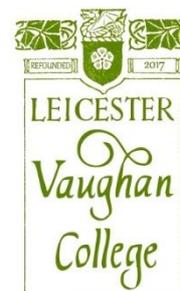


Access and Participation Statement 2021-2022



Background

Leicester Vaughan College (LVC) is a Community Benefit Society [a form of co-operative] which is dedicated to the provision of education for adult learners and has **access, success and progression** of non-traditional learner as its central aim. This aim is enshrined in the Objects of our Society:

The objects of the Society shall be to carry on any business for the benefit of the community by providing flexible, university-level education which is aimed primarily at mature students.

As a college dedicated to adult education college, we welcome students over the age of 18 years who wish to pursue part-time study, however our primary focus is on those 21 or above, which are referred to as mature students. These mature students will be the substantial majority of our intake, and such meet several of the categories of students who require improved access to succeed at HE level, for example: carers, students with mental health issues, students with learning differences, and students from low-income households.

Our objects links to the economic imperative of widening participation and lifelong learning. Adult education is a crucial resource for learners and has a positive impact on the labour market. With longer life expectancy and a later retirement age, there is an urgent requirement for more adults to be economically and educationally active for longer than in previous generations. However, LVC recognises that adult learning is highly important in terms of personal development and confidence building, as well as for career development.

LVC builds on a long tradition of adult education within Leicester and its region, continuing the work of the former Vaughan College (1862- 2013). The latter offered HE level education with a focus on counselling, arts and humanities courses. The College also seeks to deliver new subject areas which are critical for up-skilling the Leicester workforce.

LVC's flexible modes of delivery are manifested in our part-time degree courses which are designed for those who working and/or with caring responsibilities to access higher education. In addition, as a small college, we offer our students more individual academic and

pastoral support. The latter is enhanced by our co-operative approach to teaching and learning.

LVC works in partnership with Leicester City Council's Adult Learning Service and teaches at the Council's Adult Education College in Leicester city centre. The location of the LVC within the Adult Education College enables students to progress from basic skills through levels 2 and 3 and onto BA and MA level courses all in one building. Moreover, it is accessible in terms of location easily reaches via public transport networks.

As LVC has not yet started to deliver its degree programme, it does not have data that relates to recruitment, success, and progression of its students.

Part 1: Access, Success and Progression for Mature, Part-time Learners

1.1 Access

LVC seeks to provide access for mature students in five keys ways:

1. Part-time learning
2. Open access programmes
3. Second chance study
4. Lower fees
5. Predictable timetabling

Part-time learning

LVC's aims to widen participation and access for mature learners through the provision of part-time study. Both part-time and mature students' participation in degree-level study has declined since 2012. The decline of part-time students has been particularly severe at 61% which has had a disproportionate impact on mature students. Mature students are more likely to have dependents and be carers and therefore require part time courses.

Many adult learners experience mental health difficulties. Part-time study offers those students who suffer from anxiety to complete degrees at less stressful rate of study.

Open access

LVC is an open access college and thus aims to contribute positively to the diverse cultural, social and economic lives and employability of those who have no, or limited experience of higher education. Consequently, traditional qualifications such as A levels or access courses are not required to begin our degree-level courses. Mature learners have the opportunity to achieve qualifications for which they were unable to study when younger while in full-time employment. Such students often come to university education later in life due to learning

differences which were not identified at school. Open access courses offer a chance to demonstrate reveal hidden capabilities for HE level study.

A second chance

Many mature students seek to return to study after illness, both physical and mental, which prevented the completion of previous degree programmes. LVC provides them with a second chance to study for a degree programme which recognises their prior learning. Students with accredited prior learning at degree level can start at different levels of our programmes which are designed to provide a fully-supported experience for new intakes at various stages of the course.

Fees

Prohibitive fees deter many mature students from university-level study and a high percentage of those that do study report financial hardship. LVC, by setting its fees lower than those in the market for undergraduate degrees, aims to reduce the debt which students face on completing their degree. This commitment is reflected by the fact that College, as a co-operative, is structured so that academic decisions regarding students are made by those teaching them in consultation with the students themselves.

Predictable timetabling

The College seeks to make higher education accessible to these groups by timetabling classes to be accessible to part-time students with caring responsibilities or in full-time work. Timetables are set well in advance, generally taking place on a fixed evening throughout the year. This means that students will not lose income when they become a student and can plan childcare. Predictable timetabling also makes LVC accessible to younger students who may wish to earn while they learn, thereby gaining valuable work experience while reducing student debt.

Timetables also take into account the major religious festivals of area; institutions' failure to account for these can make Black, ethnic minority and Asian students feel excluded. We aim to avoid timetabling examinations during Ramadan or on key religions festivals in particular Eid al-Fitr, Eid al-Adha, Diwali and Vaisakhi to reduce this barrier. Whenever possible, we also avoid classes on major festivals. Where this is unavoidable due to timetabling pressures, students are permitted to miss classes without it be recorded as an official absence and are offered alternative support sessions with tutors.

1.2 Success

Retention rates among all types of adult learners are traditionally around 5% lower for mature students at the rate of 12% of students not continuing to finish their degree programme. LVC aims to offer a learning experience which is tailored for mature and part-time learners, addressing some of the key problems that results in their non-continuation. These are:

1. fostering a sense of belonging through an institutional co-operative structure, collegiality, and peer-support;
2. providing study support and pastoral care delivered by tutors who are specialised in teaching mature students at degree level;
3. fostering active learning among students through a principal of co-production so that they have greater investment in their studies;
4. the slower pace of part-time study enables Open Access students to acquire the necessary academic skills for successful completion of their course.

Fostering a sense of belonging is highly important for the retention of adult learners. Mature and part-time students report feeling isolated and disengaged from the rest of their university community. For students who study in departments with small numbers of mature students, this is particularly the case as they experience 'double exclusion' because they have no one with which to share this isolating experience. Mature students also feel excluded from the wider university as many regulations are made without consideration of their needs. LVC designs *all* its procedures and policies to support mature and part-time learners so that mature learners are not 'shoe-horned' to fit inappropriate regulations intended to meet the needs of full-time, young undergraduates.

The activities and academic support which are in place to foster students through their studies are explained in detail in Part 3 of this document.

1.3 Progression

Our programmes are designed to have exit awards at each level: students start with certificates, progress to diplomas and onto degrees. This is because for mature students signing up to a full-time degree programme can be daunting, while for open access students, without level 3 qualifications, a degree needs to be taken one step at a time: it is important not to set up students for failure. Some students consider the HE Certificate [NQF level 4/HE level 1] a goal in itself and we ensure that student-achievement is fully acknowledged by awarding classifications rather than a pass/fail and through award celebrations.

Our partnership with Leicester Adult Skills and Learning Service provides an opportunity for progression from levels 2 and 3 to the level 4. Developing this relationship is one of our aims, as we explain further below in Part 2 of this document.

Progression is also offered on completion of the degree programme. Our MRes in Histories and Cultures provides a route to postgraduate study for those interested in liberal arts subjects.

The pastoral care and study guidance are important not just for retaining students but for enabling their progression to a higher qualification. College staff are qualified to understand the particular problems of mature students because they are experts in both adult education pedagogy and curriculum design. Moreover, because of the small number of students, LVC can offer its students more specialist and individualised help to enable them to progress. Collegiality and peer support is also highly important for progression: fellow students are often highly effective in encouraging their peers to progress to the next level.

2. Ambitions and Strategy

LVC has identified three priorities for its first year of accredited programmes:

1. integrate Co-operative Values and Identity into all aspects of college life;
2. build community links with Leicester with the aim to ensure that LVC students reflect the racial and cultural diversity of Leicester and Leicestershire's population;
3. recruit male students on the Counselling programme.

2.1 Integration of Co-operative Values

Co-operation is a global social movement. The common-place across over one billion members is the International Co-operative Alliance's Statement on Co-operative Identity (1995).

- This defines a co-operative as 'autonomous association of persons united voluntarily to meet their common economic, social, and cultural needs and aspirations through a jointly owned and democratically-controlled enterprise.'
- It identifies the shared values of 'self-help, self-responsibility, democracy, equality, equity, and solidarity'.
- It outlines a set of co-operative principles to apply these values in co-operative life:
 1. Voluntary and Open Membership;
 2. Democratic Member Control;
 3. Member Economic Participation;
 4. Autonomy and Independence;
 5. Education, Training, and Information;
 6. Co-operation among Co-operatives;
 7. Concern for Community.

Strategies for integration of co-operative values

1. Co-operative Identity will sit at the heart of our learning community.
2. An engaged membership is central to successful co-operation.
3. The co-operative itself is a valuable site of learning. It allows students to have meaningful control over the design of their learning and the institution in which it takes place.

4. By fostering a sense of ownership and participation, we aim to support retention. It is hoped too, in a longer timeframe than this statement permits, to aid recruitment to higher-level programmes and to foster a sense of permanent collegiality, lasting long after graduation.
5. Co-operative pedagogies and learning spaces are configured to be responsive and engaging. Engaged students, participating as members, and being responded to as learners, will be more likely to articulate their needs in a context where they can be met. In turn, then, this will lead to retention and success.
6. Moreover, co-operative approaches in the classroom respects diverse knowledges and lived experiences, a particularly fertile area with mature learners, which again supports engagement and therefore retention and success.
7. LVC will continue to integrate into the co-operative movement, building links with other co-operatives, aiming to help other co-operatives meet their obligations under the fifth principle to education, and to seek to recruit students through these channels.
8. A key task will be framing student induction around understanding what it is to be learning in an education co-operative, what it means to be a member, and fostering a collegiate culture, especially at the start.
 - a. An all-programmes Saturday induction will orient students in all the conventional ways, but also membership and about co-operative learning.
 - b. The value of the rich experience as a co-operator will be stressed, pointing the transferrable and personal skills gained.

Measuring success

We will measure numbers of students participating in the various fora open to them within LVC. As well as overall engagement, we will use this to benchmark in the future. Feedback from students will ask questions specifically in relation to this.

2.2. Building Community Links within Leicester, Leicestershire, and the region to reach a wide range of mature students

LVC exists for students from a diverse range of backgrounds. The College's ambition is that its student body reflects communities of the city, which is 55% non-white British, and the county and region. LVC sees this as helping to build a vibrant College culture where different communities can learn from each other. In 2021-2022 it will work to do this by building links across the city and neighbouring areas.

Strategies for developing community relationships

LVC will appoint a marketing and projects officer whose aims are to:

- Build and establish links to community groups across the city and its neighbouring areas, especially those which are connected to the Black, Asian and ethnic minority communities.
- Make targeted interventions to connect to communities with lower progression to HE, such as through schools, colleges, Multi Academy Trusts. This will entail connecting with staff development and student careers officers in local schools and colleges, to reach both staff (such as classroom assistants) and students who want to study at a slower pace.
- Build links with staff development officers in local co-operative societies and connect with other work-based organisations which promote education, such as Union Learn.

LVC will continue to work with the Leicester Adult Skills and Learning Service [LASALS] to provide a progression route which starts at the Adult Education College with basic skills and progress through each level until they achieve a degree or an MA. This will involve:

- participating in LASALS open days;
- connecting with LASALS access students.

Measuring success

Success will be measured by the number of working relationships and contacts made with other organisations and institutions. It will also be measured by the number of attendees at open events/days. Further, and more importantly, measurements of success will be the extent of diversity in the students recruited in 2022-2025 (bearing in mind adult learners spend longer taking the decision to study). Success in future years will be assessed via recruitment, progression and completion rates of non-white British students.

2.3. Attract male students to start and complete counselling qualifications

The counselling profession is largely dominated by practitioners who identify as female. This is at a ratio of around five females compared to one male across all forms of registered psychologists. Against this is the fact that, although the suicide rate among men is higher than for women and they are more likely to become homeless as a result of mental health problems, men far less likely to seek counselling to deal with mental health issues. The counselling profession is increasingly under pressure with mental health becoming an increasing health concern within the UK and worldwide.

Strategies for recruitment

During 2021-2022, LVC will seek to increase the numbers of male counselling students by:

- Offering free taster sessions men in parallel with free taster sessions for women, though there will be no separation of teaching during the course
- Producing targeted information, advice and guidance that seeks to dispel myths around what counselling is as profession: this information will explain career options

and outline the benefits of counselling as a career, including being a self-employed counsellor

- Running focus groups to discuss barriers to the profession for men
- Work with local counselling organisations to make the timing of placements more accessible for those who need to work full time
- Work with the membership to develop a fund to give financial support for counselling students to pay for their placements and clinical supervision.

Measurements of success

Recruitment, retention/progression and completion: Success of this strategy will be measured initially by the number attending taster sessions followed by the number recruited to counselling degree-level programmes. Although attendees at the taster sessions may not have joined a degree programme, it should be recognised that mature students, due to family and other commitments, will not necessarily make an immediate career change. Success in future years will be measured by increases in male recruitment, retention and completion rates as well interest in taster sessions.

3. Activities and Support for Students

LVC provides an environment which seeks through the following activities and support to make HE education more accessible to adult learners and to enable these students to be successful in their studies.

3.1 Co-operative learning

Co-operative learning plays an important part in the ethos of LVC. In addition to offering students valuable co-operative skills, it aims to increase student retention and success by giving them greater control over their learning environment. It does this in a variety of offering academic and pastoral support on a number of levels.

Active and participatory learning

Active learning starts with the needs and interests of those studying as well as teaching and provides students with the opportunity to direct elements of their learning experience. Participatory learning recognised that knowledge is shared and generated through collaborative as well as individual learning; prior skills, knowledge and non-academic experiences are valued. There is greater opportunity to research topics which interest them and they can share existing knowledge which helps to build confidence and self-worth.

Representative curriculum

A representative curriculum addresses the alternative viewpoints of seeing the world, such as the experience of indigenous communities and a decolonial approach to study. This helps student engagement, especially students from communities who have often been excluded

by the traditional curriculum. It has helps to develop greater understanding of the life experiences of different communities.

Non-competitive learning

Non-competitive encourages students and tutors work together to provide a supportive experience throughout the learning journey. This also helps to foster collegiality and peer-support (see 3.2).

An engaged community

In order to ensure that students are 'co-producers of knowledge and success', LVC has student representation at all levels of the running of the institution. There are student representatives at Board of Studies, Academic Committee and alumni/student representative on the Board of Directors. There is also a College Student Forum, for students only. At institutional level, there are allocated places on the Board of Directors for except the Staff Forum. Students also have their own Student Forum which is open to all students.

As LVC is a community benefit society, a form of co-operative, students can become members. Membership of the society means that they can vote for all the Board of Directors; non-member students can only vote for the student representatives on the Board. Member students can also vote for, and put forward, proposals at general meetings of the Society.

3.2 Collegiality and peer-support

Collegiality and peer-support are extremely important for retention rates with cohort support playing as significant role for student progression and completion. This collegiality is fostered through face-to-face teaching which provides a collaborative learning environment among staff and students who work together to 'get everyone through'. Small group teaching (see 3.5) means that teaching and learning is experienced by both tutors and students during class time, with mature learners bringing a wealth of experiences to class.

Once the student body is established, peer mentoring will provide additional support with pairs of continuing students supporting pairs or groups of new students.

3.3 Study guidance

This is at the core of the College and an important part of the learning experience offered by the College. The specific needs of part-time learners in terms of their other commitments, academic anxieties and lack of confidence are built into all levels of the College structure:

- Study skills are written into programmes and modules and tailored towards to the disciplines being studied.
- Additional discipline-specific sections are offered to students.
- One to one support will be provided by personal tutors and module tutors.

- Tutors recognise that different students require different levels of support and both tutors and student cohorts work together to 'get everyone through'.

3.4 Tutors experienced in teaching adults

Many of LVC's tutors have worked in other adult education departments or institutions and are adult education specialists. Staff are aware of the particular problems which mature and part-time students experience on returning to study and understand the importance of encouraging and supporting student from the early stages of their degrees. Feedback for assignments reflects this.

Many adult learners discontinued their education after school often due to unidentified learning differences. LVC tutors are used to working with cohorts of students who have range of learning differences and will make all reasonable adjustments in their teaching to provide them with the support they need to complete their studies. Specialist one to one support for those with a Disabled Students Allowance, will be externally provided so that students have access to the particular support they require.

3.4 Small group teaching

Teaching is tailored towards the different needs of mature students and is in small (c. 20) or very small (c. 5) groups rather than the more traditional lecture and seminar format. This format enables students with lower confidence, often the result of being out education over a longer period or due to learning differences, to participate. Moreover, the interactive nature of small group teaching encourages more engaged students as sessions are more dynamic than traditional lecture format. Small groups also enable tutors to provide more detailed feedback on assignments which again is tailored for different students according to their needs.

3.5 Appropriate support for mature and part-time students

Regulations in universities which are dominated by younger undergraduates (that is mainly 18-21) focus their regulations and policies around these more 'traditional' learners. LVC staff understand the different life situations of mature and part-time students. For example, mature students are more likely to face problems which affect their ability to submit work and need sympathetic treatment in what can often be highly distressing circumstances. LVC permits the awarding of extensions by tutors in specific circumstances for a period of up to two weeks. After this point, student can ask for special circumstances to be taken into account for a further extension.

3.6 Student Advocate.

This is a member of staff whose role is to provide students with welfare support and pastoral care. The Student Advocate has access to knowledge and advice about aspects of the

employment and welfare system. They will encourage students to seek specialist support, if required, and represent their perspective to relevant College bodies if this is necessary.

3.7 Employment and further study

Our approach to supporting employability and career developments is grounded in the nurturing ethos we have.

- Students will primarily access careers advice through their personal tutor, but may also approach the Student Advocate for support.
- Some courses have particular employability dimensions.
 - Our Counselling Placements Tutor supports counselling students in finding their placements.
 - The MRes in Histories and Cultures has various design features to appeal to those seeking employment in heritage and related sectors.
- In all cases, College staff work with students to help them progress to further study and training courses, such as PGCEs. We offer advice, write references and support them in their job applications and writing CVs.
- Through our various partners we encourage our students to access other career sources. This includes any franchise partners resources which can be accessed remotely. Our partnership with LASALS, points students well to access careers advice and job-focused skills.
- Fundamentally, our co-operative nature means that we will engage with students through the various channels which are open, especially the student forum, to identify particular needs. For example, with mature students, employability may not always be appropriate; courses on easing into retiring might be more helpful for some.

An individual approach combined with our small scale means we will seek to meet all needs.

4 Making this statement available to staff, students and members

This statement will be available on our website as both an edited version and in full. Students are also informed where they can read it:

- On the application form
- In their offer letter
- When they register

Staff are informed via the Staff handbook.

Community Benefit Society Members are informed via:

- The Society's application form
- The members' pages of the website

5 Evaluating our activity

We will evaluate activity to see if it is effective in achieving aims through:

- **Feedback from the student delegates** to various committees, and from the Student Forum which demonstrates that students feel that they are experiencing a positive learning environment in which their recommendations and concerns are acted upon wherever possible
- **Recruitment of students** especially that of those students who have been identified as key targets by the college. The number of students who move from Leicester City Council's Adult Skills and Learning Service to LVC and the rate at which this occurs will also be an important measure of success
- **Retention** rates which demonstrate that students feel supported through their degree programmes and remain with the College to complete their degrees
- **Progression** to higher qualifications both within the College and to further study which demonstrates that students have acquired confidence as mature students as well as gaining skills relevant in the workplace.

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