

## **Croydon College**

### **Access and Participation Statement 2020-21**

#### **Introduction**

Croydon College is committed to widening participation and access to higher education for all students. The College has been delivering higher education for many years and has recently reviewed its provision to ensure that it remains industry-relevant and meets the needs of our local community. Croydon College remains committed to offering affordable higher education to its students.

The College's higher education (HE) students primarily come from Croydon and its neighbouring boroughs. Croydon shares similar demographic, economic and social characteristics with its neighbouring inner and outer London boroughs and has:

- the second highest overall population of all London boroughs
- one of the largest populations of children and young people
- one of the highest proportions of black and minority ethnic groups in South London
- some of the most deprived areas of London and the UK.

The College serves some of the most deprived wards in Croydon and neighbouring boroughs and many of our HE Students are from non-traditional backgrounds. They are often the first members of their families to achieve higher education qualifications and have progressed into aspirational employment opportunities using the higher level skills they have gained.

As a Further Education College with a Higher Education provision, the College's mission statement is clear: It is ambitious for its community and seeks to provide outstanding education and training opportunities for all. We strive to raise aspirations and change the lives of the people living, working, and learning around us.

The College's Strategic Drivers (2017-2022) ties in with its mission and it remains committed to offering access to higher education to meet the needs of its community and its students. It remains committed to offering support to its students to enable them to achieve to the best of their abilities.

#### **Access and admissions**

The majority of the College's higher education student population comes from non-traditional backgrounds. 94% of the HE population comes from local areas and reflects the local demographic. The majority of students are from underrepresented groups; 76% are BAME students, 87% are Mature students (over 21) with a further 53% over the age of 30. The gender split has shifted to a predominately female student population (87%). Furthermore, 73% is from the EIMD quintile 1 and 2.<sup>1</sup> In 2019-20, 21% of the HE student body has declared a disability and almost a third of those have declared mental health.<sup>2</sup>

The College's higher education portfolio has been recently realigned to meet the needs of the local community with a focus on social sciences including public health, social care, early childhood studies, criminology and social justice. It also provides higher education courses in law, business and management studies.

We understand that fee levels are a significant consideration in student participation and cost can be a potential barrier to participation. The College is reviewing its fee levels and recognises that higher education fee levels have increased significantly across England.

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<sup>1</sup> Data from the Office for Students, contextual data B3 Quality and Standards, provider, 05/07/2019.

<sup>2</sup> Internal student data 2019/20, ProSolution.

However, the College remains committed to providing low fee HE courses to encourage participation whilst generating sufficient income to maintain high quality teaching facilities, industry standard learning environments, and pastoral and financial support for students who need it.

The College's Admissions Policy<sup>3</sup> has been aligned with its Strategic Drivers to maximise access opportunities for students from non-traditional routes to higher education. It also follows the guidelines from the UK Quality Code for Higher Education for fair and transparent admissions. The College is continuing to review its admissions and recruitment procedures to ensure its approach is supportive and clear to all prospective students. The College's Student Services team is tasked to offer advice and guidance on academic services including available pastoral support. Prospective students are guided through the application cycle at each stage and further supported during the enrolment process.

In addition to its Admissions Policy, the College reviews its policies and procedures annually to ensure inclusive access but also inclusive participation for its students. It is committed to meeting the needs of its students with declared learning difficulties, disabilities and/or ongoing health conditions that may cause a barrier to their education. The College's General and Assessment Regulations are reviewed annually and outlines the process by which adjustments to learning and assessment are adapted for disabled students. The regulations incorporates the principle of reasonable adjustments to enable accessibility for all students. It is accessible to students and published on the internal Student Hub.

### **Participation: Inclusivity, equality and respect for all**

The College is committed to its strategic objective to create an inclusive and supportive learning environment. It has implemented a Respect for All Policy<sup>4</sup>, which clearly sets out its commitment to create a safe and supportive learning environment for all individuals.

Furthermore, the College is committed to fair access and widening participation through ensuring its programmes are accessible to all students as outlined in its Equality Strategy<sup>5</sup>. The strategy is compliant with the Equality Act 2010 to ensure fair and transparent recruitment and inclusive delivery methods for students with disabilities.

The College regularly consults with its students to ensure their needs are met. For example, student consultation has led to the adjustment of timetables to allow optimum attendance for those with childcare responsibilities. In addition, the College's HE provision includes a variety of learning and teaching methods to encourage and support access and participation. The College continues to invest in its virtual learning environment (VLE) to support and enhance learning for its students.

### **Supporting our students**

The College supports its student through a variety of mechanisms. Support is provided through its Study Plus (Additional Learning Support) team and HE students benefit from a dedicated counsellor for issues including mental health and well-being. Support is available free of charge on campus. To enable academic progression and achievement, the College has an academic support programme in place which includes tutorial support, study skills tutors, digital resources for academic and pastoral concerns, as well as reasonable adjustment practices. The College is committed to providing reasonably available support for all its students. It is reviewing its Study Plus provision and have already secured a dedicated HE learning support practitioner, a need highlighted through student feedback.

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<sup>3</sup> <https://croydon.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/Admissions-and-Progressions-Policy-November-2019-20.pdf>

<sup>4</sup> [https://croydon.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/01/Respect-for-All-Policy\\_January2020.pdf](https://croydon.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/01/Respect-for-All-Policy_January2020.pdf)

<sup>5</sup> <https://croydon.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/08/equality-strategy.pdf>

The College is aware of the rise in mental health issues affecting a large proportion of the population and also our students. The College is continuing its work with the London Local Authority and local NHS to improve and support its student community and their mental health needs. As mentioned above, our HE students have free access to an onsite counsellor by appointment.

Furthermore, the College supports students with employability support through its careers advice centre, World of Work. It is a dedicated centre created to providing support with, amongst other things, in-year work experience placements, DBS checking facility and developing resume writing skills. It provides careers advice and guidance through its database of employers. It is designed to facilitate progression to employment for students and to support their professional development.

### **Student Voice**

The College's Student Voice actively feeds into its quality processes and is designed to allow improvements in programme delivery and support. Students have many opportunities throughout the academic year to feedback and into its quality improvement processes. Student participation and representation on committees, including the Student Council, is encouraged and promoted throughout the year. Student Voice allows the College to improve, develop and review student-related policies. The College has also adopted a Complements and Complaints procedure to allow students ad hoc opportunities for anonymous feedback to further facilitate improvements to delivery and available support.

As mentioned, student consultation has resulted in a range of improvements recently, including the appointment of a dedicated HE Learning Support Practitioner to support academic attainment and progression, a dedicated common room to create a feeling of community amongst HE students, and flexible timetables to accommodate our mature student body with childcare responsibilities. The College continues to listen to its students to enable them to benefit from quality higher education.

### **Access and participation aims**

The College's access and participation strategy aligns with its HE Strategy (2016/17-2021/22). Croydon College's specific aims for access and participation in 2020-21 will continue to focus on:

- Improving completion and achievement of students on higher education programmes from underrepresented groups
- Improving progression into sustained employment or further study of all students but particularly its BAME students
- Use a learner journey centred approach through outreach initiatives to raise awareness and improve student attitudes to higher education amongst our FE learners, enabling them to make informed decisions about the impact of HE on their future.

We are actively working with higher education providers in and around London to broaden progression pathways for our students to encourage postgraduate opportunities and ambitions. We are also reviewing our available academic support practices and pastoral services to ensure students benefit from support at every stage of their student journey to allow for academic progression and also to enhance continuation. We will continue to offer an affordable and inclusive higher education portfolio to ensure fair access for all with a real commitment to continuation and employability.

**Reviewing and monitoring impact**

The College will review the impact of its access and participation strategies on an annual basis and make adjustments if found that strategies are ineffective. In particular, the support function is under review to ensure mechanisms are in place to improve student continuation. Additionally, the College is committed to improving its destination of leavers' data, which will be used to evaluate the effectiveness of its enrichment programme on offer.

*Croydon College's Access and Participation Statement has been reviewed by the College's relevant committees and approved by the Board of Governors. It will be reviewed annually to ensure its aims remain relevant and up to date.*

*The Access and Participation Statement is available on the College's website.*