

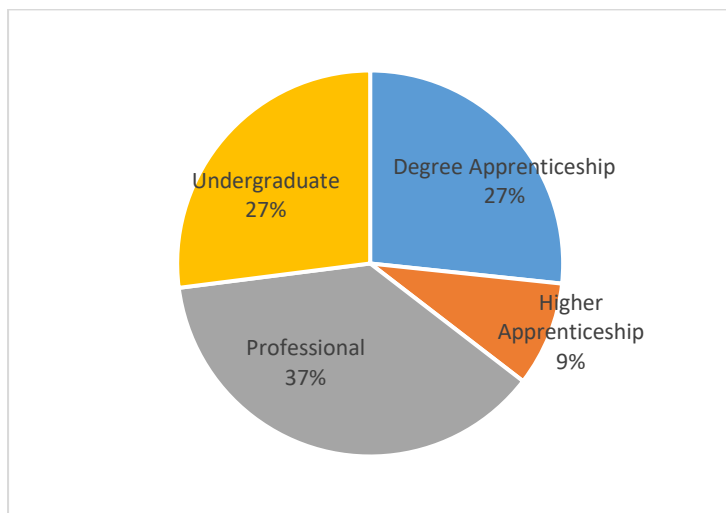
Abingdon and Witney College is a medium sized, general further education college operating mainly from three major sites across south and west Oxfordshire. The College offers a broad range of Higher Education (HE) provision:

- In partnership with the Oxford Brookes University Associate College Partnership (ACP) we offer full time other undergraduate (Foundation degrees) and full time undergraduate programmes (Top up degrees and one full degree).
- Higher National Certificates and a number of professional qualifications at level 4 and above such as AAT, CIPD, ILM, CPCAB, DET and CET. These are considered as part time other undergraduate programmes or higher apprenticeships.
- One degree apprenticeship in Business and Management Practice.

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.

In 2014, 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 2023-2024 the College had 285 Higher Education students. The breakdown of the types of HE students is provided below.



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

The progression rates into highly skilled employment or further study, particularly for those students from lower POLAR quintiles, are significantly above benchmark. Internal College data for the 2023-24 academic year shows a continuation (retention) figure of 92.7% overall.

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 “Be you, Be Extraordinary”. 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?**

Our recent Ofsted review (June 2024) included a “deep dive” of the HE Programme; Chartered Manager Degree Apprenticeship where delivery of apprenticeships was deemed as outstanding. Ofsted published the following relevant information in the inspection report:

*“Learners and apprentices are highly respectful and tolerant of staff and others in the college community. They value and celebrate diversity and individuality. Learners and apprentices are courteous towards all within the college and their behaviour is exemplary. Learners and apprentices are positive ambassadors for the college, equipped with the behaviours they need for study, work and life. Leaders and managers have successfully established a culture of inclusion. They are passionate about providing learners and communities with opportunities to ‘be extraordinary’.”*

*“Disadvantaged learners value highly the learning and social opportunities as well as the breadth of community learning that courses offer. Learners with high needs and those with previously poor experiences in education are supported well to learn and become independent. Learners are often able to progress to higher levels of learning where they show a strong commitment to their studies. Staff embrace the inclusive culture and, together with leaders, they serve their communities well.”*

### Participation 2023-24

- Participation in HE within Abingdon and Witney College shows greater access opportunities to those in under-represented groups than reported nationally in three key areas; POLAR4 quintiles 1 and 2, students who declare disabilities and mature learners (aged 25+).
- POLAR4 participation is 7pp above the national average, those that declare disabilities are 2pp above the national average and mature learners are 21pp 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 (NOMIS 2011) is helpful in relation to BME. The proportion of BME learners accessing College HE provision is 9pp above the local demographics
- Our male demographic remains low which is largely to do with the cancellation of male dominated programmes such as Engineering.

Widening Participation Area		2020-2021	2021-2022	2022-2023	2023-2024	HESA Data (2021-22)	Oxfordshire Data*
Ethnicity	Non BME	86%	85%	83%	76%	69%	78%
	BME	14%	15%	17%	24%	31%	22%
EIMD Quintile (POLAR4)	1 and 2	23%	23.5%	26%	20%	13%	
	3 to 5	77%	76.5%	74%	80%	87%	
Gender	Male	34%	23%	26%	26%	41%	
	Female	66%	77%	74%	74%	59%	
Age	20 and below	38%	25%	26%	25%	41%	
	21-24	30%	22%	24%	18%	24%	
	25-29	10%	12%	14%	11%	11%	
	30 +	22%	41%	36%	46%	25%	
Learning Difficulty/ Disability	No LDD	78%	71%	74%	79%	81%	
	Yes LDD	18%	24%	26%	21%	19%	

**Achievement rates by different student groups 2023-24**

- Achievement rates of different groups of students show improvements in areas such as learning difficulty/disability, male, age 20 and below and ethnicity.
- Some areas requiring improvement include those in EIMD quintiles 1 and 2 (although this equates to 1 learner failing out of 17)
- Overall, those without protected characteristics have an achievement rate of 93% and those without, 89% showing that there is a minimal difference between the two.

Achievement rates by different groups		Achievement Rate 2020/21	Achievement Rate 2021/22	Achievement Rate 2022/23	Achievement Rate 2023/24
Ethnicity	White	93%	94%	93%	89%
	BME	80%	100%	85%	92%
EIMD Quintile	1 and 2	92%	100%	93%	88%
	3 to 5	91%	92%	92%	93%
Gender	Male	92%	93%	82%	96%
	Female	89%	95%	96%	87%
Age	20 and below	88%	86%	78%	92%
	21-24	94%	97%	94%	85%
	25-29	94%	100%	96%	88%
	30 +	83%	100%	96%	92%
Learning Difficulty/Disability	No LDD	89%	96%	92%	88%
	Yes LDD	96%	88%	94%	95%

## Equality of Opportunity Risk Register

The College has identified three potential key risks to equality of opportunity:

- 1. Indication of Risk:** Low application numbers across the board for our higher education programmes.

**Risk:** Even where a student has the grades and information or guidance required to choose a particular course or provider, they may not apply.

**Objective:** Continue to raise awareness and expectations about participation in higher education among the local community in order to further improve access for underrepresented groups.

**Action:** Project underway in 2024-25 to identify how to reach potential students whose perception of HE negates them from applying, even though they have the entry qualifications.
- 2. Indication of Risk:** Continuation data from the OfS dashboard (2018 – 2022) shows that full time students on other undergraduate programmes who are under 21, 31 or over, have a disability, are male, who are in deprivation quintile 1 or 2 are least likely to continue their programmes. Male and Q1 or 2 are shown to be significantly below numerical thresholds.

**Risk:** Students may not have equal opportunity to develop the knowledge and skills required on their higher education courses that match their expectations and ambitions. Students may not receive sufficient personalised academic support to achieve a positive outcome. Students may not receive sufficient personalised non-academic support or have sufficient access to extracurricular activities to achieve a positive outcome.

**Objective:** To improve continuation rates for males and areas of deprivation.

**Action:** Students at risk to be identified at an early stage (prior to the first reading week) with all students receiving a personal development plan meeting on a one to one basis that sets out the barriers and support for each individual.
- 3. Indication of Risk:** Progression data from the OfS dashboard (2018 – 2022) shows part time other undergraduate students are generally not progressing into managerial or professional employment. Significant areas below numerical thresholds include those under 21 years and male. Similarly, females on full time first degree programmes also fall below the numerical threshold for progression.

**Risk:** Students may not have equal opportunity to progress to an outcome they consider to be a positive reflection of their higher education experience.

**Objective:** To establish the reasons behind non-progression in order to develop an action plan.

**Action:** Project in 24-25 to look at routes of progression from our HE programmes. Some, for example such as childcare, are not considered professional and therefore further analysis needs to be done on the types of progression that can be obtained from our programmes.

## 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 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. 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.
8. 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 2023-24, the College self-assessed the quality of our HE provision to be in line with expectations (met). 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/>