



Access and Participation Statement

Introduction

Mattersey Hall College was founded in 1909. It moved to its current location in the village of Mattersey, in 1973. The College is wholly owned by Assemblies of God Inc. with whom it shares the campus. The denomination has around 600 assemblies served by 1,200 accredited ministers. Around half of our annual undergraduate intake is from within Assemblies of God. This means, too, that a significant proportion has other denominational affiliations. Our admissions policy also has provision for applications from students with non-Church backgrounds who are sympathetic to the ethos of the College.

We currently offer degree programmes validated by the University of Chester. These are: a BA in Biblical Studies and Theology, a one-year Graduate Diploma in Theological Studies, MAs in Missional Leadership, Practical Theology and Biblical Studies, a Doctor of Ministry and an MPhil/PhD programme.

Our aims

This statement sets out two key aims of the College.

First, Mattersey Hall College is committed to widening access to, and participation in, Higher Education (HE). This entails making the possibility of involvement in HE more widely known, increasing availability and removing potential barriers to study. This has two main aspects: promoting HE and encouraging the idea of study on an HE programme among those who would not otherwise think about, consider themselves suitably qualified to apply for, or feel able to complete such a programme; and ensuring equality of access to HE across age, gender, ethnicity, social and educational background, and disability.

Second, we are committed to work with those who study with us in order to enhance their potential for employment.

Widening access and participation

We encourage wider participation through our involvement with groups and organisations outside the usual HE forum. This includes having staff and faculty members speak to churches and conferences, both within our immediate constituency (Assemblies of God)

and within other church groups. This raises the profile of pursuing further training and continuing professional development through appropriate academic programmes. A significant number of our current students have come to Mattersey through this means. Most current students at Mattersey Hall are also involved with churches as part of their course, and this, too, raises the profile of the College and of academic study among a wider audience. Former students also publicise the College and we have recently had applications from clients who have been helped by homeless projects, supported by former students.

Students are involved in Church Placements, most weekends. This involves them in church initiatives to the wider community, which contributes more generally to the public good. Their presence within the community also makes HE more visible by providing a positive model to those who might not otherwise come into contact with HE, or consider it as an option. Annual Missions Trips, some of which are within the UK, likewise, enable students to become involved in community projects, and also raise the profile of HE.

It is planned that significant part of our advertising budget (currently £10,000 per annum) will be used to attend churches, conferences and other points of contact, where HE might not normally be on the agenda, in order to promote both the benefits of HE more generally, and the HE provision offered by the College.

Whilst we encourage excellence in our academic standards, we are willing to admit mature undergraduate students, who may not have formal Level 3 qualifications, but who show, through conversations at interview and the submission of an essay, that they have the potential to complete the programme. The current overall level of students at Mattersey Hall without formal entry-level qualifications is 38%. Several students come with no academic qualifications at all. In 2017–18, 31% of Level 4 students entered Mattersey Hall without Level 3 qualifications, and all went on to achieve grades of over 50% at the end of Level 4, with a third achieving grades of over 60%. Continuation rates among full-time students is almost 90% according to our most recent TEF metrics. There is no noticeable difference in continuation rates between those with and without Level 3 qualifications on entry. In 2018, of those who graduated with an honours degree, 30% had entered College with Non-tariff qualifications, and of those, 80% of those attained a second-class degree or above, with 60% attaining a 2.1.

There is also provision for MA applicants without formal qualifications to enrol on the basis of appropriate church and leadership experience.

We are committed to widening access and participation across age groups. The proportion of mature students at Mattersey Hall is significant: 62% of our current students are aged over 21 and 41% are over 30. This percentage is reflected in the 2017–18 cohort, where 23% were over 40 on entry, and 10% were over 50. It is clear that those who have not studied for many years find the programmes more challenging. Nevertheless, an analysis of

data over the last few years shows that over 70% of those aged 40 and above on entry achieved grades of above 50%. Of those who graduated in 2018, 35% were over 40, and half of those were over 50.

We also seek to widen access and participation by keeping our tuition fees at a low level. Fees for our BA programme in 2019–20 are currently set at £6950, and these are among the lowest in the sector. There is a substantial dependence among our students on student finance. All eligible students apply for student finance, and a significant proportion of full-time on-campus students receive higher levels of maintenance. Of our current students, 19% are from the lowest undergraduate participation areas (POLAR quintile 1), which is substantially higher than the national figure of 10%. By contrast, only 10% are from the highest participation areas (POLAR quintile 5), and this is very much lower than the 34% national figure. To help students not in receipt of student finance small bursaries may be available. We believe, however, that the best way to help current and potential students is to keep fees low and that means that the opportunity to provide bursaries is very limited.

Amongst current students at Mattersey Hall, 32% are from Black and Ethnic Minority groups, while 68% are White British. We very much appreciate the ethnic and cultural mix of students. There is no significant difference in the overall levels of performance of different ethnic groups. In 2018, 47% of graduating students were from Black and Ethnic Minority groups.

Potential students are made aware of what is involved in pursuing a degree programme. Those who are thinking about taking a HE course with us are invited to a ‘Taster Day’, where, over a two-day period, they have a tour of the College, talk to current students and sample something of student life, including a sample lecture. The subsequent application process includes a formal interview, in which information about the programmes of study, and practical issues relating to it are discussed, and options for overcoming potential difficulties are considered. There is also a programme of induction that helps students to be aware of the responsibilities of participating in a HE programme.

Most of our students enrol on a full-time, campus-based programme. This includes teaching, but also wider personal and spiritual formation, through campus-based activities. We realise, though, that this is not possible for all students, and we offer several variations, including a part-time campus-based programme and full- and part-time Distance Learning options. In recent years, numbers on the Distance Learning programmes have grown. This provides access to HE provision to students who would not, otherwise, be able, often for practical reasons, to study for a degree. We are currently working on enhancing our Distance Learning provision, through better access to key

resources, audio and video files of on-site teaching, and increased direct engagement with students via VLE.

We also have adapted the delivery of our Level 4 modules and made them available to the wider public as ‘short-courses’, in which visitors sit in lectures alongside our undergraduate students. These short courses are not validated, but they introduce a wider audience to the possibility of engaging in academic learning, and so, again help to widen access and participation.

Widening access involves, too, offering appropriate student support, in order to secure progression and successful completion of their programme of study. Students receive pastoral support from the Pastoral Team (headed up by the College Dean), through mentoring groups led by members of staff, and through the general availability of members of faculty and staff. Academic support takes the form of study skills sessions, substantial help from the Research Centre manager and open-door access to the academic team. We will seek to work with students to resolve issues that may arise with their course and offer a range of options, which may include changing the mode of learning, to enable them to complete their academic programme. In our recent TEF metrics we received a rating for ‘Academic Support’ of over 94% (last year it was 92%). Our goal is to enable all students to perform to the best of their ability and to achieve their potential.

There is considerable support, too, for students with learning disabilities, primarily through our dedicated Disability Officer, who applies the College’s Disability Policy. Students with learning disabilities are contacted on acceptance, and where necessary helped through the process of post-16 assessments. Through staff training sessions and regular communication, all lecturers are made aware of the importance of taking learning needs into account in their teaching, including their use of appropriately revised learning resources and visual aids. All students with learning disabilities are given extra time to submit assignments. Currently, 16% of our undergraduate student body have diagnosed learning disabilities. Both historically and within the present cohort, the performance of students with learning disabilities is consistent with that of other students who entered College with similar qualifications.

The Disability Officer, working with other staff, will also offer support to students with physical disabilities, to ensure access to teaching and learning. Most teaching areas are on the ground floor, with full wheelchair access. The Chapel and part of the Research Centre is on the first floor. These are both served by a lift. There is, currently, one student with a stated physical disability amongst on-campus students, and special provision for accommodation has been made.

Our goal is to make the training that we offer, which has the degree programme at its centre, available and accessible to a widening range of students. A significant proportion

of our students come to us without formal academic qualifications, and many are unlikely, otherwise, to access HE. Given the range of backgrounds from which our students are drawn, and the high proportion of successful outcomes, we believe that our goal is largely being fulfilled. We will, nevertheless, continue to work hard to increase access and improve our provision.

Preparing for employment

Mattersey Hall aims to serve two main constituencies. First, we offer an Undergraduate programme, together with key formational elements, in order to provide theological and pastoral training for those who are seeking to serve churches and communities. Second, we offer post-graduate programmes that offer continuing professional development to those already in pastoral ministry or serving in related professions. Our Programme Specifications, in accordance with the Framework for Higher Education Qualifications, include benchmarks relating to careers and employability, and we take our commitment to deliver on those benchmarks very seriously. According to the most recent TEF metrics, among those who come to Mattersey Hall as full-time undergraduate students, two-thirds go on to highly skilled employment or further study, and that figure increases to 95% for all forms of employment or further study.

We also aim to prepare our students for future employment by including key formational elements, which are built in to our provision, and enrich the academic programmes. So, for example, all of the teaching staff are involved, practically, in local churches, and they ensure that, while the degree programme is marked by academic excellence, it is also grounded in practical relevance and application. Classroom discussions, as well as assignments, will frequently include how particular topics may be related to contemporary life. Students are also given experience of potential employment through weekend Church Placements. All students participate, too, in annual Missions Trips, where they gain experience of working in teams alongside others, both from inside and outside the College, usually in a cross-cultural setting.

The ethos of the College, which is reflected in the values clearly articulated through lectures, key formational and enrichment elements, opportunities for service within the community, reflects our commitment to service and to social justice that is part of our commitment to leadership formation. Through our programmes, and through the additional formational elements that Mattersey Hall offers, we believe we help our students to fulfil their potential, and encourage the practical skills and abilities that contribute towards their future employability, and with it, a significant contribution to service in the communities in which they will be working.

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