

College Higher Education Strategy

| | |
|------------------|------------------|
| Date of issue | May 2024 |
| Approved by | HESB & Governors |
| Scheduled review | Three Years |
| Available on | Intranet |



1.1 This strategy sets out the college direction of travel so that it will deliver high quality provision at Higher Education for levels 4 and 5 that is highly valued by students and our communities that contributes to economic growth and wealth building

1.2 This strategy aims to build on the college's success as a high performing FE (Further Education) in college in London and to build a reputation as a trusted provider of distinctive, high quality technical education for Higher Education (HE) focused on levels 4 and 5 in specified subject areas aligned to local and regional skills identified in the LSIP and college curriculum strategy.

1.3 The College Strategic Plan and Employer Engagement Strategies targets building trusted relationships with students, employers, and stakeholders acting as an anchor institution leading to jobs growth, employment pathways and sustainability.

1.4 The College Intent on Curriculum Planning is set out in its Curriculum Planning Strategy and is to target the college growth and specialisms to support local, regional, and national priorities in:

- Construction & Built Environment,
- Engineering,
- Creative & Information Technologies
- Health and Care and Hospitality.

The College Estates Strategy prioritises investment in these curriculum areas to provide up-to-date and specialist suites, workshops to support high quality teaching, learning and assessment.

1.5 The college has created a governance and structure that facilitates effective leadership, management, and oversight of L4+ curriculum. The four objectives against which the college is assessed by the OfS (Office for Students) are that all students, from all backgrounds, with the ability and desire to undertake HE are:

- Supported to access, succeed in and progress from higher education
- Provided with a high-quality academic experience and their interests are protected while they study in the event of provider, campus, or course closure
- Able to progress in employment or further study and that their qualifications hold value over time
- In receipt of value for money

1.6 The college corporation devolves responsibility for curriculum matters to the college senior leadership team which has a formally constituted HE Steering Board (HESB) that provides strategic oversight of operational matters. The HE Oversight Board together with the Academic Curriculum and Quality Committee (ACQC) and Data Registry and Finance (DRF) Committee have responsibility for rationale, standards, and quality of HE courses and student experience. Corporation oversight is regulated via HE Oversight Board which reports into the college corporation governance structure via the Curriculum & Quality Committee to full Corporation and this ensures regulatory compliance.

1.7 There are five college priorities in setting the direction of HE for the college aligned to Higher Education Quality and Standards as outlined by the Office for Students (OfS)¹ underpinned by the functions, duties and powers given to it in the Higher Education and Research Act 2017 (HERA). These are:

- (1) Priority One – Quality of Student Experience**
- (2) Priority Two – Curriculum Offer**
- (3) Priority Three – People**
- (4) Priority Four – Promotion**
- (5) Priority Five – Governance & Structure**

2. Background & Context

2.1 Waltham Forest is an outer London borough characterised by lower qualification levels, lower employment, and lower salary levels relative to the rest of London. Most businesses in the area (93%) are micro-businesses, employing fewer than 10 people. The average salary in the borough is lower than the London average, at £30,900. Waltham Forest is currently ranked 35th most deprived borough nationally according to the 2015 Index of Multiple Deprivation. Only 32% of the residents have secondary qualifications as their highest academic achievement while 25% have either no schooling or only up to primary level education.

2.2 The area is served with access to other Higher Education Institutions (HEI) from the University of East London to the south-east of the borough in Stratford and a newly established small base if the University of Portsmouth London campus in E17 – both offering Level 6 qualifications or above. There is very little supply of high-quality technical qualifications at Levels 4/5 in the area - seen as the missing middle by the government – and a key to improving the UK's productivity.

2.3 The college offers a very small number of Level 4 vocational qualifications and apprenticeships and a Level 5 Diploma in Teaching for in-service delivery to college teachers. The college has a Curriculum Strategy that identifies the key local needs and has reviewed its intention to offer technical qualifications in HNC/D in key priority areas for the local economy in: Health & Care, Engineering and Business through the changes in funding and loans. The college curriculum will seek to take advantage of changes in funding with the Lifelong Loan Entitlement from 2025 to seek to widen higher technical qualifications above level 3 in the college and help meet local skills needs and support students into higher paid work. For learners not ready for advanced technical study, the college will revise and adapt its curriculum accordingly with the Lifetime Skills Guarantee which will allow students to access the skills needed to be successful.

3. Priorities

Priority 1 Quality of Student Experience

Facilitate a high-quality student experience to enable students to gain sustained employment through the development of work and life skills. This will be achieved through:

- i. Empowering students to make informed decisions in partnership with staff. This will facilitate students in taking responsibility for their learning, in a co-creation model, which recognises students and staff as partners that together create an academic community. This approach allows students to be involved in planning their learning experience, challenging themselves and peers and engaging with those who teach them.
- ii. Using student feedback to further enhance the quality of the provision and use their experience in college and while on course to lead to change and development. This will support enhancement in their own and future students' experiences and enable the college to innovate and improve approaches to teaching, learning and assessment.
- iii. Preparing students for a world of employment opportunities where wider skills in teamwork and associated soft skills are valued alongside vocational and technical expertise.
- iv. Continuing to invest in learning resources and technologies recognised by students and employers as creating a realistic environment in the areas in which they are studying.

We will review and monitor this and know this is achieved when:

- i. Academic teaching and support are judged excellent by our students.
- ii. Students are stretched to achieve the highest possible grades in their awards so they can realise their academic and professional potential.

- iii. Students' views are used in reviews and decision-making processes by course teams with actions set and monitored and this is reflected in students through feedback surveys.
- iv. Students engage in a range of Quality Assurance processes that lead to improvements, including course validation
- v. The college and the student body work collectively to bring about improvements and collaborate to ensure there is advice and support for students

Priority 2 Curriculum Offer

Review, revise and provide a Higher Education offer for students and employers that are high quality and meet local and regional skills priorities in a sustainable way. This will be achieved through:

- i. Curriculum developments being informed by local, regional, and national labour market needs and developments in industry to help develop an appropriately skilled and qualified workforce.
- ii. Working effectively with key employers to co-create higher level awards for approved accreditation by the relevant awarding bodies.
- iii. Developing our network of industry specialists and employers who contribute to the design and delivery of HE programmes ensuring sector relevance and supporting progression into employment
- iv. Building a curriculum that is resilient and has unique selling points to attract students and support widening participation.
- v. Develop appropriate routes in HE including HNCs (Higher National Certificate) (Higher National Certificate), HNDs (Higher National Diploma) (Higher National Diploma) (Higher National Diploma) (Higher National Diploma) and Higher Apprenticeships, along with alternative modes of delivery to attract a wider demographic.

We will review and monitor this and know this is achieved when:

- i. The curriculum offer is flexible to meet employer and student needs leading to effective student recruitment.
- ii. Delivery of qualifications that lead to strong progression into highly skilled sector-specific employment.
- iii. Employers and sector specialists participate in and contribute to curriculum delivery including design and input.

Priority 3 People

Deploy and develop our people to meet the needs of education, employer, and community partnerships to grow and sustain a high-quality HE offer. This will be achieved through:

- i. Recruiting leaders, managers and teachers who deliver excellence and who meet the college's high expectations.
- ii. Ensure effective course leadership to deliver high quality education contributing to an excellent student experience.
- iii. Provide opportunities for all teachers to engage with employers to ensure delivery and content is current and evolving to meet industry needs.
- iv. Extend and develop our academic network through the sharing of pedagogic practices with other academics from Advance HE and partner organisations
- v. Recruit, support and develop staff who work with students effectively to enable them to discover things for themselves and support innovation and creativity in their work.

We will review and monitor this and know this is achieved when:

- i. Teaching teams are skilled at creating curricula and using pedagogies which meet the needs of their students and sector expectations.

- ii. Staff maximize their industrial links and expertise to enhance student experience.
- iii. Strong and effective course leadership leads to excellent outcomes for students.
- iv. Staff undertake continuous professional development which enhances the quality of students' learning experiences.

Priority 4 Promotion

Ensure the promotion of our HE offer fully informs students, employers and key stakeholders including accurate CEIAG, progression, career opportunities and value for money through a whole college approach to marketing and recruitment which includes widening participation and internal progression.

This will be achieved through:

- i. College staff see marketing and recruiting as a shared responsibility.
- ii. Marketing and recruitment activities provide a high-quality experience for applicants.
- iii. Providing a clear line of sight and aspiration for internal applicants for progression into college HE and ultimately high-quality sector relevant employment.
- iv. Building on local partnerships, including schools and sixth forms, to further open up access to HE to provide developments in widening participation through effective engagement in our local community.
- v. Ensuring our HE offer demonstrates good value for money through the quality of teaching, fair assessment and feedback and high-quality resources.

We will review and monitor this and know this is achieved when:

- i. Course teams and college recruitment teams are proactive in maximising marketing opportunities, including taster events leading to increased student recruitment.
- ii. We are successful in meeting our Widening Participation policy to make accessible pathways in HE to for economically valuable courses to local people.
- iii. Internal progression to HE courses improves year on year.
- iv. Over 85% of L4/L5 students achieve positive destinations into employment or higher levels of study.

Priority 5 Governance and Structure

Ensure that the governance and management structures remain a crucial function for the college with accountability at all levels within the organisation clearly articulated to maintain adherence to regulatory HE framework from the OfS.

This will be achieved through:

- i. Responsibility for the strategic direction lies with the Board of Governors and oversight and accountability of HE sits within the college Senior Leadership Teams.
- ii. Managing a deliberative committee structure that draws membership from across the college, including student representatives, to make recommendations, ensure compliance and operate transparently for HE decision making.
- iii. Reviewing the quality of student experience via the agreed framework.
- iv. Implementing a robust set of standards and procedures that meet regulatory requirements and improve student experience.

We will review and monitor this and know when this is achieved when:

- i. OfS registration and recognition is in place and maintained.
- ii. Committee minutes and actions are continuously improving student experience.
- iii. An agreed HE Quality and Policy Framework is in operation to review and raise standards.
- iv. Annual Self-Evaluation Documents and associated development plans are in place.

This document should be read and considered in conjunction with the following:

- **College Higher Education Quality & Policy Framework**
- **Deliberative Committee Handbook & associated policies and processes**
- **College Curriculum Strategy**
- **College Employer Engagement Strategy**
- **College Student Engagement Strategy**
- **College Widening Participation & Access Statement & Plan (annual)**
- **Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion Policy**
- **Higher Education Access and Participation Statement**
- **Higher Education Student Communications Policy**
- **Higher Education Student Engagement Policy**
- **Safeguarding & Prevent Policy**
- **Staff Recruitment & CPD Policies**
- **ICT Acceptable Usage Policy**

Document Change Record

| Version | Description of Change | Changes Made By | Date | SLT App Date |
|---------|-----------------------|-----------------|------|--------------|
| V.1.0 | • | | | |
| | | | | |
| | | | | |