



Higher Education Learning, Teaching and Assessment Strategy

2016-2018

CONTENTS	PAGE
1. CONTEXT	3
2. UNDERPINNING PRINCIPLES	3
3. HE LEARNING, TEACHING AND ASSESSMENT STRATEGY	3
3.1 Aims	4
3.2 Objectives	4
3.3 Key outcomes	5
4. STRATEGIC THEMES	6
4.1 Student engagement and empowering the learner	6
4.2 Assessment for learning	7
4.3 Supporting student success	7
4.3.1 Student 'learner journey' approach: transition interventions	7
4.3.2 Identifying students at risk and providing support	7
4.3.3 Personal Development Planning (PDP) for students and the Higher Education Achievement Record (HEAR)	8
4.4 Academic excellence in learning and teaching	8
4.4.1 Developing a learning and teaching community	8
4.4.2 Academic professional development	8
5. REFERENCES	9

1. CONTEXT

As a widening participation college with a diverse student body, Bolton College is one of the most socially inclusive further education Institutions in England. We have a long tradition and commitment to access and widening participation. Our student body is diverse and most come to us with non-traditional entry qualifications and from non-traditional entry backgrounds.

Bolton College HE provision has many challenges including, student attrition, student engagement, (especially if they are part time students with work and family commitments), and non-traditional entry students who have the opportunity to access Higher Education.

It is against this Institutional context that the learning, teaching and assessment strategy has been developed to transform and enhance our learning and teaching environment by focussing on student success and student engagement.

This document complements the wider college teaching, learning and assessment strategy, with additional objectives that fulfil the requirements and indicators of the QAA Quality Code, and the HEA learning, teaching and assessment initiatives.

2. UNDERPINNING PRINCIPLES

The key to the development and implementation of any learning, teaching and assessment strategy is ensuring that we develop, implement, monitor and are assured, that we are offering the best possible student learning experience for all our students which support all students to reach their full potential and become confident independent lifelong learners.

It is critical that Bolton College implements a HE learning, teaching and assessment strategy that is transformational, motivational and meaningful to both students and staff and places the student at the heart of the strategy.

Bolton College HE learning, teaching and assessment strategy will serve to focus our thinking towards developing a culture which: engages students both individually and collectively as partners to enhance their learning and the learning environment ; inspires students to participate in active learning and embraces student success within the context of a widening participation and inclusive College.

We will need be clear about what we are offering and communicate this to our students and manage their expectations. We will seek to develop a culture of partnership with our students, engender a community atmosphere and provide a nurturing environment which enables them to become fully engaged with the HE aspect of the College and become confident and independent lifelong learners.

3. HE LEARNING, TEACHING AND ASSESSMENT STRATEGY

The learning, teaching and assessment strategy aims to enhance the student learning experience through quality enhancement in learning and teaching and through supporting and developing tutors in the scholarship and practice of teaching and learning.

The strategy will serve to challenge and to raise the expectation of both staff and students in the quality of learning and teaching; and will reinforce a continuous improvement agenda.

3.1 AIMS

Bolton College HE Learning, Teaching and Assessment Strategy will aim to:

Provide a high quality learning experience that values students as active partners in learning, supports student success and develops academic excellence in learning and teaching.

3.2 OBJECTIVES

The learning, teaching and assessment strategic key objectives are:

To develop and create a culture of partnership and mutual respect between staff and students in the learning experience by:

- providing opportunities for students to be more engaged and be able to influence and shape the learning environment and education experience
- developing new and improving existing student feedback mechanisms and approaches, which will serve to inform the enhancement of the learning experience
- developing a new programme of initiatives and activities which support student engagement and student empowerment in the learning experience
- engaging students in an annual review of the student charter and being explicit in managing student expectations which informs what it means to study at Bolton College

To support students and student success throughout their period of study through a student life cycle approach by:

- developing management information systems which identify students who are 'at risk' and putting clear procedures in place which determines actions for follow up and intervention
- further developing a student induction model / framework that includes academic/social integration actions that continue throughout the first year and subsequent years of study
- further developing 'transition interventions' which aim to support students achieving success, at points across the years of study, where it is recognised that students may be feeling most vulnerable and lacking in confidence in their academic ability/attainment
- further embedding Personal Development Planning for students within all courses and developing the Higher Education Achievement Record (HEAR) for students

To develop curriculum design and assessment which is inspiring, relevant and practical by:

- developing and implementing a portfolio of a HE curriculum which embeds the Bolton College vision and values of: employability and professional development, environmental sustainability and social and ethical responsibility

- developing an approach to assessment which emphasises ‘assessment for learning ‘ with formative assessment and constructive assessment feedback being at the heart of the learning experience
- developing innovative flexible methods of delivery and the increased use of technology enabled learning

To engender a learning and teaching professional development culture where all staff whose role is supporting HE learning are committed to the enhancement and development of their learning and teaching practice and their own on-going professional development by:

- developing a culture that enables staff to engage with the UK Professional Standards Framework (UKPSF) in teaching and supporting learning and is recognised by the Higher Education Academy (HEA)
- strengthening a culture that enables staff to engage in continuing professional development via in-house staff development activities
- strengthening and embedding sharing good practice activities in annual and quarterly staff development activities

3.3 KEY OUTCOMES

Key Outcomes:

- A revised HE ‘learner journey’ framework which informs Induction and transition interventions to support student success
- A strengthened ‘student engagement’ framework with a planned scheme of initiatives and activities to support student engagement and empowerment in the learning experience
- A strengthened HE personal development planning framework for students
- A strengthened professional peer review of practice procedure that includes peer observation, and peer sharing
- A strengthened personal tutoring procedure to support the enhancement of the role of the personal tutor in supporting students at risk, and student engagement and feedback events
- A revised attendance and monitoring procedure to support the student life cycle
- Increased use of innovative blended learning approaches to teaching, learning and assessment

Key performance indicators:

- Improved student attrition rates and student success/ attainment: e.g. retention, ‘drop-out’ rates, achievement indicators
- Improved National Student Survey (NSS) and other internal student satisfaction survey results

- Improved employability and progression results

4. STRATEGIC THEMES:

The learning, teaching and assessment strategy has been divided into four themes which have been identified as key priorities of the Strategy to provide further clarity and focus. These four Key themes are:

- Student engagement and empowering the learner
- Assessment for learning
- Supporting student success
- Academic excellence in learning, teaching and assessment

4.1 STUDENT ENGAGEMENT AND EMPOWERING THE LEARNER

Bolton College HE Learning, Teaching and Assessment Strategy aims to create a learning experience that is transformational through encouraging students to be more active in all aspects of their learning experience and empowering them to have an influence and shape developments and aspects of the student learning experience.

We will develop a partnership, mutuality between students and staff; we will take deliberate steps to engage students, both individually and collectively as partners to enhance their learning experience. We want to develop a community where students have a sense of belonging.

We will proactively seek student feedback and participation in both national and internal student satisfaction surveys which will inform the enhancement of the learning experience. We will ensure that we communicate the outcomes to students and report on the actions which have been taken and how the student feedback has led to enhancements in teaching and learning.

We aim to further strengthen student engagement and empowerment by developing student engagement opportunities outside of the existing course committee, review panels, and college forum (e.g. HE Student Forum, HE validations; providing student reps want to attend).

We will provide structured, flexible and regular opportunities for student feedback which will include 'face to face' and technology assisted processes e.g. a student engagement and feedback start of course feedback via the formal student induction process, module evaluations, course end of year survey; a HE Moodle student forum; career events; regular one-to-one personal tutorials; and an annual 'you said, we did' publicity event.

In developing the opportunities/mechanisms above this will serve to create a culture that promotes and supports student engagement, develops students to be active partners in the learning experience (not just passive learners), and provide opportunities for students to influence their learning environment.

4.2 ASSESSMENT FOR LEARNING

The learning, teaching and assessment strategy will encourage learning and teaching practice which is inspiring, relevant and practical.

All types of learning must be appropriately and formally assessed and it is important that the summative assessments are designed to test whether the particular learning outcomes have been achieved. However, assessment strategies that have an emphasis on supporting student learning, as well as measuring achievement of academic standards can improve the student learning experience and student success.

The learning, teaching and assessment strategy wishes to emphasise the value of ‘assessment **for** learning’, as emphasised by the HEA. We will expect all HE courses to adopt learning, teaching and assessment strategies and for tutors to demonstrate practice, which embrace and evidence this approach.

Emphasis will be placed on formative assessment, innovative and creative assessment design which, inspires challenges and motivates the learner to fully engage with the learning opportunities presented through assessment and not to take a wholly ‘utilitarian’ approach to assessment.

Students will be encouraged to understand, recognise and value the learning that takes place in undertaking all forms of assessment and will be provided with clear guidance in relation to meeting the assessment criteria and the grading of assessments.

We aim to encourage assessment design which best guards against opportunities for student malpractice and develop mechanisms that support the authentication of a student’s work.

Assessment feedback is critical to the development of an ‘assessment for learning’ approach and all feedback will be timely and provide a basis for constructive feedback and guidance to further inform the expectations for student achievement and success.

Diverse forms of formative and summative assessment feedback methods will be expected to be employed across the programme / module e.g. initial verbal group feedback, individual tutorial feedback opportunities, written feedback which includes academic advice on how the student could further enhance their attainment in subsequent assessment submissions.

4.3 SUPPORTING STUDENT SUCCESS

4.3.1 Student ‘Learner Journey’ Approach: Transition Interventions

We will support our students throughout their study and develop ‘transition interventions’ which aim to support students for achieving success at points across the years of study, when they may feel most vulnerable and may experience a lack of confidence in their academic attainment.

Adopting a ‘learner journey’ approach, and pre-entry engagement / interventions will be designed to ensure that new students fully appreciate the demands of studying a HE course before enrolment e.g. Invitations for applicants to visit the college and speak with course leader and staff to gain information and receive advice; student induction programme designed to familiarise students with the college and the course; current student peer links; personal tutor meetings; learning materials on line; clear aims and objectives for being successful in assessments.

Diagnostic approaches will be adopted to identify academic/study skills ability and support put in place at an early stage of the learner journey life cycle; this will be part of the induction process.

The induction process will be reviewed and developed to reflect a HE student learning journey intervention model. ‘Orientation/Induction’ processes will continue throughout the first year with further induction interventions taking place (where relevant), in the second year of study. The principles underpinning the Induction cycle will be to: aim to inform, support and prepare students for the next stage of study, so that they feel supported, confident and prepared to continue with their learning journey.

4.3.2 Identifying students at risk and providing support

Staff will monitor students who may be ‘at risk’ from success in their studies e.g. non-attendance of classes and work-based experience, lack of engagement with HE Moodle, and learning resources placed on HE Moodle, non-submission of assessments, low achievement in summative assessment.

It is necessary to develop an approach which supports students who have been identified at risk and to take action/make the necessary interventions. This may be undertaken by the personal tutor /module tutor/ or another, and each course leader will take measures, to state clearly in the student programme handbook, how they will support students' who are having difficulties in their studies.

4.3.3 Personal Development Planning for students (PDP) and the Higher Education Achievement Record (HEAR)

Through the learning, teaching and assessment strategy we will aim to build into each course PDP for each student that includes support from a named tutor who will focus on the student's personal development.

We will embrace and introduce the opportunity for students to undertake the HEAR which recognises student academic achievements and extra curricula activity. HEAR development will take place during the HE Learning, Teaching and Enhancement Group meetings.

4.4 ACADEMIC EXCELLENCE IN LEARNING AND TEACHING

4.4.1 Developing our learning and teaching community

The learning, teaching and assessment strategy will seek to strive for excellence and innovation in learning and teaching. We will develop our learning and teaching community of practice and enquiry across the HE provision which engages with innovation and research to inform teaching practice. We will provide opportunities for sharing best practice in learning and teaching and highlight new and innovative ways to engage and meet the diverse needs of students.

This will be achieved through: Staff development workshops and activities that include the sharing of good practice and innovation; and a learning, teaching and assessment forum, via the He Learning, Teaching and Enhancement Group, for all staff who deliver HE courses and modules. Staff will be encouraged to take advantage of any learning and teaching staff development opportunities in-house or at partner institutions and HEA conferences.

4.4.2 Academic Professional Development

We aim to engender a learning and teaching professional development culture where all staff whose role is supporting learning are committed to the enhancement and development of their learning and teaching practice and their own on-going professional development.

All staff who teach on HE courses will be expected to have a teaching qualification and we expect those staff that do not to undertake a teaching qualification.

We will enhance the college peer observation process via the HE Learning, Teaching and Enhancement Group forum and sharing of good practice.

We will introduce, via staff development workshops, opportunities for staff to share pedagogic research and / or discipline-based research that informs their teaching and learning; and to keep abreast of developments related to the college HE provision (e.g. strategies, policies, procedures).

We will support HE tutors to submit a portfolio to the HEA in order to gain Fellowship of the HEA.

5 REFERENCES

- Higher education indicators for further education colleges: Overview of trends for the widening participation, non-continuation and employment indicators, HEFCE, February 2016/01 Issues Paper;
- UK QAA Quality Code for Higher Education;
- Higher Education Academy (HEA): various HEA framework series documents: embedding employability, student engagement through partnership, student access, retention, attainment and progression in HE, flexible learning in HE;
- HEFCE publications (various);
- National Student Survey 2016;
- UK Professional Standards Framework in Teaching and Supporting Learning in Higher Education;
- Department for Business Innovation and Skills, White Paper, Higher Education ‘Students at the Heart of the System’ (June 2011);
- QAA ‘Teaching and Learning: What students are saying’ report (8.03.12)
- BIS Gov.: Student Charter Group, Final report Jan 2012,

Area	Higher Education
Prepared by	Lesley Groom
Approved by	Quality Unit
Last Updated	July 2016
Next Review Date	July 2018