



## **Access & Participation Statement 2023 - 2024**

### **Context**

The principle aim of this Access & Participation Statement is to contribute to the defining and orchestrating of the long-term vision of the City of London College's (CLC) Strategic Plan 2022-2025 and Widening Access & Participation Policy as it positions itself to become a leading higher education institution in the alternative provider sector. The statement has been developed and implemented after careful analysis and consideration of a range of both internal and external intelligence sources utilising, student enrolment, progression and achievement data, sector benchmarks, HE Code of Governance, QAA UK Quality Code, awarding body and the organisation's annual monitoring and external examiner reports.

Established in 1979, the College has enjoyed a long tradition of providing high quality, relevant national and international higher education vocational and professional education provision.

In recognition of its efforts, the College received the 'Queen's Award for Enterprise 2011' (International Trade), an acknowledgement of its outstanding performance and success over the years.

### **Mission & Vision**

In determining the educational character of its higher education provision, the College provides wide ranging and flexible opportunities in support of developing a global student community, fostering and encouraging an environment where academic and professional leadership, and management capabilities are recognised and developed across the organisation, enhancing staff and student performance, career potential and quality of work experience.

#### **The City of London College's Mission is:**

- To facilitate student access to high quality, yet reasonably priced higher education
- To create a learning environment which will support personal development and enable the acquisition of essential knowledge and appropriate skills, including inter-personal ones, which will lead to qualifications relevant to future employment and career development.

- Through the success of the College's completing students and graduates, to help contribute to the well-being of the enterprises and economies they work in.

**The College aims to achieve its mission by**

- Valuing and developing, to the full, the contribution of its staff
- Working closely with and supporting students
- Providing training and learning opportunities for students and staff
- Providing high quality and relevant programmes of study at vocational, undergraduate and postgraduate levels

In July 2017, the College met all QAA Higher Education Review [UK Quality Code Expectations], receiving affirmations for the steps taken to develop robust structures to underpin the College's quality assurance system and the development of appropriate policies and procedures for the recruitment, selection and admission of students. In July 2018, the College received a successful conclusion to the QAA HER Annual Monitoring visit for its continuing monitoring, review and enhancement of its higher education provision.

The College is accredited by a range of awarding bodies including professional organisations such as ACCA (Gold Standard), City & Guilds and previously has offered undergraduate and postgraduate programmes in collaboration with a wide range of UK universities. These have included the London School of Economics & Political Science (LSE), Birmingham City University and the University of Greenwich. It has been successful in offering vocational qualifications providing pathway opportunities to higher study.

Aligned with its Widening Access & Participation strategy, the College works with awarding bodies and organisations in support of national standards in training, contributing to the Government's Skills Agenda in areas including: Electrical Engineering, Heating Engineering and Computer Studies. The College's vocational skills courses are privately funded by learners supporting their individual continuing professional development or by employers supporting their staff.

For members of the public looking to enter continuing education, the College provides information, advice and guidance moving into employment, securing jobs or progressing to further/higher study.

In recognition of its work with non-traditional and under-represented groups, the College further demonstrates its commitment to widening participation through its Access to HE provision, providing a wide range of progression opportunities in the subject disciplines of Business Management and Electrical Engineering. This provision, consisting of predominantly adult returners from non-traditional backgrounds, demonstrates high levels of achievement, with students successfully progressing onto undergraduate programmes at Russell Group institutions including Queen Mary University, University of Sheffield and the University of Bristol.

In addition, other students have successfully gained places at the University of Salford, University of Kent, Edinburgh Napier University, Middlesex University, University of East London, University of West London and Kingston University.

Since December 2016, due to redevelopment of the site, the College did not enroll students until September 2020. Since then the student numbers have been growing year on year on mainly students progressing and new students joining courses. Students are registered with mainly two awarding bodies City and Guilds and Pearson Education. Currently the completion rates are at 97% and progression rates are at 95%.

### **Ambition & Strategy**

The College recognising that the range of audiences with whom it communicates, students, employers, awarding body partners, regulators and national and international organisations, has instigated positioning strategies to ensure that consideration is given to how provision is developed and driven in determining the ‘educational character’ of the curriculum in support of providing equal opportunities and accessible higher education to non-traditional and under-represented groups of learners.

Planning, implementing and managing change in a fast-changing environment is increasingly the norm for alternative providers of higher education. The changing landscape brings attention to how future challenges will question current assumptions and working practices and reshape strategies to reflect new priorities. Strategies for the delivery of alternative provision must continually change to be responsive to demand and demonstrate that this method of delivery is a strength as learners seek value for money in a diversely populated educational landscape.

The College is committed to the notion that all who can profitably benefit from higher education study and have the potential to succeed, but not necessarily possessing the normal qualifications or academic record, should have the opportunity to engage in advancing their personal development and acquisition of knowledge through practice. Acknowledging the growth in demand for programmes at sub-degree level, which are of particular importance in support of local and regional economic strategies, the College seeks through its Strategic Plan, Widening Access & Participation Plan and revised Recruitment Strategy, to meet the challenges of the high level of skill

shortages across a range of industries throughout London and the SE region.

The UK has a range of professions that fall under Occupation Skill Shortages category as companies fail to find suitable candidates from within the local talent pool to perform certain jobs. This opens up a wide array of opportunities for the learner to access the labour market. Sectors facing skill shortages are published by the Government.

The London & SE skills shortages underpin the College's overarching strategy for expansion of its provision through offering opportunities to under-represented groups in the key vocational areas of Healthcare, Hospitality Management, Computing/Software/IT.

Reflecting on the current economic climate of increased inflation, static wages and the reduction in EU migrants, we have made assumptions to grow our higher education student intake by 10% year on year. In extending higher education access to potential learners, the availability of student support funding from both private and public government resources is necessary. To achieve this College has a plan to secure registration with Office for Students (OFS).

The College's huge investment in a new purpose-built campus confirms a commitment to the enhancement of the student learning environment and the overall student experience. Our work with local and national employers ensures relevance in our educational offer and supports our alumni through business incubator initiatives. Sustainability of the business is assured by multiple income streams deriving revenues from our independent school, vocational courses, self-funded higher education learners and executive education programmes.

The College will reflect on its mission to ensure a strategic commitment for the further development and enhancement of strategies in support of its Widening Access & Participation Policy, the key principles of which are:

1. To develop and maintain a comprehensive and targeted programme of vocational study qualifications to increase opportunities for non-traditional & under-represented groups and raise aspiration in young people
2. To identify, recognise and support applicants who have the potential to succeed in vocational studies, but not necessarily having the normal academic record
3. To provide routes of financial support and opportunities for learners from low income backgrounds to access study routes realising their ambitions and aspirations.

Recognising the potential of applicants has always been at the heart of the CLC Mission & Vision, Corporate Objectives and Values to recruit the most able students from diverse and under-represented backgrounds, including those living in areas of low higher education participation, household income or socio-economic status, across the demographic spectrum.

In order to ensure that the College continues to eliminate barriers to learning we will continuously work to raise aspirations and educational attainment among prospective students from under-represented groups, preparing them for higher study. We will ensure support for success and achievement on their programmes of study offering a wide range of employment opportunities and the potential for postgraduate study. Through the evaluation of student recruitment and admissions, learning and teaching, assessment, induction, student support, staff development, and course development to ensure the maintenance and enhancement of academic standards and learning opportunities ensuring that all those with the potential to succeed can do so.

### **Our commitment to the widening participation agenda**

The CLC Widening Access & Participation Policy confirms its commitment to equal opportunities and widening participation in all of its activities. Admissions procedures reiterate our belief in the educational and social benefits, to the College and to our students, of a diverse student population, drawn from all sections of society.

Key to the policy is the College's emerging and enhanced approach to widening access and participation supported by:

1. The development and maintenance of a comprehensive and targeted programme of vocational studies to increase opportunities from under-represented groups and raise aspiration in young people.
2. To identify, recognise and support applicants who have the potential to succeed in higher education.
3. To provide routes of financial support for opportunities for students from low-income backgrounds to enable access to study and realise aspiration and ambition.

The College has developed a series of key performance indicators (KPIs) based upon its commitment and experiences including:

1. A targeted percentage increase in enrolments of 10% year on year of students from low socio-economic backgrounds and minority ethnic groups
2. To incrementally improve progression rates from low socio-economic and ethnic minority groups in order to exceed existing and previous rates across all provision, where both standard and non-standard academic background entrance requirements apply.
3. To identify clear and improved targets for progression to exceed progression rates from previous cohorts and improve progression and achievement into graduate-level employment.

The Student Engagement and Disability policies introduce student support as a key theme to support individuals of all backgrounds, abilities and

aspirations in order to fulfil their potential through learning, achievement and progression and articulates our commitment to the Widening Participation agenda.

We value and actively encourage student input into developing inclusive strategies through the use of feedback from student representatives from the Programme Management Committees, Student Support, Disability Services, and personal tutors, to inform our strategies for access and participation.

### **Who we work with to widen access and participation**

The College is active in sharing and disseminating practice with providers across the sector. In recognition of the positive work of the delivery of HE in FE in a range of further education colleges, most notably, that of the Mixed Economy Group of Colleges, the College has developed and continues to develop, collaborative links with Gloucestershire College and Tyne Coast College Group.

The College also engages with ethnic minority businesses based in the boroughs of Southwark, Newham, Tower Hamlets, Hackney and City & Docklands, offering training opportunities in accountancy and IT in support of business development and the raising awareness of potential progression opportunities into higher education. Engagement with local and regional enterprises including Job Centre Plus, LEPs, Prince's Trust and SMEs supports the College's work in creating opportunities and widening participation.

We positively support the LGBT movement and welcome applications from students identified as BAME and LGBT, as well as those with disabilities.

### **Recruitment, marketing & pre-entry advice and guidance**

The College's Strategic Plan - 2022-2025, recognises the key to a successful student recruitment strategy is having a clear understanding about "*what, how and to whom the College communicate with*". Key to this is the alignment of recruitment and admissions activities with the principles and key performance indicators of the Widening Access and Participation Strategy.

Increasingly, the vocational skills agenda and the growth of the non-traditional learner highlights the need for the creation of a seamless link of College policies and procedures from external marketing materials and events through to enrolment.

The College acknowledges that its messages must be consistent and clear and have the ability to engage at all levels with schools, further education students, including internal progression students, adult returners to higher education, careers counsellors, parents and other family members and all members of under-represented groups from diverse ethnic and cultural backgrounds who require varying approaches, dependent on the stage of education development or personal circumstances.

The College's recruitment message, closely aligned with the Government's vocational skills agenda offers the opportunity of a vibrant and fulfilling

student life, delivered within a supportive learning environment, built upon a long history of excellence, enhancement and development with a track record of successful alumni through progression to further study and graduate employment. Through its Recruitment Strategy – *‘Enquiry through to Enrolment’*, the College applies the principles of corporate & ‘relationship marketing’ strategies to further develop and widen its ‘brand’ and reach into new territories.

**Relationship Marketing Strategies** offering opportunity to improve both conversion rates and enrolments promotes the implementation of processes including:

1. Marketing and Promotions – managing and coordinating the production of non-traditional-specific publicity and promotional material, event management, advertising and public relations
2. Educational Partnerships/Relationship Marketing – developing advocates in educational and social service agencies to facilitate progression to higher study at the College
3. Student Services – coordinating student advice and guidance, including welfare support, enquiry services, information and admission services and learning support.

**Strategies to inform future curriculum planning include:**

- understanding of the requirement of a broad range of feeder institutions from schools, sixth forms, FECs and community and faith-based organisations
- gathering of market intelligence from regional partner institutions
- internal and external student perception & general market demand — local, regional, national and international
- communication with relevant local government and social services to identify and engage with members of under-represented ethnic and cultural groups
- develop and embed specialist programme-focused recruitment strategies, to contribute to securing sustainable growth in line with the strategic objectives of the College.
- build on, and further develop, existing current market intelligence, in the form of feeder institution databases, identifying key contacts, including: Heads of Schools, subject managers and course leaders.
- develop action plans, identifying methods of contact and communication.
- To prepare, as appropriate, programme-focused traditional and digital marketing aids, to assist in feeder institution presentations.

- To prepare "Glory Files", clearly selling strengths and quality of subject provision, focusing on industrial links, external events and exhibitions, highlighting student successes, achievements and awards.

The College will consolidate and further develop its understanding of the local and regional environment to grow its WP provision. In establishing its databases of appropriate local, regional and national markets, action plans will be instigated to pursue appropriate recruitment activities in support of engagement, establish partnerships with a range of educational and community-based organisations to ensure access to higher study is made available locally and regionally.

Collaborating institutions will be identified by the synergy of their own provision, often "personality led" and driven by the desire to place students and adult returners into appropriate high quality provision. "Relationship marketing" is key to the activities of developing one-to-one relationships with course leaders and specialist staff in these potential partner institutions. As these contacts develop, organisations will be encouraged to join internal College activities, contributing to the development and planning of curriculum and resources, further contributing to the College's Externality Framework and Strategy.

Market intelligence indicates that it is crucial that the College's outreach representatives engage directly with named contacts in schools, colleges and community organisations to establish one to one relationships, to ensure the opportunity of independent meetings, designed to develop a mutual understanding of each institution's requirements. Relationships of this kind ensure that external contacts working with the College will become advocates for our WP provision. Dialogue with organisations will clarify and communicate the structures and range of WP provision opportunities highlighting the experience of the "student journey", raising aspiration and indicating progression opportunities as appropriate. These could include:

- Dialogue to confirm initial understanding of "provision matched to progression".
- Confirmation of the need/desire for external institutions to be fully acquainted with all aspects of College provision.
- Development of programme-specific marketing and recruitment publicity, reflecting the distinctiveness of provision, its quality and its achievements, including: student awards, competition successes, employment opportunities and achievement (alumni profiles)
- Exchange of visit opportunities — organisations to be encouraged to visit the College, to further develop an ethos and culture of mutual understanding.

The delivery of appropriate academic and pastoral guidance to all prospective and current students is an important strategic policy for the College. The recruitment process is supported by the induction programme for the enrolled students.



## **Admissions and induction**

The Admissions Office makes decisions based upon agreed criteria and if necessary, refer the application to an Admission's tutor for the final decision. In line with its commitment to WP & fair access the College confirms its admissions procedures are fair and inclusive, taking into account the work experience, individual merit and non-standard qualifications when considering applications.

The QAA HER Review report 2017 confirms that as part of its strategic commitment to Widening Participation, outlined in its Widening Access & Participation Strategy, the College is committed to a fair and inclusive admissions process, adhering to the principles of fair admission, underpinned by appropriate organisational structures and processes.

The College has a history of working closely with awarding body partners to ensure that processes align with their requirements and that admissions decisions are based on agreed entry requirements. Detailed information is provided to prospective students to help them make decisions about subject disciplines and, where appropriate, assistance, relating to the application process is offered to students, through the opportunity of face-to-face discussions with staff in the College.

The College is committed to ensuring the selection of students who are able to complete their chosen programme of study. In cases where applicants do not meet the entry requirements, the College 'signposts' them to alternative programmes.

Applicants are required to undertake language and maths tests where appropriate, and all undertake an interview to confirm both academic suitability and motivation to their course.

Emphasis is placed on student attendance supported by an Attendance Policy which states required levels of attendance. Attendance and subsequent progression is monitored by the Programme Committee, and following Annual Monitoring, the Academic Board considers success and achievement rates.

The College's admissions policy adheres to the principles of fair admission and is underpinned by appropriate organisational structures and processes. Staff undergo internal training including workshops with external experts, and have access to resources such as UCAS webinars and guidance on judging new or non-traditional qualifications. This aims to ensure awareness of admissions procedures and provide support for them to fulfil their respective roles and responsibilities.

The College provides detailed information for prospective students to help them in making decisions about the provision on offer – support staff contact applicants who have incomplete applications and invite them into the College. In addition, it is committed to ensuring that they select students who

are able to complete their programme. If applicants do not meet entry requirements, the College signposts them to alternative opportunities.

The College has created an environment enabling students to develop and achieve, by taking responsibility for their own learning, with an overarching aim to enhance student employability. This approach to supporting development and achievement is outlined in the 'Effective Learning Framework and the Learning & Teaching Policy. The College Recruitment and Retention Strategy outlines the College's procedures for ensuring progression and retention of students and senior managers recognise the necessity to recruit with integrity to promote positive student outcomes.

The College also recognises its obligations to support learners with particular needs and has developed its policy for students with learning difficulties and disabilities to include support for learners with disabilities and those with learning difficulties, including screening for dyslexia (with the help from external bodies through the local authority) and self-declaration. The College identifies the particular needs of individual students through the application, enrolment and induction phases and there are further opportunities on programme through personal tutorial and informal contact with both academic and support staff. Classes in learning skills and remedial English language, are provided, both at the start of, and during, the programme, for those students with support needs, as well as provision relating to assessments for those with particular learning difficulties or disabilities.

### **Enhancement, Progression & Employment**

The College recognises the challenges which can accompany the commitment to widening access and participation particularly in the successful retention of some students. Student support activities offering flexible additional pastoral and learning support through one-to-one study skills appointments plays an integral part in the retention of students who may be considering withdrawing because of the unexpected demands of their course. In addition to these support mechanisms, the College also has a dedicated student support team providing specialist information, advice and guidance, including finance and welfare support, to students throughout the entire learner lifecycle.

Furthermore, the Student Services provides students with information and guidance on career choices throughout their time at the College, advising on learning and work development, searching the local job market and brushing up on interview skills.

In alignment with the QAA UK Quality Code *Chapter B5: Student Engagement*, focusing on the provision of an inclusive environment for student engagement, the College makes every effort to embrace the need to put students first in support of their varied needs for educational opportunities. The College is further committed to improving the motivation of students to engage in learning and learning independently along with support for their participation in quality enhancement.

The enhancement of student learning opportunities is a major strategic activity within the College's formal oversight processes and procedures. The College's Strategic Enhancement Plan, drawn from both internal and external review outcomes, programme and student engagement activities, student feedback and driven by the Senior Management Team confirms the deliberate steps being taken at a strategic level within the College to ensure continuous enhancement and development of the student learning environment and experience. The plan, structured over the joint themes of enhancement & employability, identifies and highlights 'externality' activities in support of the acquisition of 'employability' skills along with self-evaluation and personal reflection strategies, informing career management capabilities and alumni engagement.

In further developing the Strategic Enhancement Plan for 2022/25, the College has reviewed the notion of enhancement in its widest sense explicitly identifying and communicating student engagement and externality as drivers for enhancement. Externality drivers, informing the acquisition of employability skills are designed to challenge staff and student awareness of the wider influences that shape and inform professional standards and practice.

'Quality & Culturally-focused' engagement ensures the College continues to make every effort to place students at the heart of developments, providing opportunity for different groups to share their culture and traditions with fellow students, underpinning the College's Widening Participation & Fair Access Strategy. The College's support for 'Employability-focused' engagement provides a space where the external world of employment informs and engages student's aspirations and the best possible educational experience.

The College's 'Effective Learning' Framework contains policies relating to Learning & Teaching, Resources for Learning, Attendance Monitoring, Special Consideration and Reasonable Adjustment. Collectively, this framework addresses key issues and challenges in learning, attendance and its effect on achievement' and the need to be aware of the special needs of some students in order to provide equality in the learning process. Support for career development through the College's teaching & learning practice ensures students acquire contacts, skills and experience and equips them with an awareness and understanding of the wider scholarly requirements of what gives a subject discipline its coherence and defining what can be expected in term of skills and abilities.

## **Summary of Activities and Support for Students**

Principle 4 of the College's Strategic Plan 2022 – 2025

**Student Engagement, Development & Achievement** states that:

*... 'Through a commitment to equality and accessibility of resources in support of student learning, the College will take deliberate steps to engage students as participants in developing strategies to assure and enhance the learning experience, providing oversight of the management, monitoring and*

*evaluation of processes and resources enabling students to maximise their academic and professional potential’.*

### **Strategic Aims**

1. To create a learning environment which will support students’ personal and professional development, enabling them to acquire the necessary skills and knowledge leading to the acquisition of awards relevant to career development and future employment.
2. To provide students with an exceptional and distinctive learning experience through the provision of teaching excellence and a supporting pastoral framework underpinned by the development of processes and procedures for effective identification of additional learning needs of students.
3. To promote and provide access to higher education provision in support of students from non-traditional, low socio-economic and ethnic minority groups and implement employability strategies to support academic and careers expectations.
4. To operate a system of student representation, encouraging discussion and engagement with managers, staff and personal tutors.

### **Key areas of dedicated student support**

- The creation of the new Student Representative Development Programme confirms the College’s continuous commitment to supporting students elected to the role of representative. The programme is designed to develop skills, knowledge and attributes to steer students through the demanding role of representing their fellow students alongside the senior management team in both formal and informal activities and to contribute to the development of enhanced personal and professional communications skills contributing to both a greater informed individual and organisation.
- Support for student alumni through business incubator initiatives supported by working closely local, regional & national employers.
- Through its fair and inclusive admissions process, the College supports potential students with the provision of detailed information on subject disciplines to help in the decision-making process, and where appropriate, face to face discussions with staff are made available
- Classes in learning skills and remedial English language, are provided, both at the start of, and during, the programme, for those students with support needs, as well as provision relating to assessments for those with particular learning difficulties or disabilities.
- Student support activities offering flexible additional pastoral and

learning support through one-to-one study skills appointments plays an integral part in the retention of students who may be considering withdrawing because of the unexpected demands of their course.

- In addition to the above support mechanisms, the College also has a dedicated student support team providing specialist information, advice and guidance, including finance and welfare support, to students throughout the entire learner lifecycle.
- The Student Services/Careers office provides students with information and guidance on career choices throughout their time at the College, advising on learning and work development, searching the local job market and brushing up on interview skills.

### **Equality & Diversity**

The College recognises that discrimination and victimisation is unacceptable and that it is in the interests of the organisation and its employees to utilise the skills of the total workforce. It is the aim of the organisation to ensure that no employee or job applicant or learner or potential learner receives less favourable facilities or treatment (either directly or indirectly) in recruitment or employment or education on the grounds of age, disability, gender / gender reassignment, marriage / civil partnership, pregnancy / maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, or sexual orientation.

Our aim is that our workforce and learners will be truly representative of all sections of society and each employee and learner feels respected and able to give of their best. We oppose all forms of unlawful and unfair discrimination or victimisation. To that end the purpose of this policy is to provide equality and fairness for all in our employment and to all learners.

All employees and learners, whether part-time, full-time or temporary, will be treated fairly and with respect. Selection for entry onto learning programmes and selection for employment, promotion, training or any other benefit will be on the basis of aptitude and ability. All employees and learners will be helped and encouraged to develop their full potential and the talents and resources of the workforce will be fully utilised to maximise the efficiency of the organisation.

Our staff will not discriminate directly or indirectly, or harass customers or clients because of age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, and sexual orientation in the provision of the College's goods and services.

### **Monitoring and oversight of this statement**

The College will review this Access and Participation statement regularly through the Senior Management Team meeting structure, making recommendations as appropriate to Academic Board and the Governing body.

In addition, as part of our annual review of policies, we will review, update and re-publish this policy as required by condition A2 of the Office for Students Regulatory Framework.

Policy Review This policy will be reviewed on an annual basis, or if there is a change in legal or other business related requirement.

### **Policy Review**

Review Date	Description	Reviewer
February 2024	Policy approved and accepted by Academic Board	Senior Management

**THE END**