. Quality monitoring KQI meetings are held with programme managers to monitor in year data such as recruitment, attendance, retention and progress. The student voice is particularly important in ensuring we are adapting our processes to meet the needs of underrepresented groups and these are taken into account within KQI meetings and throughout the academic year in the form of Quality Improvement Plans (QIPs).

Further specific monitoring and evaluation activity will continue to be undertaken to support the College's main widening participation activities. The annual HE Self-Assessment Report (SAR) contains a critical analysis of key performance indicators and a range of data linked to student cohort. In 2021-22, the College self assessed the quality of our HE provision to be good. This document highlights areas for further improvement which are included in the College Quality Improvement Plan as appropriate. The College's Governing Body has oversight of this process.

<http://www.abingdon-witney.ac.uk/about-us/key-documents/>