



## Stratford College London

### ACCESS AND PARTICIPATION STATEMENT

#### Background

Stratford College London is a comparatively small College providing higher education courses at affordable costs. Stratford College London is situated in the borough of Newham and has a natural catchment area that includes Newham, Hackney, Tower Hamlets, Greenwich and Lewisham and Haringey.

A particular problem locally is the number of people with level 4 qualifications being below the national average. In Haringey, 34% of residents live below the poverty line. 35% of Haringey residents of ages 24 – 49 do not have a level 3 qualification. Unemployment rate is 4.67% and 24.97% are on low pay. 8.90% of adults are on out of work benefits (Trust of London.org.uk)

In Tower Hamlets 43% of children live in poverty, the highest rate in London; 7.7% of the working age people are unemployed; 32% of adults lack qualifications and 8.10% are on out of work benefits.

In Newham 36% of working residents are on low paid jobs, the highest percentage in London. Unemployment rate is 5.8%; and 41% adults lack qualifications.

The above socio-economic factors require that prospective students and those who aspire to access HE Courses are encouraged and given opportunity to gain admission to HE study, through flexible and alternative routes. The College considered the above analysis in the contrivance of its Access and Widening Participation Statement with the aim of enhancing access to HE study for the poorly represented groups within our target boroughs.

This commitment to widening access and participation is embedded In the College Strategic Plan 2020 – 2025 (Vision 2025), which envisions the creation of a learning environment which accommodates the educational needs of students of all backgrounds and ages.

The College's strategy and policies set out our commitment to fair access, including the minimising of barriers for applicants. In addition to setting transparent criteria for entry to our HE programmes, we welcome applications from those with non-traditional educational backgrounds and value work related experience in the selection process. To encourage this category of prospective applicants and enhance their admission prospects, the College provides information, advice and guidance (IAG) which is overseen by the Admissions Committee.



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### Widening Participation Initiatives

- Use of community data to identify underrepresented groups in HE
- Effective and targeted marketing strategy
- Simplified and affordable tuition fee structure
- Transparent & Fair Admissions Policy & Procedure
- Flexible tuition schedules to enhance work-study approach for mature students
- Identification of those with additional support needs
- Tutorial and individual specific support to create inclusive learning environment and improve retention and completion rates
- Develop progression routes to industry and the conversion of HNC and HND qualifications into full degrees through partnership arrangements with UK Universities.
- Embedding Employability Skills in the College curriculum and work closely with industry to enhance the employment prospects of our students.

### Expected Outcomes

- The College aims to play a part in offering greater opportunity for prospective students from underrepresented groups to access Higher Education study through encouragement and facilitation of flexible and fair admissions and procedures.
- To ensure that these target groups continue with their HE studies, the College teaching and learning strategy promotes flexible student support activities as well as the use of bespoke individual support mechanisms to enhance learner achievement. We believe in the enhancement of student completion rates through increased motivation and reduced frustration.
- To help reduce the gap between students from underrepresented groups and other students. We aim to establish and maintain collaborative arrangements with UK Universities to create opportunity for students to progress on to degree level after completing their HNC/HND programmes of study.

### Strategy

We aim to pursue admission targets which reflect 50% intake from those groups beset with socio-economic challenges in our targeted boroughs. These include those living in areas of low household income and low HE participation.

We will target an intake of 60% overall from mature applicants. Our effective and targeted marketing strategy will help identify and motivate mature students to make a lifetime decision to pursue HE study to enhance their socio-economic status and employment prospects.



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The College access and widening participation will focus on a 4 stage approach:

- Targeting and encouraging underrepresented groups in the communities to pursue HE studies;
- Facilitate the admission process by implementing non-traditional routes of entry to HE;
- identify specific areas of learning needs and put in place support mechanisms to enhance achievement;
- Embed employability skills and employer engagement in the College Employability Strategy to enhance the job and career prospects of our learners.

The essence of embedding employability skills and employer engagement in the curriculum is to ensure that such learners on completion of the HE study do not find themselves in the situation in which they were before embarking upon HE study.

Research indicates that many graduates from University are not fit for employment. The College access and widening participation seeks to contribute towards reversing this perception by linking students with industry during their time of study to expose them to the skills that industry seeks when dealing with job seekers.

To enhance the achievement of the above, the College will work in partnership with the following organisation:

### **Access HE**

AccessHE activities will support our access and widening participation. There are half-day events which inform communities of opportunities in HE study and support mechanisms to enhance admission, achievement and progression.

We will cooperate with AccessHE in their legacy programme which supports Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic Learners to improve access to and succeed in HE study.

### **Student Consultation and Engagement**

Stratford College London perceives HE provision as a partnership arrangement between the provider and its learners. The partner-learner therefore needs to be fully engaged in the delivery of the programme to create an inclusive learning environment in which the provider is aware of learner needs from the onset and learner made aware of support mechanisms available.

Students play a significant role in the development of access and widening participation policy and practice at Stratford College London. The College has plans which, upon approval, will create a student advisory panel to act as a forum in which students from a range of backgrounds would contribute towards enhancing support for specific groups across the student lifecycle.



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The College aims to facilitate student engagement at all levels, including the use of our Student Representative Council (SRC) to explore specific issues, making use of current students' feedback to enhance the understanding of student challenges and the development of supportive practice.

We will work continuously with the student representatives to ensure that mechanisms for delivering the support on offer are fit for purpose and in the best interests of students.

### **Evaluation**

The College Admission Cycle will be evaluated on an annual basis to ascertain the extent to which student recruitment targets have been achieved and to inform revision of strategy and the impact made on access to HE in the underrepresented groups in our target boroughs. Prospective and current students will play a significant role in the evaluation process in order to assess the effectiveness of our targeted marketing, information on HE access and opportunities and the quality of student support available at the College.