



University of the
Highlands and Islands
Moray College

Access and Inclusion Strategy

Responsibility:	Director of Information, Planning and Student Support
Approved by:	Learning, Teaching and Quality Committee
Reviewed:	July 2018
Date of Next Review:	June 2019

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1. Introduction

Moray College is committed to further developing its ethos and culture to ensure equality of opportunity for all students and potential students.

This strategy underpins the College's vision as stated within our Strategic Plan:

We will be 'famous' for:

- *the quality of our learning and teaching*
- *our partnership work with stakeholders*
- *the positive impacts and outcomes of what we do*
- *our values*

This vision encompasses the full range of learning, teaching and support services included within this strategy. The College's access and inclusion strategy continues to ensure an inclusive approach and in particular it re-establishes the College's aim to enhance existing inclusive practices to meet the needs of students ensuring parity of intake and outcome so that all students have an equal chance of successfully completing their programme of study.

These individual services all have specific aims and aspirations and progress is routinely monitored and reviewed. An overarching Action Plan for Session 2018/2019 is included in Appendix 4. These aims evolve as appropriate to reflect progress made, relevant national initiatives, affordability and to reflect the priorities of the College and its partners in addressing access and inclusion issues.

Access and inclusion priorities are also embedded within a wide range of other strategies, policies, procedures and operational plans as detailed in Appendix 1. The College is committed to further extending its evidence base in relation to this Strategy and its underlying policies and practice to ensure a more outcome driven approach. Analysis of student equal opportunities monitoring data, for example, provides the basis for ongoing self-evaluation.

The College has a key role in supporting those who wish to develop skills and attributes to allow them to participate fully in society and as such this role encompasses preventing individuals from becoming excluded and in providing opportunities for those excluded to overcome particular barriers.

The College recognises a wide range of issues and factors which can prevent a student or prospective student from realising their potential and provides a wide range of support services from pre-entry guidance to progression to study or employment. It would however be inappropriate for the College to provide expertise in all aspects of welfare, guidance and support and staff work in partnership with other external agencies to more widely meet the needs of

individual students. The College sees its key contribution as the provision of educational opportunities working in partnership with agencies better placed to provide other support, e.g. Throughcare Aftercare, Who Cares Scotland. College staff, including senior managers, are members of various support groups within the Moray Community Planning Partnership, e.g. Mental Health and Well-Being Group.

This strategy is also informed by the longer-term planning and strategic aspirations of the Moray Community Planning Partnership on which Board a member of the college's Board of Management has a seat.

An exemplar list of external agencies and stakeholders the College engages with is included in Appendix 3.

2. Inclusive Practice

The College's aspirations and plans over recent years have been to ensure an inclusive approach to providing learning support and other services to all students on a needs-led basis. In recent years the College has evolved its learning support service from being a deficit model where learning support was only provided if a student indicated a requirement for support through either the application or enrolment process. This process was based on a Personal Learning Support Plan (PLSP) being developed and the agreed support being put in place. The College's current inclusive practice includes a 'one-stop shop' for all student services including guidance, counselling, employability skills, learning support, career advice, financial management support etc. and removes the stigma perceived by many in accessing support.

Pre-start

All applications are monitored to identify as early as possible any individual student support needs. These individuals are contacted by our Learning Support Team to encourage applicants to discuss any support required to ensure that as much support as possible is in place prior to the start of the session.

The College has an inclusive approach to learning support and all applicants are communicated with in the summer, via online postcards etc., to inform them of all the opportunities available in the summer to seek support prior to the start of the session. This support extends to familiarisation tours and help with student support fund applications.

This communication is continued throughout the session via regular Newsletters however future developments include improving the accessibility of the wide

range of online information available to applicants and ensuring that it is effectively informed by student experience and expectations.

The College's Kickstart programme is highly successful and offers a variety of learning support workshops in IT, numeracy, literacy, study skills etc. within the summer to those applicants who feel either unready or under-confident to start college. This programme has evolved over many years of feedback and is now recognised by all who attend it to be a useful aid prior to starting college.

All applicants must attend a pre-start event prior to being accepted on to their course. This provides all applicants with an introduction to their course of choice and the student services on offer as well as ensuring that they are enrolled on the course that best suits their need and current qualification and skill level.

This practice is continually reviewed however it is recognised that pre-start support has played a significant role in improving student early retention and, in 17/18 also contributed to a significant improvement in attainment.

For those students who find it difficult to engage with College, e.g. those who have a significant lack of confidence, suffer from anxiety or other mental health issues, a one-to-one pre-start experience is offered which individually supports the student to gain access to a College course.

Transition from School to College

Well-established practice exists to ensure effective transition from school to College and pupils are supported in a variety of ways from course choice onwards. The Head of Academic Partnerships oversees work with the local secondary schools and other agencies, e.g. Skills Development Scotland and DYW Moray. Individual pupil needs, including care leavers and young carers, are met through a series of Pathway Planning Meetings. Where a learning support need is identified the pupil is engaged with promptly to provide appropriate and continual support through the summer break.

These meetings facilitate data sharing including highlighting any perceived barriers to progress, e.g. lack of confidence, lack of motivation.

The College is making use of the Schools Data Hub to help inform leaver destinations and further discussion with SDS and other stakeholders is planned to lead to new data sharing agreements to help shape the College curriculum, and support functions through analysis of destination data.

Induction

All FE full-time students are invited to a minimum of a two-day induction. A structured induction programme developed over many years sets the standard where the focus is on ensuring that the College provides a welcoming environment to all students whilst providing further opportunities to signpost all the support services available and how to access them.

Senior managers play an active part in welcoming and meeting the students and Student Helpers are recruited to ensure that students are engaged with and supported in this very busy period.

A key change introduced in session 2017/18 was the introduction of the new Learner Development Worker (LDW) post which centralises the student advice provision within Student Services, removing the burden from teaching staff. LDWs are introduced at induction and guide the student through to the end of their course and provide support for transition to the next step in their journey.

The LDW implementation was based on good practice established in other Colleges within the sector and better focuses resources on the non-academic needs of learners whilst complementing employability skills offered by academic teams.

The College conducts an annual Student Early Experience Survey covering the period from initial enquiry to four or five weeks into the course. This survey has around a thousand responses and routinely demonstrates a high level of student satisfaction. Class Representative meetings and focus groups further consider any specific areas for development to inform future induction planning.

In session support

Within our Student Services Centre, our Study Bar provides an open and welcoming environment for all students to access their individual learning support needs including study planning, study skills, numeracy, literacy, assistive technology support, etc. This ensures there is no differentiation between the existing 'extended learning support' and 'learning support' and that the service provided is student-focussed. This is also more effective where students do not initially recognise that they have a need or where they do not identify themselves as having a disability, e.g. mental health issues, dyslexia.

Over time the demographic of need has shifted from a need to support a physical impairment to providing more emotional and mental health support. This is

evidenced by the trends in our student data and more recently the College has opened an Empathy Bar to more directly support those students with mental health issues due to the significantly high number of students now declaring. Students also have access to fully-qualified counsellors and plans are currently in progress to increase this provision as well as plans to nurture positive mental health and well-being. For 2018/19, this will be re-branded as the “Wellbeing Bar” housed in a new dedicated location in College, offering the opportunity to bring in other third-sector providers from the local area, enhancing the services available to learners.

There is a similar trend in those students who have dyslexia, both disclosed and un-disclosed and significant planning and staff CPD has been undertaken to support early identification.

Plans include improving the information to all staff to create more inclusive environments including engendering a better understanding about how to deliver more dyslexic or autistic friendly approaches, e.g. all assessments being printed on coloured paper for all students.

In 2014 the College achieved the Buttle Quality Mark for Care Leavers and the implementation and review of support for those students in and from a care background has led to not only a better understanding of the issues faced by those students but has also better informed the support provided to all students. A Corporate Parenting Plan is in place to continue to progress this work.

Workshops similar to the pre-start Kickstart programme are offered to all students throughout the session, and in particular to those students on SCQF Level 4 to 6 programmes. In addition, learning support may be provided in SCQF level 4 classes at the start of session.

Students with specific recognised needs identified at the pre-entry, application, induction or enrolment stage also access the Study Bar. Currently these students have negotiated and agreed PLSPs in place of which time in the Study Bar may be a component of these plans. It is intended in the future to continue the PLSP process for those students with complex needs, where one-to-one support is required, or for those where support may be provided from other areas within the College, e.g. Estates.

Learning Support staff are trained in the use of assistive technologies and again the support provided has evolved from only supporting individual students with specific disabilities to promoting the benefits of assistive technologies to all students requesting support, e.g. Read Write Gold is beneficial to any student who requires to enhance their study skills.

More technical IT support is provided via the Student Services Centre by our IT Helpdesk Analyst.

The Learning Support Team support all students to undertake core skills diagnostic testing and the outcomes from this informs both teaching staff and the Learning Support Team to determine individual student needs and effective support mechanisms.

Students have access to a wide range of support via the Student Services Centre including employability support through the Career Zone. LDWs and other student services staff provide signposting of services and a variety of themed sessions are delivered to all FE class groups.

A 'Building Resilience' session has been introduced this session in response to both the increased level of students declaring mental health issues and to support those who are having difficulty coping with their studies.

PDP resources are also available online for students to access at a time that suits their needs.

3. Evaluation and Planning of Student Services

The evaluation of all student services is underpinned by a variety of sources of information including analysis of student data, survey responses and individual feedback on the implementation of the associated policies and procedures.

For example, students participate in the review and development of all student related policies and strategies through a series of meetings organised by the Student Association. The two local Depute Presidents of the Highlands and Islands Student Association (HISA) not only participate in the associated committees but also work closely with the Student Services team.

Students who engage in the Kickstart Programme and those who use the Study Bar also participate in focus groups to support evaluation and planning. Statistics related to study bar use were used during learning and teaching evaluation sessions in session 2017/18 to aid the development of the College Evaluation Review and Enhancement Report (EREP).

Work remains in progress to develop a more outcome oriented approach to student services planning and to ensure that it is informed by effective analysis of student impact and outcomes including volume of students accessing learning support, retention and attainment performance indicator analysis by age, course level studied, disability (disclosed and undisclosed) etc. An action has been created to ensure the relevant KPIs are identified and this closely links to the EREP report and the challenge questions outlined in *How Good is our College?*

The quantity and quality of our student post-course destination information is improving, but more work is still required to help better improve learners outside of the SDS data sharing framework, specifically learners who apply but then who do not enrol.

4. Responsibilities

The Senior Management Team and Board of Management have overall responsibility for fostering a culture within the organisation which values and embeds the aims and ambitions of this Strategy.

The Director of Information, Planning and Student Support has responsibility for the development and on-going review of this Strategy.

The Director of Information, Planning and Student Support is also responsible for ensuring that student services policies and procedures take account of the full range of needs of students and potential students.

The Learning Support Officer and Student Advice Manager are responsible for developing the associated annual Action Plans and for ensuring that our student services are regularly reviewed.

They are also both responsible for raising awareness of staff of the various aspects of access and inclusion issues and ensuring that both teaching and student-facing support staff make an appropriate contribution to the College's overall approach to improving access and widening inclusion.

All staff have a responsibility to undertake appropriate continuous professional development. For example, the Learning Support Team have recently developed a training program including:

- Counselling Skills, active listening is essential when supporting students who are suffering from anxiety and or depression
- Autism
- Dyslexia
- Advancing Equality and Diversity through Inclusiveness
- Mental Health First Aid
- Mental Health First Aid for youths
- Sleep deprivation – the affects
- Sensory Impairment Training

5. UHI Partnership Policy Development

In 2018, the UHI Partnership started work on creation of the *Single Policy Environment* project which is designed to bring together best practice and establish a common policy framework within the FE region. The college has now fully adopted the first two outputs from this project:

- FE Admissions Policy
- Learner Support Policy

These policies are better focussed on improving access and inclusion than the existing College policies they replace.

The action plan in this document highlights tasks to support further developments related to the Student Attendance Strategy and Policy which respond to changes in student funding guidance.

6. Constraints

The major constraint to continuous improvement of student support services is the level of targeted funding available for these services. Funding allocations within the region now cap the amounts previously claimed for learning support to ensure a more equitable distribution of funding across the region. In this context the college continues to strive to ensure the sustainability of the services we provide and our improvement planning.

(Historically, in comparison with the sector, we had a high volume of Personal Learning and Support Plans, directly funded through the previous WSUMS tariff and hence attracting significant levels of ELS funding. In addition, the College has seen a 45% reduction in its rurality and remoteness funding with which to support the impact of rural poverty and deprivation).

Despite the constraint, the College continues to provide a significant level of funding to support the provision of the “one-stop shop” in student services to deal with a wide range of learner support needs.

The service continues to meet a wide range of specific learner needs with the PLSP remaining critical to ensure the right support is tailored for each learner.

Appendix 1: Related Internal Documents

- Academic Quality Policy
- Complaints Procedure
- Course Assessment and Progression Board Procedures
- Equalities Mainstreaming Report
- Extended Learning Support Procedures
- FE Student Support Funds Policy
- Learning and Teaching Strategy
- Mainstreaming Report
- FE Admissions Policy (UHI Partnership Policy)
- Learner Support Policy (UHI Partnership Policy)
- Student Advice, Personal Development Planning and Guidance Policy
- Student Attendance Policy and Procedures
- Student Bullying & Harassment Policy
- Student Confidentiality Policy
- Student Disciplinary Procedure
- Student Disclosure Policy
- Student Induction Policy
- Student Safeguarding Policy

Appendix 2: Related External Documents

- Gender Action Plan
- The Education (Additional Support for Learning (Scotland))
- Getting it Right for Every Child (GIRFEC)
- Highlands and Islands Regional Outcome Agreement
- Moray Community Planning Partnership Strategic Plan: Moray 2026
- National Ambition for Care Experienced Students
- Opportunities for All
- Youth Employment Strategy

Appendix 3: Stakeholders and External Agencies

- Through Care After Care
- Skills Development Scotland
- Action for Children
- School Liaison Officer
- Employment Support Services
- Job Centre Plus
- Beech Brae Education Centre (Inclusion and Support Service)
- Foster Care
- Who Cares Scotland (WCS)
- Aberlour Mentoring
- Kinship Care

Moray Community Planning Partnership Committees and Groups:

- Community Engagement Group
- Prevention Group
- Prevent Group
- Children and Young Persons Partnership
- Mental Health and Well-Being Group
- Corporate Parenting Board

Appendix 4: Action Plan

No.	Aim/Target	Key Task	Lead Responsibility	Target date	Progress
1	STUDENT SERVICES				
1.1	Review effectiveness of the Learner Development Worker (LDW) role and determine actions to improve the service to learners in session 18/19.	Gather feedback from staff (cross College) and learners using focus groups. Develop an evaluation report and action plan for implementation in 18/19.	Student Guidance Manger	September 2018	Focus groups held. Education Scotland review feedback May 2018 Initial evaluation report has been drafted.
1.2	Ensure the LDW role is fully embedded in the College and is promoted widely to staff and learners.	Re-develop the Student Advice Policy to ensure the LDW role is better embedded across the College cycle. Run staff development sessions to communicate planned improvements to the LDW role.	Student Guidance Manger	September 2018	Policy review in progress.
1.3	Support the development of a new UHI partnership approach to student attendance strategy and associated policy/procedure framework.	Attend central workshops. Provide documentation in support of the central policy development. Review and approve partnership documents for local adoption.	Student Guidance Manager + Director IPSS	September 2018	Workshops are taking place to review existing partnership documentation.

1.4	Pilot the provision of free sanitary products for female learners prior to the roll out by the Scottish Government in August 2018.	Plan, implement and monitor the provision of free sanitary products at key locations across the College estate.	Student Guidance Manager	August 2018	The pilot was successful and is now complete. All female toilets now have free sanitary products in place which are regularly replenished.
1.5	Develop new Support Service KPIs which relate to access and inclusion to inform the College EREP.	Identify KPIs from <i>How Good is our College?</i> challenge questions. Evaluate effectiveness and identify new KPI targets for improvement.	Student Guidance Manager	August 2018	Key challenge questions identified as part of contribution to EREP development process.
1.6	Develop partnership with a local service provider to increase the services available in College to improve the wellbeing of learners.	Develop partnership agreement. Develop accommodation to support the service.	Student Guidance Manager	October 2018	Service provider has been identified. Initial meetings have taken place.
2	LEARNING SUPPORT				
2.1	Improve access to wellbeing and support services through the use of technology, leading to more timely intervention.	Implement support services using video technology.	Learning Support Officer	October 2018	Accommodation located Specific training in presenting / demonstrating through VLE to be completed.
2.2	Improve service for dyslexia support to ensure learners are more effectively filtered to the Study Bar.	Ensure referral guidance is clear to all staff, using PLSP process to filter learners	Learning Support Officer	September 2018	Dyslexia PDA completed and training ongoing by key Study Bar Staff. Assessing the needs of students with dyslexia and the creation of PLSPs undertaken by key Study Bar staff – complete and training ongoing.

2.3	Improve support services to learners with mental health issues and involve third-sector providers in the provision.	Create a dedicated Well Being Bar in an accessible location and promote the service to learners.	Learning Support Officer	September 2018	Room now identified.
2.4	Respond to the Outputs from the Mental Health Service Review	Develop and monitor local action plan.	Learning Support Office.	December 2018	Staff participated in the main review meeting. Follow up meetings with key staff to discuss review findings now in planned.
2.5	Improve the integrity of the Alternative Assessment Arrangements (AAA) through more effective monitoring to establish non-use of AAA's, provide exam information for lecturing staff and improve the learner consent process.	Develop a revised internal exam procedure regarding the implementation and monitoring of Alternative Assessment Arrangements. Provision of AAA exam information to lecturing staff. Develop new AAA consent letter for under-16s.	Learning Support Officer	September 2018	Data base was piloted in 17/18 which allowed monitoring of the use / non-use of AAA's. In session 18/19 – revise data base and implement new procedures regarding AAA's.