
Improving Progression Opportunities in Criminology Education on the Isle of Wight

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Since I began teaching criminology at the Isle of Wight College earlier this year, it has become increasingly apparent that our students face reduced opportunities to progress into higher education compared to their peers on mainland England.

This disparity is central to my Professional Doctorate in Education, which investigates how to improve progression from Level 3 criminology, law, and criminal justice pathways to degree-level studies.

Here are some relevant recent figures:

- In 2021, of students leaving 16-18 education at the Isle of Wight College, 47% progressed to higher education or training (Level 4+) after Level 3 study.
- The average for England in similar contexts is 70%.
- Regarding degree destinations specifically: 38% of Isle of Wight College students in 2021 went to a degree-level course; in England the comparable figure is around 66%.
- More recent “student destinations after 16-18 (2022 leavers)” data at the Isle of Wight College show 74% of students moved into education or employment following Level 3 study, compared to 80% nationally.

These gaps are substantial and persist even after accounting for differences in prior attainment and qualification type.

Key Barriers

Drawing on my doctoral work (including early interviews with students and staff), the following barriers emerge:

1. Aspiration and awareness – Some students believe university is “not for them,” either because of cost, perceived grades, or lack of role models.
2. Access to outreach and university connections – Limited interaction with universit(ies), fewer guest lectures, site visits, or mentoring for island students, compared with mainland colleges.
3. Perceived logistical/financial barriers – costs of travel, relocation, accommodation; less flexible admissions options; fear of being disadvantaged due to geography.

Proposed Interventions (Based on Proposal & Best Practice)

Aligned with my doctoral research, I am exploring a multi-component intervention model to raise progression rates. Some elements:

- Partnership with local universities to co-design modules or preparatory coursework that bridges FE and HE criminology/law curricula.
- Mentoring and peer support, including current undergraduates acting as mentors; alumni sharing pathways and experiences.
- Taster days / “university in a week” workshops held on the Isle of Wight, to provide exposure to HE study.

Invitation for Shared Practice

Given the scale of these differences, I am keen to hear from BSC members who have evidence of successful programmes or models that have improved progression from college or sixth form to higher education in criminology, law, or related disciplines. In particular:

- Colleges or sixth forms in rural or island settings.
- Examples of bridging modules or dual-enrolment arrangements.
- Mentoring or outreach schemes with measurable impact.
- Admissions policies or partnerships that have shifted selective HE access.

Perhaps you can help design interventions that are realistic, equitable, and scalable - not only for the Isle of Wight but for similarly geographically isolated regions across the UK.

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