

3. Institution's commentary

For your statistical and other access agreement milestones (from Tables 9a and 9b), please provide a narrative (maximum 750 words) which:

- comments on the level of progress made against the targets
- sets the figures in some context, for example if there have been any external factors which may have influenced them
- provides explanations where you have not met targets or where progress has been less than anticipated.

The College's Access agreement for 2010-11 did not have specific numerical targets against which progress can be measured. However we have data for a variety of parameters which we believe reflect the College's current achievements.

Table 9a

Over the period considered the proportion of students who study part-time has decreased. Our part-time cohort consists primarily of mature learners, some of whom in the past have been sponsored by their employers – the recent economic downturn has impacted on this support and has also meant that students are less likely to be able to self-fund. In addition, attrition on part time courses has increased over the period, mostly due to changes in financial status during the three year programmes, for example in 2010/11 several students were made redundant and moved location. However, we still believe that as a proportion of the student body the figures are satisfactory.

The full time rate of attrition has remained relatively constant over the three years for which data is available. This is disappointing as we have put in place a number of measures to increase student support, but does perhaps reflect the fact that the College attracts a high proportion of non-traditional learners e.g. 46% of F/T and 54% of P/T learners are from household where the annual income is less than £25,000 with 44% of F/T and 12% of P/T learners receiving full grant support. The life issues associated with low income mean that some students leave the course before completing and others struggle with the demands of academic study against a difficult background. We will continue to work with our students to address these issues, with the initial aim of reducing attrition further.

The numbers of mature students have remained relatively constant and reflect how the College supports students who are returning to education.

The figures for DSA show increasing numbers of students with a declared disability and a recent College survey indicated that the figures for those students who considered themselves to be disabled are even higher – running at 18% for both full and part-time cohorts.

Table 9b

The College supports progression into Higher Education with a number of initiatives, many of which were originally established with AimHigher funding which has now been superseded by College finance.

Green Apples provides funding for college based activities for pupils from local comprehensive schools – mainly aimed at progression into tertiary education and Higher Ambitions funding is aimed at providing advice and guidance to the College's own level 3 students so that they can make informed choices with respect to progression to HE study.

The extended degree programmes are seen as a particularly successful initiative which has enabled non-traditional learners to progress into higher education. This includes those who may have poor achievement at level 3 and mature learners returning to education after a gap in study. Some of these students have gone on to achieve merit or distinction in their foundation degrees and hence have progressed to full honours.

The College has also continued to subscribe to, and actively support, two Lifelong Learning Networks: Higher York and VETNET.

Overall, the College continues to attract and support a wide range of students from varying backgrounds and is proud of its inclusivity and level of individualised support.