

Access and Participation Statement

Document Summary

Date of approval: 18/11/2019

Authorised by: Academic Board

Revision date: 08/10/21

Next revision date: 31/08/2022

1: Background

The motto of The City College is 'where students come first', and we strive to ensure that this underpins all our activities whether academic, pastoral, administrative, or professional.

Placing each student at the heart of all that we do, The City College is fully committed to providing the highest quality of service possible to help meet local and national needs and fulfil the expectations of our College community. The College provides a Higher Education (HE) environment that is founded on equality of opportunity, freedom from discrimination, and freedom from bullying and harassment. The College values the diversity of its student body and is fully committed to widening access to HE for all potential students, while minimising or removing the barriers that can exclude many from the world of HE.

The City College therefore supports the strategic priority of the UK government to 'boost social mobility, life chances and opportunity for all, and enhance the competitiveness and productivity of our economy' as enshrined in the Higher Education and Research Act, 2017.

2: The local dimension

The City College is located in the Hoxton West Ward of the London Borough of Hackney. Hackney was the eleventh most deprived local authority overall in England in the 2015 Index of Multiple Deprivation, whilst in 2010 it was ranked second. In 2015, 17% of its Lower Super Output Areas were in the top ten percent most deprived, compared with 42% in 2010. The measures of deprivation include income, employment, housing and services, living/environment and deprivation affecting, and crime. In 2020 10% of the working age population claimed out-of-work benefit, the highest rate of any London borough, and 12.1% of working-age adults do not have any qualifications in Hackney, the highest rate in London.

Hackney is a relatively young borough with a quarter of its population under 20. The proportion of residents between 20-29 years has grown in the last ten years and now stands at just under a fifth. People aged over 55 make up only 14% of the population.

Hackney is a culturally diverse area, with significant 'Other White', Black and Turkish/Kurdish communities. The Charedi Jewish community is concentrated in the North East of the borough and is growing.

Nine out of ten Hackney residents say that Hackney is a place where people from different backgrounds get on well together. Hackney's diversity and multiculturalism are the main factors contributing to residents feeling proud of the borough.

3: Provision

Provision is principally vocational, accessible and employment focussed, and provides opportunities in HE for those who may otherwise not have access to HE, many of whom are returning to education.

The College has a history of providing access to students from a variety of backgrounds. We are dedicated to providing the means through which non-traditional learners can experience and succeed in HE. The last registered data set profile showed:

- 98% students are above the age of 21

- 62% identify as women
- 38% identify as men
- 50% Black British African
- 21% White
- 10% Asian British – Bangladeshi
- 6% Black British Caribbean
- 3% Other Black background
- 2% Mixed White and Black African
- 2% Asian British (Pakistani)
- 1% Mixed White & Black Caribbean
- 1% other Asian background
- 3% Other ethnic background.

To facilitate this, the College sets transparent entry criteria for access to HE programmes, welcoming applications irrespective of background and valuing the previous work-related experience that students may bring. We are careful to ensure that every student we enrol has a reasonable expectation of success on their programme. Applicants aged over 21 years at the start of their course and who have been out of education for at least three years are classed as ‘mature students’. The prior qualifications and/ or experience of such applicants is reviewed by the College to consider if their individual profile shows they have the potential to achieve the qualification. If it does and all other requirements of the enrolment process are met, such applicants may be enrolled.

The College is also committed to providing impartial advice and guidance to ensure applicants and students are placed and supported on an appropriate programmes from application through to course completion and their future destinations. The framework for this is outlined in the College’s Student Recruitment and Admissions policy and Information, Advice and Guidance statement, and in accordance with the Expectation found in Chapter B2 of the UK Quality Code for HE.

The City College uses a range of strategies to stimulate access and participation in HE, including those identified in section 4-12 below.

4: Public information

The College publishes detailed programme information about content, costs, awards and the complaints-handling process to help students make the right choice and informs them of any changes made since application. This supports continuation, success and a good student experience.

5: Students who want to start courses at different times

The College has flexible entry points which are in January, April and September, allowing students to choose a suitable time to start studying.

6: Students returning to education

There is a comprehensive Induction programme for all new students plus a ten-week study skills programme which encompasses English, mathematics, computer skills and other necessary skills required for higher education and employability. The aim is to make a successful transition into college life and study after possibly a long gap in study.

7: Students without a formal English language qualification

The College tests all students for English, prior to entry, as part of the recruitment process. Where appropriate, support is provided to any student who may need it.

8: Teaching and Learning

High quality teaching, assessment and feedback generates an inclusive learning environment and encourages the best performance possible from students unfamiliar with the expectations of higher education. The monitoring of progress and learning support provided (see below) underpin student retention, help students to overcome barriers, and provides insight into the issues our students experience.

9: Student Retention, attainment and success

All measures are employed to mitigate any chance of a poor student experience leading to withdrawal from the course. The College takes a case-by-case approach to retention owing to the complex circumstances and needs of our students. The practice of the College is to continue supporting students experiencing difficulty providing they engage with us. This applies to students without funding too because if a student shows the necessary commitment we will do what we can to help them.

10: Student support

Support for students is extensive both inside and outside of the classroom and includes personal and welfare support, academic and study skills support and support for those students with additional learning needs. It can be seen as follows, for example:

- At the admissions interview stage, the Admissions Team identify students who require additional support (including the Disabled Students' Allowance provision)
- Study Skills classes are provided to all students including academic referencing, use of IT, communication skills, presentation skills, and academic malpractice
- Formative assessments are set on each programme, enabling staff to identify students who need additional support
- Students have access to tutorials, reviews and workshops to support their progress
- The Student Welfare Officer provides counselling to students on a confidential basis.

11: Student surveys

Participation in the National Union of Students' (NSS) and Graduate Outcome surveys publicly demonstrate the College's performance on student satisfaction, retention and employment to prospective applicants. The most recent data available indicates good levels of student satisfaction and success.

In addition, student feedback in the 2017/18 BTEC Higher National Annual Student Survey revealed 100% course satisfaction, which compares very favourably with a national average of 75%. The college was also very well reviewed in the other categories, including, for example, course and qualification information provided, level of support provided, and preparation for work or further study.

12: Careers advice

The College's employability strategy provides guidance on employment, access to external speakers, information about membership of professional bodies, guidance on creating a CV, and other key information. Employability Skills features as a taught unit in all BTEC programmes. Students acquire the knowledge, skills and attributes valued by employers, thereby enriching their personal and professional lives and are supported to achieve a good qualification and progress into work or further study first.