

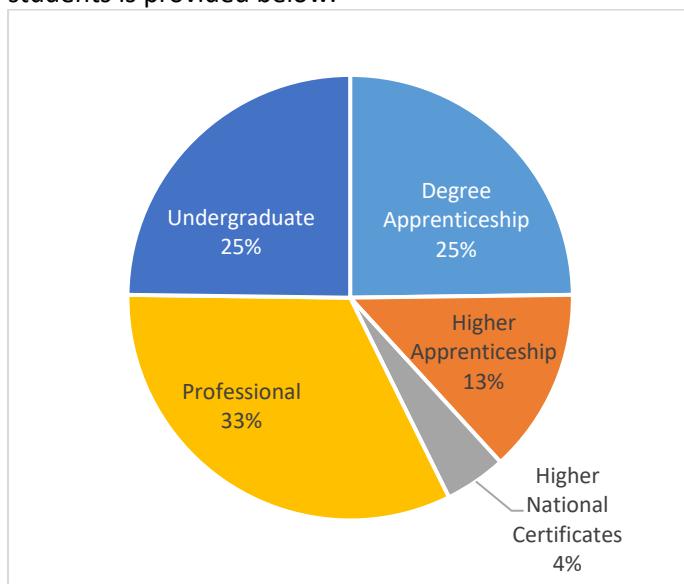
Abingdon and Witney College is a medium sized, general further education college operating mainly from three major sites across south and west Oxfordshire. The College offers a broad range of Higher Education (HE) provision:

- 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 2024-2025 the College had 240 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 2024-25 academic year shows a continuation (retention) figure of 96.3% overall (an increase of 3.6pp on last years data).

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 2024-25**

- 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; students who declare disabilities and mature learners (aged 25+).
- Those that declare disabilities are 5pp above the national average and mature learners are 13pp 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 (2011 Census\*) is helpful in relation to BME and POLAR4.
- Whilst locally, participation for EIMD quintiles 1 and 2 have remained relatively stable, nationally this figure has increased. Oxfordshire Statistics (OCC Data Hub) shows that locally the most deprived neighbourhoods account for 16% of the population, therefore the College remains firmly above the regional picture by 8pp.
- The proportion of BME learners accessing College HE provision is 1pp above the local demographics.
- Our male demographic remains relatively low although there has been some growth since last year due to the reintroduction of technology based HE.

Widening Participation Area		2021-2022	2022-2023	2023-2024	2024-2025	HESA Data (2023-24)	Oxfordshire Data*
Ethnicity	Non BME	85%	83%	76%	77%	70%	78%
	BME	15%	17%	24%	23%	30%	22%
EIMD Quintile (POLAR4)	1 and 2	23.5%	26%	20%	24%	41%	16%
	3 to 5	76.5%	74%	80%	76%	59%	84%
Gender	Male	23%	26%	26%	29%	43%	
	Female	77%	74%	74%	71%	57%	
Age	20 and below	25%	26%	25%	37%	37%	
	21-24	22%	24%	18%	14%	27%	
	25-29	12%	14%	11%	9%	13%	
	30 +	41%	36%	46%	40%	23%	
Learning Difficulty/ Disability	No LDD	71%	74%	79%	76%	82%	
	Yes LDD	24%	26%	21%	24%	18%	

### Achievement rates by different student groups 2024-25

- At the time of writing, of the 152 students that were due to finish their programme in 2024/2025, 29 learners are awaiting results or still to complete exams/resits. Of the remaining 123 students:
  - 3 students withdrew before the end of the course and 3 failed leaving a 95% achievement rate
  - Students with protected characteristics consistently outperform their counterparts
  - The lowest performing group were aged 25-29, however this was also the smallest group with 1 student withdrawal and 1 student fail.
- At the time of writing 57 students overall completed their full degree programmes however, 3 are yet to submit their final work. Currently 100% of students studying on full degree programmes have so far achieved this academic year.

Achievement rates by different groups		Achievement Rate 2020/21	Achievement Rate 2021/22	Achievement Rate 2022/23	Achievement Rate 2023/24	Achievement Rate 2024/25
Ethnicity	White	93%	94%	93%	89%	94%
	BME	80%	100%	85%	92%	96%
EIMD Quintile	1 and 2	92%	100%	93%	88%	100%
	3 to 5	91%	92%	92%	93%	93%
Gender	Male	92%	93%	82%	96%	90%
	Female	89%	95%	96%	87%	96%
Age	20 and below	88%	86%	78%	92%	100%
	21-24	94%	97%	94%	85%	100%
	25-29	94%	100%	96%	88%	85%
	30 +	83%	100%	96%	92%	92%
Learning Difficulty/Disability	No LDD	89%	96%	92%	88%	94%
	Yes LDD	96%	88%	94%	95%	96%

## **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: New faculty of HE and Professional launched in August 2024 with a full public launch planned for March 2026.
2. Indication of Risk: Continuation data from the OfS dashboard shows that the College is statistically above the numerical thresholds with the exception of full time (2019-20 to 2022-23) which falls 6.8pp below the threshold. Drilling into the data shows this to be students at level 4 predominantly on business and management programmes. However, this may be due to very low numbers on these programmes (2 students in year 1, 2 students on year 2 and 5 on year 3 in 2024.25).

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 on business specific programmes.

Action: Students studying outside the apprenticeship 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 is suppressed due to low cohort numbers. HESA graduate data shows details of only 5 students progressing into full time work.

Risk: Students may not have equal opportunity to progress to an outcome they consider to be a positive reflection of their higher education experience, however there is insufficient data to be able to understand the issues behind progression data.

Objective: To establish an internal progression reporting mechanism

Action: Project in 25-26 to ensure that all staff input into a progression/destination system so that statistics and data can be more closely analysed in the future.

## **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 2024-25, 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/>