

**Peter Symonds College**  
**Equality Act 2010: Public Sector Equality Duty**  
**Equality Analysis**  
**February 2020**



*“Prejudice Sucks” is a mural which hangs in the Paul Woodhouse Centre.*

*The mural was designed and painted by Peter Symonds’ students:*

*Zoe McKellar, Scarlet Standen, Maya Gadd and Tamsin Koumis*

## Section 1: Introduction

The college motto is “Counting in Ones” and illustrates our commitment to promoting diversity and equality of opportunity for all staff and students, as expressed within the college’s Strategic Plan, which states that, “Peter Symonds College is a diverse, inclusive and ambitious community in which each person is valued and encouraged to achieve... Whatever their future aspirations, we nurture our students’ potential and challenge them to develop personally, academically and creatively, and develop a sense of responsibility towards the communities of which they are a part”.

The Strategic Plan 2019 - 2022, includes as a strategic objective:

*“To ensure equality of opportunity for staff and students, challenging discrimination and fostering good relations.” (Strategic Objective 6.6)*

Over the past thirteen years, the college has analysed the student and staff experience as part of our Equality Action Plan. Initially, this involved impact assessment over a three-year cycle with outcomes reported to the Senior Management Team and Governing Body.

In September 2016 a more focused approach was adopted, identifying key aspects for analysis and specific areas of the student journey that have been identified as an area for further development (eg: through complaints, student feedback, the self-assessment process, etc), or where there have been new developments (eg: an on-line application process in the sixth form college).

Similarly, regarding staff matters, analysis focuses on specific areas of interest or concern rather than a college-wide review.

The college is committed to consulting with and involving both staff and students in analysing equality and diversity, along with other stakeholders where and if appropriate.

Throughout the year there are surveys of learner views that are analysed by gender, ethnicity and learning difficulty and disability. Focus groups are arranged as and when appropriate in order to examine the student or staff journey or when new initiatives are introduced, as follows:

1. Student Focus Groups (organised by the Head of Study Support and the Equal Opportunities Co-ordinator).
2. Staff Focus Groups (organised by the Personnel Manager and Vice Principal).
3. AHED Focus Groups (organised by Director of AHED and the Head of Adult Study Support).

## **Section 2: Equality Information**

### **Profile of the College**

Peter Symonds College provides Advanced level and vocational opportunities at levels 2 and 3 in the sixth form college. In 2018-19, there were 3,961 full-time 16-18 year-old students, including 70 boarders.

The Adult and Higher Education Division (AHED) caters mainly for post-19 and a mixture of vocational and non-vocational education and, in 2018-19, had 432 SFA/24+ loans funded adult students, 261 students on higher education programmes and 1,965 enrolments on leisure courses.

As at 29 January 2019, the sixth form site had 254 teachers and 203 support staff. AHED had 79 teachers and 36 support staff. All figures exclude casual and hourly paid staff.

### **Our staff and student profile in relation to disadvantaged groups:**

#### **Students**

In 2018-19, a total of 5,828 students were on roll at the college, over both the sixth form college and the adult and higher education sites.

#### **Sixth Form College (SFC)**

In 2018-19, 3,961 students were aged 16-18. The gender split was 55% female and 45% male. 9% of learners were from minority ethnic groups. 27% of learners had a learning difficulty or disability.

#### **Adult and Higher Education (AHED)**

In 2018-19, of the 432 SFA/24+ loans funded adult learners, 80% were female and 20% male.

The college has an emerging programme of higher education courses. In 2018-19, there were 261 enrolments on HE courses, 77% were female and 23% male.

At AHED, 7% of learners were from minority ethnic groups. 13% of learners had a learning difficulty or disability.

#### **Staff**

The majority of our employees are female and this percentage continues to increase as the majority of those appointed are female. Less than 2% of our staff declare themselves to have a disability, although a much greater percentage have medical conditions which in fact constitute disabilities under the 2010 Equality Act. Our percentage of staff who come from an ethnic minority has increased and is now around 5%.

Our workforce continues to age, with slightly under half being aged 50 or over. An increasing number are requesting to decrease their hours as retirement approaches and the College is very accommodating of requests to do this. We have also agreed an increasing number of job share posts. We continue to recruit staff across all age groups.

## **Protected characteristics under the Equality Act 2010**

The college is committed to gathering as much information as is possible and necessary about the protected characteristics identified in the Equality Act 2010 to enable us to comply with the Public Sector Equality Duty. For both students and staff, the college will continue to raise awareness and encourage disclosure of a protected characteristic, promoting an environment where staff and students feel comfortable and have multiple opportunities to disclose.

### **SFC**

Guidance for tutors has been developed in the sixth form college on how to deal with a disclosure of a protected characteristic by a student. Timetabled 'one to one' tutorial sessions for all students allow regular opportunities for tutors to discuss individual matters with students and afford greater opportunity for students to disclose.

Equality and diversity is one of the key topics covered in the tutorial programme and Symonds lecture programme. Students are introduced to the core values of the College at the very start of the Lower 6 year in a welcome presentation delivered by the Senior Management Team and again in a tutorial session linking the College's ethos to fundamental British values.

More students are now disclosing personal information through their application form and interview process, in particular transgender students.

### **AHED**

There is guidance for AHED tutors on how to deal with a disclosure of a protected characteristic by a student, and how to use the disclosure form. Students have opportunities to disclose personal information through their application forms, the interview process and learning agreements.

### **Staff**

All staff can access, check and update personal information (including protected characteristics) held by the Personnel department via the 'self-service' personnel system via the staff intranet. Also, in the professional review process, there is a prompt on the self-appraisal form to disclose an acquired disability for those who wish to do so. Information on the protected characteristics of applicants for jobs is analysed to identify any trends or points of concern.

The return to work interview procedure enables a focus on those with significant health issues which may be related to a disability. Staff are encouraged to talk to Personnel staff or to their line manager about any adjustments that are required.

### Section 3: Equality Analysis - Students

The Student Journey – It is our aim to eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation; to advance equality of opportunity and to foster good relations for all, and in particular for those students within the college that can be identified by the nine “protected characteristics” set out in the Equality Act.

In pursuance of these aims, the college looks at the student experience in relation to equal opportunities via student focus group meetings where we consider the student journey.

#### SFC

During 2019, two aspects of the student journey were explored through student focus group discussions; exam access arrangements throughout the year and in end of year (EOY) exams, and the College’s mental health and wellbeing services. EOY exams were held in formal exam conditions for the first time in the academic year 2018-19.

#### 3.1 End of Year Exams and Exam Access Arrangements

The Head of Exams gave an update on exam arrangements since they were last considered in 2015:

- Consistency of invigilator - Invigilators are all given extra training on exam access arrangements. Unfortunately, the high turnover of invigilators makes it impossible to always ensure consistency. However, the Exams Department liaise with Study Support about all students with EAA including students with mental health difficulties and most of the invigilators are well known to Study Support especially the senior invigilators.
- Staff awareness-raising on the need to allow exam arrangements in mock exams and tests - specific training was not necessary but all access arrangements are accessible on the college system. Students reported that staff knew their exam arrangements and ensured that they were in place.
- Strategies for last minute access arrangements - the Exams department works to a tight timetable following the deadline for exam arrangements but make every effort to put in place any last minute access arrangements that Study support say are required.

#### Key points that emerged in 2018-19 were:

| ISSUE RAISED   | ACTION   |
|--|--|
| Raised anxiety levels of some students (especially those students connected with Study Support) surrounding EOY exam results and how this may affect their predicted grade.  | LE/SMT: Consider staff guidance on the significance of the result and how this is conveyed to students.  |
| Students with extra time in Mercers Sports Hall are disturbed by other students leaving and by invigilators starting to take in scripts. Claire W explained that it is impossible to put all students with extra time in one room and that there may be greater disruption in small classrooms | Study Support / Exams Dept. Students should be prepared for the disruption in advance and encouraged to communicate with invigilators if they are being disturbed. |

|   |                    |
|---|--------------------|
| Impact of new timetable – may make extra time easier to apply during lesson time tests but it is still not enough for a full mock in some subjects especially if students have extra time | ALL Monitor impact |
|---|--------------------|

Overall, students reported that access arrangements work well and that staff and Study Support were supportive. Students all agreed that the formality of the EOY exams was important, as this would be their only experience prior to the A level exams. Students themselves all seemed to know their exam arrangements, timetable and venues because this was easily accessible on the College system.

### 3.2 The College’s Mental Health and Wellbeing Services

For the period 2016-2020, the College set an Equality Objective **to improve the outcomes for sixth form students with a mental health difficulty**. A number of actions were taken in respect of this objective including the creation of a HUB staffed by professional mental health advisers in order to provide support for those students with ‘low level’ mental health issues and to provide a triage service for those with more complex needs, referring on to existing college support services provided by Counselling and Study Support if necessary.

**Student feedback on the Mental Health and Wellbeing support in College was as follows:**

#### Advertising of wellbeing and mental health services:

| FEEDBACK   | ACTIONS   |
|--|---|
| Students knew about, Counselling, Study Support and the HUB. They felt that other students may not be aware of the extent and range of support in College especially re. counselling | More advertising to reach out to all students on the services offered |

#### Accessibility of the wellbeing and mental health services in terms of booking appointments, drop in times and location in the college

| FEEDBACK  | ACTIONS  |
|---|--|
| <p>a. Students generally are not well informed on how to make appointments especially re. Counselling</p> <p>b. There are times when the HUB is closed and Counselling full so that students could not access support in a ‘crisis’ moment.</p> <p>c. Students knew the location of different services and felt counselling was located in a private area so more confidential and discreet</p> | <p>More guidance on how to utilise various services</p> <p>Increase drop in times to HUB and have staff available throughout the day to signpost students on to further support, even if not a counsellor.</p> |

**Student awareness on where and how to get support:**

| FEEDBACK  | ACTIONS |
|---|---------|
| Students generally know that Student Services would provide information on where and how to get support | None    |

**Accessibility of wellbeing and mental health services for particular groups depending on gender, race, disability, cultural background or sexual orientation**

| FEEDBACK   | ACTIONS  |
|--|--|
| Students were aware that some groups may have more reluctance because of their cultural background and that male students might be reluctant to seek support for fear of 'stigma'. | Gather feedback from a wider sample of students especially BAME & promote importance of mental health for boys |

**Support and help offered by the various services:**

| FEEDBACK   | ACTIONS |
|--|---------|
| Students felt very well supported and reported that friends had been helped. | None    |

**From the number of students who would benefit from support, how many access the mental health and wellbeing services available in College**

| FEEDBACK   | ACTIONS                                    |
|--|--|
| Many students did not access support until they hit a crisis point because they did not realise they needed support. | Awareness raising about good mental health |

**Factors that prevent students from accessing wellbeing support:**

| FEEDBACK  | ACTIONS  |
|---|--|
| Students identified: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● stigma /fear – arising from peer pressure</li> <li>● students not realising they need help</li> <li>● students not wanting to be defined as having a mental health problem</li> </ul> | Promote wellbeing provision is for all. Make students aware that support in college would not go onto their medical records outside of college |

**Use of Therapy Dogs:**

| FEEDBACK   | ACTIONS |
|--|---------|
| Very beneficial: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Good excuse to go to the HUB</li> <li>● Encouraged all students to go along</li> <li>● Particular benefit to boarders who missed their dogs</li> </ul> | None    |

### **Cross-college survey April 2019, sixth form students:**

In the cross-college survey of upper 6 students undertaken in April 2019, students expressed a high level of satisfaction:

- “Equal opportunities are actively promoted at the college” – the large majority of student agreed or strongly agreed – 94%
- “I felt safe and secure at college” – the large majority of student agreed or strongly agreed 94%
- “Bullying and harassment are tackled effectively” - the large majority of student agreed or strongly agreed – 93%

In the induction survey taken in December 2019, Lower 6 students also expressed positive responses:-

- “I feel safe and secure at College” – the very large majority of students agreed or strongly agreed 97%
- “The College promotes a culture of acceptance and equality” - the very large majority of students agreed or strongly agreed 96%

### **AHED**

During 2019, the focus was very much on mental health. Various strategies were put in place to improve support and to monitor student encountering difficulties.

**Monitoring the attendance of students with a mental health issue** (including low level anxiety and emotional difficulties) This was achieved through study support creation of a list of students in this category. In addition, registry notify study support that a student has declared mental health difficulties on the enrolment form, they are added to our basic Excel Active Students spreadsheet and they are sent a Medical Declaration Form. Once that is returned and the severity of the issue assessed, if necessary the Student is added to the Students of Concern list on the G drive. Centre Staff, HoC's and Duty managers are able to access this password-protected list.

Some students do not declare their mental health difficulties at enrolment, but later via the Confidential Study Support & Health Declaration form or verbally to a Tutor. When that happens the same process as described above is carried out.

Of the students on the concern list regarding mental health over this period (9 students) 8 completed all their qualifications, 1 was a non-starter on Access and then withdrew from English functional skills. Two students progressed onto AHED degree programmes from level 3 and are still with us.

**Support for students with mental health issues** Distressed students receive some immediate Mental Health First Aid Support from the Head of Study Support or from other members of the management team/Duty Manager. The Head of Study support holds a Mental Health First Aid qualification.

Students can be referred for Counselling at AHED via Karen Hough Head of Curriculum for Counselling

## Section 4: Data Analysis:

Each year for the Self-Assessment process the Assistant Principal (Quality) provides data on recruitment, retention and success rates by gender at individual course level and has provided a facility to explore module results (as well as end of year results) by gender, income quartile, disability and ethnicity in both raw and value added terms. College performance is routinely examined by gender, ethnicity, and disability and learning difficulty and reported to the senior management team and Governors.

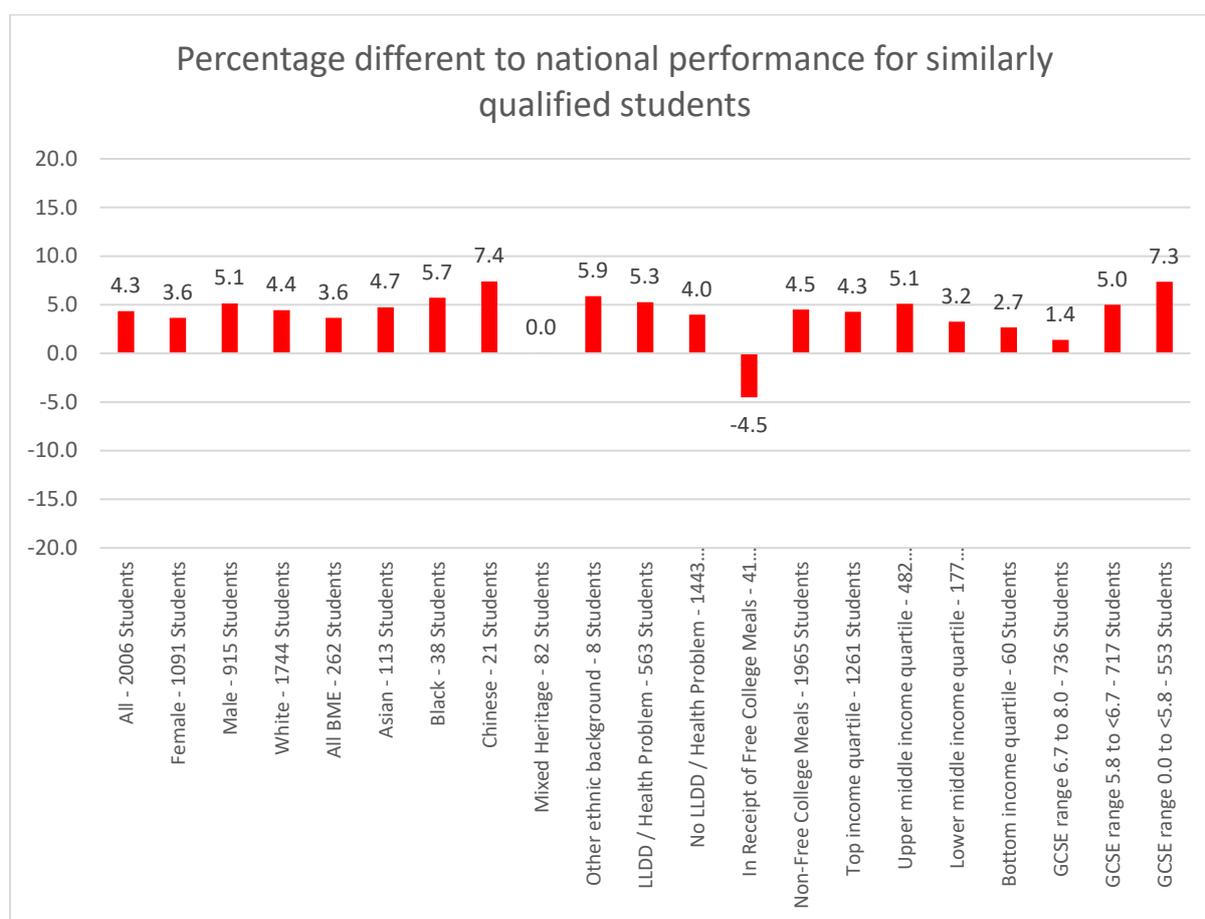
### SFC

The analysis presented here looks at two key questions about student performance:

- Of those students who start A level or BTEC courses with us, how many last the full two years of the programme of study
- Of those students who start studying A levels or BTEC courses with us, what proportion go on to successfully achieve three or more A level or BTEC qualifications

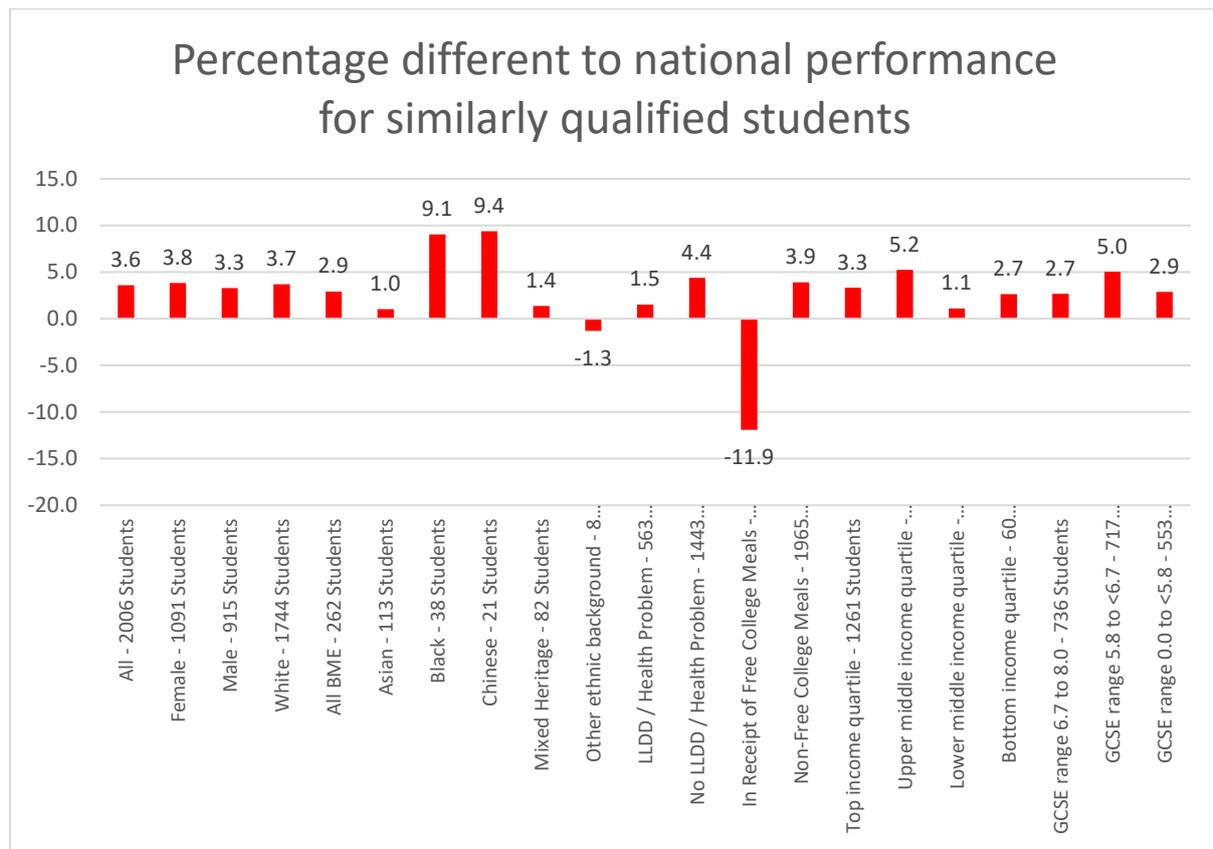
The analysis is based on identifying an expected level of performance which is adjusted according to the prior attainment of the students and then examining actual performance for that group of students.

**Figure One: Retention over two years, by equality and diversity category**



**Figure One** shows that for most categories the college does remarkably well. Overall, 4.3% more students get to the end of a two-year programme of study than would be expected nationally – an extra 86 students across the college. Of those groups that perform less well than is typical we have to be cautious in over-interpretation. Students in Receipt of Free College Meals are 4.5% below expectation, but there are only 41 students in this category – each of them equating to 2.5%.

**Figure Two: Proportion of students achieving three A levels or equivalent, by equality and diversity category**



The analysis of the proportion of students achieving three A levels or equivalent in **Figure Two** echoes that of retention in **Figure One**. While we must be cautious about overinterpretation, it does suggest that students from Free College Meals background are less likely to achieve three A levels of equivalent. In part this reflects retention patterns, but also indicates that these students are more likely to drop from three to two A levels.

### AHED

The analysis of performance in the adult education division of the college is less reliable than that for 16-18 students, largely because the numbers in each category are so small. The one feature that is worthy of note is that of participation: in common with the adult education sector as a whole, female students are over-represented.

## **Section 5: Equality Analysis - Staff**

The Director of Personnel & Corporate Services provides an annual monitoring report to Governors that analyses staff data by certain protected characteristics. This report is available on the college website [www.psc.ac.uk](http://www.psc.ac.uk)

We continue to seek to identify issues arising from the report and act upon them. We also published our first Gender Pay Gap Report in 2018 and a second in 2019. On both occasions the analysis revealed that we have a disproportionately large number of women among our lower paid staff although the gap had narrowed in the second year. We have proposed some action points to try to address this, although it is challenging given the relatively few numbers of men who apply for employment and our relatively low levels of staff turnover.

## **Section 5: Equality Objectives 2020-2024**

This year the College is reviewing its Equality Objectives and is setting the following new objectives for the period April 2020-24. An action plan in relation to these objectives will be available on the college website: <https://www.psc.ac.uk/content/eo>

### **Equality Objectives for the Sixth Form College (Students)**

1. To continue to develop and improve support for students with mental health issues
2. To improve the attainment of students in receipt of Free College Meals
3. To encourage aspiration in female students

### **Equality Objective for the Adult and Higher Education Division (Students)**

1. To continue to develop and improve support for students with mental health issues

### **Equality Objective for all College staff**

1. To enhance opportunities for flexible working

## **Section 6: EO Audits:**

Equal Opportunities Audits are embedded within the College's self-assessment processes in both the sixth form college and the adult & higher education division. These identify areas of good practice as well as areas for development.

### **SFC**

The following are taken from SAR reports completed in 2019 as examples that reflect the further development of best practice in the SFC with regard to equality and diversity.

#### **Careers**

- Continues to support students identified by Study Support as having Education, Health & Care Plans through 1-1 appointments and by attending all annual reviews in the summer term.
- Objective - to provide targeted support to students in specific identified categories including NCOP, Free College Meals, Vulnerable, College Bursary, widening participation with Oxbridge support
- Objective - to ensure all resources produced by the department are available in formats appropriate to students' needs.

#### **IT & Web Services**

- Objective - review published materials including web materials to ensure that we have taken accessibility into consideration and that they conform to best practice

#### **Boarding**

- Objective - Ensure boarding provision accounts for the needs of all students and that the boarding environment takes careful consideration of life choices and religious requirements such as Ramadan, veganism and vegetarianism

#### **Pastoral & Tutorial Support**

- Continues to offer students a 'safe space' for controversial discussions and to develop knowledge and skills to counter prejudice, stereotypes and discriminatory behaviour.
- Objective - to continue to contribute to improving outcomes for students with a mental health difficulty by ensuring pastoral support is in place for them in liaison with other college support services.

#### **Student Services**

- Continues to promote Free College Meals and the Support Fund to ensure that no student is unable to succeed at College due to their financial background.
- Continue to support the LGBTQ+ group, encouraging members to help with events and campaigns throughout the year.
- Objective - to work with new Wellbeing Ambassadors to ensure that health campaigns are relevant, of interest and where possible "hands on".

## **The Hub**

- Objective - Work with new members of staff to continue to develop the Hub's provision for students with mental health needs.

## **Study Support**

- The change in specification has meant for some subjects an increasingly fast pace of delivery of a high volume of subject content. As a result, the study support department have implemented the use of mindfulness within the 1:1 setting to support students experiencing stress and anxiety.
- Objective - To develop the expertise of LSA team in relation to students with ADHD
- Objective - To create an additional transition day from student with ASC

## **AHED**

**Within the AHED curriculum SAR process in 2019**, feedback was gathered on the equality and diversity priorities for 2019-20. These included:

### **Study Support**

- Ongoing development of innovative methods to support students on a one to one basis using SKYPE. Feedback from subject teachers is that is effective and resulting in improved standard of work submitted by students.
- To support Higher Education students through additional Academic Support class sessions during progress review periods to deliver targeted study support to groups based on their needs. Extension of previous year's work based on positive feedback from students and teaching staff.

### **Access to HE**

- Ensure that the units of work in each subject specification consider Equality & Diversity.
- Compile documentation listing all students with Equality & Diversity needs to be accessible for tutors from the start of the course, to be updated throughout the course.

### **Functional Skills**

- Assist higher-level students for whom English is not their first language to achieve an English qualification now that ESOL classes will no longer be available.

### **Counselling**

Issues of equality and diversity permeate the field of Counselling and forms part of the curriculum at all levels. Priorities are:

- To ensure we are up to date with regard to legal requirements regarding this issue e.g. knowledge of the most important acts;
- To remain au fait with changes in the BACP Ethical Framework regarding the protected characteristics;
- To actively promote these issues and to ensure that the needs of individual students are met liaising with the Head of Student Support as appropriate.