



CITY OF LONDON COLLEGE

A UNIVERSITY SECTOR PREMIER College

Widening Participation & Fair Access Strategy

2025/26

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1. Introduction

The principle aim of this strategy is to contribute to defining and orchestrating the long-term vision of the City of London College's (CLC) Strategic Plan 2025-2026, 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 organisation's annual monitoring and external examiner reports. In addition, the strategy is aligned with the College's Access & Participation Plan and the current Office for Students (OfS) regulatory guidance, post the consultation in March 2025 and recent updates to the new initial conditions C5: Treating Students Fairly & E7/8 & 9 Governance.

In determining the educational character of its provision, the College confirms it provides high quality, relevant national and international academic, vocational and professional higher education provision, providing wide ranging and flexible opportunities in support of developing a global student community. The College's aim is to foster and encourage 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.

2. The College's Mission is:

- To facilitate student access to high quality and value for money higher education provision.
- 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 to contribute to the well-being of the enterprises and economies they work in.

3. 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

The College works with accrediting bodies and organisations in support of national standards in academic & vocational training. In addition, the College provides information, advice and guidance in support of graduate employment and careers development.

4. Ambition & Strategy

The College recognising that the range of audiences with whom it communicates with; 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 private 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 Recruitment strategy, to meet the challenges of the high level of skill shortages across a range of industries throughout London and the SE.

The UK has a range of professions that fall under the 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 UK student and labour market. Some sectors facing skill shortages include Engineering (Especially Oil & Gas Industry), Electronics Engineers in Aerospace & Railways, Civil Nuclear Industries, Waste Management, Medical Consultants as well as Software/IT Specialists, Graphic Designers, Animators, Social Workers & Healthcare professionals.

The Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) and the London & SE skills shortages clearly underpins 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 and the reduction in EU migrants, the College is working to extend higher education access to potential

learners from overseas and across London and the regions by working with local and national employers to ensure relevance in its educational offer.

The College reflects on its mission to ensure a strategic commitment for the further development and enhancement of strategies which include the key principles 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
- identify, recognise and support applicants who have the potential to succeed in vocational studies, but not necessarily having the normal academic record
- 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 College's 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 the elimination of barriers to learning, the College works to raise aspirations and educational attainment among prospective students from under-represented groups, preparing them for higher study.

Through the evaluation of student recruitment and admissions, learning and teaching, assessment, induction, student support, staff development, and course development, the College aims to ensure the maintenance and enhancement of academic standards and learning opportunities ensuring that all those with the potential to succeed in higher education can do so.

5. Our commitment to the widening participation agenda

The College confirms its commitment to equal opportunities and widening participation in all of its activities. Admissions procedures reiterates 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 this is the College's emerging and enhanced approach to widening access and participation supported by:

- The development and maintenance of a comprehensive and targeted programme of academic & vocational studies to increase opportunities for under-represented groups and raise aspiration in young people.
- To identify, recognise and support applicants who have the potential to succeed in higher education.

- 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:

- A targeted percentage increase in enrolments of 10% year on year of students from low socio-economic backgrounds and minority ethnic groups
- 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.
- 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. The College values and actively encourages student input into developing inclusive strategies through the use of feedback from student representatives from the Programme Committees, Quality Committee, Student Support, Disability Services, and personal tutors, to inform our strategies for access and participation.

6. Recruitment, Marketing & Pre-Entry Advice and Guidance

A series of policies including pre-course & offer stage information, admissions & enrolment information and admissions procedures, all compliant with OfS requirements and the Competitions & Markets Authority guidance on consumer protection law align with the College's Strategic Plan - 2025-2026. This recognises that the key to a successful student recruitment strategy is having a clear understanding about what, how and to whom the College communicates with. 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 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. Through its Recruitment Strategy, the College applies the principles of

corporate & ‘relationship marketing’ strategies to further develop and widen its ‘brand’ and reach into new territories.

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

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

8. Strategies to inform future curriculum planning include:

- Understanding of the requirement of a broad range of feeder institutions from colleges, 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 Colleges, 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.

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.

Market intelligence indicates that it is crucial that the College engages directly with named contacts in a range of community organisations to ensure that external contacts working with the College will become advocates for widening participation (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) etc.
- Exchange of visit opportunities — organisations to be encouraged to visit the College, to further develop an ethos and culture of mutual understanding.

9. Admissions and induction

Admissions staff make decisions based upon agreed criteria and if necessary, refer the application to an academic 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 College has a history of working closely with accrediting 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, either on-line or face to face, to confirm both academic suitability and motivation to their course

Emphasis is placed on student attendance supported by an Attendance Strategy 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 strategy and procedures adhere to the principles of fair admission and is underpinned by appropriate organisational structures and processes, providing detailed information for prospective students to help them in making decisions about the provision on offer. In addition, the College is committed to

ensuring that only students who do not meet entry requirements, are signposted to alternatives 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 Learning, Teaching & Assessment Strategy.

The Retention Strategy outlines the College's procedures for ensuring progression and retention of students with senior staff and executive managers recognising the necessity to recruit with integrity to promote positive student outcomes. In recognising its obligations to support learners with particular needs, the College has developed its strategy for students with learning difficulties and disabilities to include support for learners with disabilities and those with learning difficulties, including screening for dyslexia and self-declaration.

The College also 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.

10. 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 has student support staff providing specialist information, advice and guidance, including finance and welfare support, to students throughout the entire learner lifecycle.

Furthermore, the student services staff provide 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, 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 development 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 Executive 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. Further development of the Strategic Enhancement Plan for 2025/2026, includes reviewing 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. These can be found in the College’s externality strategy.

‘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.

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.

11. Summary of Activities and Support for Students

Strategic Aims

- 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.
- 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.
- 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.
- To operate a system of student representation, encouraging discussion and engagement with managers, staff and personal tutors

12. Key areas of dedicated student support

- The 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 both senior academic & executive management staff 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 working closely with 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 has student support staff providing specialist information, advice and guidance, including finance and welfare support, to students throughout the entire learner lifecycle.
- Students are provided with information and guidance on career choices throughout their time at the College, being advised on learning and work development, searching the local job market and brushing up on interview skills.

13. Monitoring and oversight of this statement

The College reviews its strategy documents regularly through the Executive Management Team meeting structure, making recommendations as appropriate to Academic Board and the Governing body.

The End