



Widening Participation & Access Statement 2020-2021

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Introduction

The British College of Osteopathic Medicine (BCOM) is a specialist, independent Higher Education (HE) College, founded 80 years ago, which offers University level courses for aspiring osteopaths. The legal construct of the college is a Registered Charity (No: 312907) and a Company Limited by Guarantee (No: 562119). Until 1991 BCOM self-validated a Diploma in Osteopathy, but since then the programme has been reviewed and validated as a BSc (Hons) Osteopathic Medicine degree by the University of Westminster and has evolved to arrive at the present time with the University of Plymouth validated undergraduate Masters in Osteopathy for current and future intakes. In common with its validating partner, The University of Plymouth, there exists a clear and continued commitment to Widening Participation, with the promotion of equality, diversity and inclusion at its heart.

The University of Plymouth has ultimate responsibility for the academic provision of BCOM and Plymouth and BCOM equally develop and manage the college's business to meet its financial objectives, quality standards and mission objectives in relation to education.

BCOM is registered with the Office for Students and we are committed to supporting access and participation in higher education by students from disadvantaged backgrounds and under-represented groups. This Statement is made in line with the Office for Students' priorities of:

- increasing the entry rates of students from under-represented groups to HE
- reversing the general decline in HE participation by mature students from under-represented groups
- reducing the drop-out rates of students from under-represented groups
- reducing the attainment gaps between students from under-represented groups
- improving the rates of progression of students from under-represented groups into graduate-level employment or further study

BCOM offers excellent teaching, learning, research and expertise and one of the primary aims is making its programmes more accessible to eligible, financially disadvantaged learners and increasing overall participation in higher education. The purpose of BCOM's courses is to guide student osteopaths towards becoming stand-alone practitioners through the acquisition of basic science and osteopathic-technique skills leading to an integrated clinical appraisal of patients. This allows the formulation of safe, effective, rational and caring treatment plans for as beneficial an outcome as is feasible in a given clinical situation. BCOM believes its aims accord with the General Osteopathic Council's Practice Standards (OPS) and the QAA benchmark statement

The College Mission Statement, 'The Holistic Approach to Osteopathy', is central to the philosophy of the College and informs the Aims and Objectives.

The College aims are:

- a) To ensure that graduates acquire adequate clinical competence via a self-critical approach to integrated learned skills.

- b) To instil evidence based research ethos into practitioners of clinical practice through holistic Osteopathic Medicine.
- c) To acquire knowledge and understanding of health and its promotion.
- d) To acquire knowledge and understanding of disease, its prevention and management in the context of the whole individual and his or her place in the family and in society.
- e) To promote an attitude of inquiry and the maintenance of this attitude into professional life and to keep abreast of current knowledge by maintaining Continued Professional Development.
- f) To foster inter-professional dialogue and referral.
- g) To recognise the advanced standard of professional competence and responsibility demonstrated by Masters-level graduate practitioners of Osteopathic Medicine.
- h) BCOM reviews the aims and objectives at Board level and through validations and with reference to evolving professional requirements eg. OPS.

BCOM is committed to seeking to provide equality of opportunity to all applicants and students. The College encourages an atmosphere of tolerance and inclusion and particularly values the contribution of a diverse and well-represented student body. After consultation with staff and students the College published the Single Equality Scheme in 2011 as well as Equality Objectives in 2012, both these documents were updated in 2017. These ensure that consideration is given to the College's activities, including strategic planning and resource allocation, to enable students with specific needs to participate in all aspects of the academic and social life of the institution.

Any disclosure of need is used to monitor, and where possible make reasonable adjustments, the needs of the applicants and students in accordance with The University of Plymouth policies. However, because the College offers solely vocational courses, certain physical abilities may be considered as "competence standards" under the terms of the Equality Act. The College opposes direct and indirect discrimination on the grounds of disability at any stage, including admissions, and will advise applicants and students appropriately about practice- and technique-based competence standards and what might reasonably be expected of a course of professional osteopathic study. The College closely monitors the academic progress of students as well as the effectiveness of academic provision, and the evaluation processes and the identification of opportunities for enhancement are well embedded within College's structure.

The Current Student Body

BCOM has a long standing commitment to widening participation and has an excellent track record of attracting and recruiting students from WP backgrounds it has in place a range of initiatives and activities to support recruitment, access, retention and employability for all its students in addition to providing substantial support to students with disabilities and learning needs.

Ethnicity: By Cycle Year					
	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
Asian	7	2	7	3	3
Black	7	7	4	5	2
Mixed	7	3	3	0	2
White	41	33	20	21	11
Other	1	0	0	0	1
Unknown	0	0	0	0	2
Total	63	45	34	29	22

Age: Enrolments by Cycle Year					
	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
Under 21	19	15	15	13	12
21-30	25	18	15	11	6
31-40	14	8	2	5	3
Over 40	5	4	2	0	1
Total	63	45	34	29	22

Disability: Enrolments by Cycle Year					
	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
Declared	4	9	7	3	3
None declared	59	36	27	26	19
Total	63	45	34	29	22

Socio-Economic: Students who had parents with HE: Enrolment by Cycle Year					
	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
Parents with HE	18	16	14	18	10
Parents no HE	18	15	9	9	12
Unknown	27	14	11	2	0
Total	63	45	34	29	22

ELQ: Enrolments by Cycle Year					
	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
ELQ	4	5	1	2	4
No ELQ	59	40	33	27	18
Total	63	45	34	29	22

The Student Lifecycle

BCOM is committed to attracting applicants and enrolling and retaining students from all backgrounds. Our entry requirements recognise the value of work experience as well as academic qualifications, and our programmes are designed working closely with the Professional Body (General Osteopathic Council), as well as practicing osteopaths to meet the needs of the sector.

BCOM values diversity and the range of experiences and perspectives that come from a diverse community and provides student services that support our widening participation aims and the broader diversity agenda. Our admissions arrangements aim to assess applicants from all backgrounds fairly, so that we may admit those most able to benefit from studying with us. Support services at BCOM are informed by, and appropriate to, a diverse student community. Our small bursary scheme aims to be fair and clear.

One of BCOM's strategic objectives is the retention and success of our students, and this is closely monitored on a quarterly basis by the Registry, and the target is subject to annual review. From the academic year 2019-20 in line with best practice BCOM has been operating an enhancement strategy entitled 'The BCOM Graduate' the objective of which is to increase retention of **all** our students. This strategy is supported by the Registrar, working closely with the Programme Leader, Module Tutors, Clinic Tutors and counselling team.

BCOM will also be implementing a more strategic approach to collecting and analysing data with regards to retention and success. This will be done through its in-house Student Record System (SRS) in conjunction with the University of Plymouth SRS and the use of learning analytics. It is believed that this will further inform decisions made on module design, delivery and interventions to students to enable them to succeed.

Learning and Teaching Strategy

The BCOM Learning and Teaching Strategy (LTS) outlines our shared direction for learning and teaching, it sets out BCOM's strategic priorities and aspirations for the period 2016-2021, providing a framework for:

- Developing revised or new programmes which are inclusive and flexible to meet the requirements of our diverse student community
- Delivering a quality, inclusive, flexible and employability focused undergraduate and postgraduate curriculum
- Understanding the relationship between learning, teaching and assessment
- Developing collaborative learning communities
- Identifying the resources needed to sustain or enhance the quality of our provision
- Supporting and developing the staff involved in teaching and supporting learning to ensure that their practices are informed by scholarship and reflection.

It is intended to enable the College to shape its delivery in the way which is inclusive and suitable for the context of teaching Osteopathy. It has been closely aligned with the BCOM strategic plan. Each element of the LTS has an action plan which is

intended to shape discussion and development and monitor the progress and evaluation of its impact.

It is shaped by the BCOM learning and teaching philosophies which are:

- The importance of recognising and harnessing effectively the benefits of diversity in both students and staff
- The emphasis the College places on the development of the practical and professional skills which our students need to be highly employable effective practitioners

BCOM Aspirations for 2020-2021

- To continue to develop and deliver undergraduate and postgraduate programmes which combine research informed disciplinary skills and knowledge, transferable skills, professional competence and cultural agility, delivered in London and in our international partner institutions.
- To deliver taught programmes which emphasise and ensure the development of professional competence
- To produce graduates which possess a highly regarded set of attributes which equip them to make a difference in their chosen profession (*The BCOM Graduate*)
- Flexible continuous professional development (CPD) programmes that provide the basis for Osteopaths to build towards a BCOM award.
- To ensure that those involved in teaching and supporting learning are appropriately qualified, supported and rewarded and that teaching and learning practices are informed by reflection and scholarship.

In order to meet these aspirations 'themes' which will shape the enhancement of our activities have been identified and it is recognised that these will require commitment and input from all staff and students within BCOM. The themes are:

- The creation and support of a community of learning at BCOM: the enhancement of induction and other activities will bring together staff and students to create a greater sense of belonging by enabling more staff/student contact
- To inspire students to broaden their understanding of academic study: we aim to stimulate student learning through intellectual curiosity and inspiration rather than through the necessity for assessment
- The development of cultural agility: BCOM aims to ensure that all students understand and implement the importance of working with others of different cultures by delivering an inclusive curriculum which recognises the diversity in the learning approaches of our students
- The provision of consistent and effective academic and personal support for student learning and development. The aim is to enhance the effectiveness of student learning and support by the identification of key goals relating to how students are taught and supervised, the teaching and assessment methods used and the personal support offered.
- The BCOM Graduate concept: the definition of specific attributes which make up a BCOM Graduate.

- The maintenance and enhancement of the College’s reputation for the student experience and our academic standards: we recognise the need to provide effective support to all staff involved in teaching and supporting learning here in the college
- The effective and efficient use of available resources: BCOM recognises the significance of sustainability in the use of all resources – staff, space, time, equipment, etc. and where possible will integrate technologies into the learning environment
- The creation of a clear employability strategy: This will help students to articulate what they can do as a result of their studies and related or extra-curricular activities they have undertaken and present their skills portfolio in the most clear and effective manner

The operational changes we will need to make in order to achieve our theme objectives are

- The introduction of more synoptic and integrative assessments as an alternative to the current individual module model, ensuring authentic assessment practices are used. (Theme 1, 3, 5)
- The guarantee of comprehensive formative feedback to students with guidance and exemplars provided as standard and to support best practice. (Theme 4, 5)
- The adoption of the HEAR record to recognise students’ achievements in areas not covered by current academic assessments. (Themes 3, 8)
- To facilitate the development of collaborative programme development with partner institutions (Themes 2, 3, 5, 6)
- The establishment of a framework for the development of an enhanced offering of CPD and their recording (Themes 2, 4, 5, 8)
- Facilitating the effective use of all teaching resources (Themes 1,6)

Activities to widen access and participation

The following activities have been put into place to improve access and widen participation in HE here at BCOM.

Inclusive Recruitment	
Targeted	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Open days • School Visits • Careers Fairs • UCAS Direct marketing mailings • Print and on-line advertising • Website and social media • Working with Careers advisors in Schools • Partnership with Aspire
Adult Engagement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A specific osteopathic focussed access course has been developed to provide a pathway to adults to re-enter education
Partnerships with HE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • BCOM works closely with its validating partner the University of Plymouth

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • BCOM also works closely with other HE osteopathic institutions across the UK and Europe to promote the 'brand' Osteopathy and research into Osteopathy
Access to Course Information	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Detailed course related information can be accessed in a variety of ways by prospective students – dedicated website, prospectuses, social media and open days • All applicants apply via UCAS

Provision of Information, Advice and Guidance	
Student guidance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The provision of information to students will continue to take place on a regular basis via open days, and recruitment and outreach activities • Advice on funding via student loans • Information on fees and the sources of support, including bursaries, is available on the BCOM website
Learning Support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All prospective students are interviewed and any issues raised regarding specific learning support requirements are discussed at this time to enable strategies to be in place upon enrolment • 1-1 tutorials and practical's are arranged for students who have been identified as in need of additional support
Support for transition into HE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • BCOM works closely with the University of Plymouth, its students, the professional body and practicing osteopaths to ensure that the curriculum (including course design, assessments and the effective use of resources) remains relevant • Robust induction programmes, including learning support interviews and regular reviews • Provision of clear information on the BCOM intranet, Osteonet • Dedicated counselling service on campus • Study skills are built into each module and supplemented by dedicated sessions in the first term of Level 4 • 1-1 tutorials and practical's are arranged for students who are struggling with the transition
Enhancement of Student Experience	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Small class sizes with excellent staff to student ratios (normally 10:1) • Dedicated library incorporating a silent study area, internet access and learning centre • Work placements and work related experiences with practicing osteopaths • Regular reviews of the curricula to ensure that the latest evidence/knowledge is evidenced in the modules • Courses are designed in conjunction with students, practicing osteopaths and the professional body • Level 6 Pre-clinic lectures designed to expose students

	<p>to the application of their skills to the practical world of the clinic</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • At Level 7 the student assumes the role of Junior Partner in an osteopathic practice
Support for next steps	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advice and guidance offered for post course destinations and/or further study • Post-graduate specialist courses offered by BCOM • One to one tutorials to identify opportunities • Consistently good progression rates into employment

Review

The Access and Participation Statement will be reviewed on an annual basis, with supporting data monitored by the relevant Academic Committees within BCOM