

Access & Participation Statement 2025 - 2026

Responsible post holder	Director of Higher Education
Approved by / on	
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Relationship to Strategic Goal	To create growth and opportunities for all prospective students through a college wide approach to access and participation
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1. Introduction and Context

The Access and Participation statement outlines the College's commitment to widening access and participation to students from disadvantaged areas and most deprived wards and providing accessible, transparent and fair information, advice and guidance to all. The College has played a significant role in the South East London community, providing education which makes a real and positive difference to people's lives by achieving the below:

- Encouraging applications from all those with the motivation and ability to thrive at LSEC, whatever their background
- Student choice and value for money, keeping affordable fee model
- Fair and effective admissions policy
- Additional support to improve success and progression in Higher Education
- Flexible provision to support transition into higher education
- Further development of access to Higher Education provision, adult courses and Foundation Years

When assessing our responsiveness to access and participation, we will evaluate how our provision and organisation reflects and supports our community and current and future student population. According to the 2021 Census, the most ethnically diverse region in England and Wales remains London, where 46.2% of residents identified as from the Black, Asian, Mixed, or Other ethnic groups.

In 2021, only 36.8% of Londoners identified as White British, the lowest share across all regions. By contrast, the North East had the highest percentage of White British people, at 90.6%. Looking at broader "White" ethnicity (i.e., including non-British white), in 2021 White people made up 53.8% of London's population. Meanwhile, the South East has the largest share of white ethnic population overall. According to regional data, 78.8% of people in the South East identified as White British, with a further proportion being White Other

Regarding non-White groups, the 2021 data shows high concentrations in London:

- Asian: 20.7% in London (vs 9.3% for England & Wales)
- Black: 13.5% in London
- Mixed: 5.7% in London
- Other: 6.3% in London

Overall, across England and Wales in 2021:

81.7% of residents were from "White" ethnic groups. White British made up 74.4% of the population. Asian (all) accounted for 9.3%, Black 4.0%, Mixed 2.9%, and Other 2.1%.

Following a review of LSEC University Centre EDI data for 2024/25, the current cohort profile shows the following:

Age

- **16–18:** 11%
- **19+:** 89.1%

Ethnic Group

- **White:** 58.2%
- **Black:** 23.9%
- **Asian:** 6.8%
- **Mixed:** 6.3%
- **Other:** 3.7%
- **Unknown:** 1.1%

Disability

- **Disabled:** 16%
- **Not Disabled:** 83.8%
- **Unknown:** 0.2%

Sexual Orientation

- **Heterosexual:** 72.9%
- **LGBTQ+:** 2.2%
- **Unknown:** 24.9%

Religious Belief

- **Christian:** 35.4%

- **No Religion:** 29.3%
- **Muslim:** 9.2%
- **Hindu:** 3.3%
- **Other:** 3.7%
- **Unknown:** 19%

Gender

- **Female:** 44.9%
- **Male:** 55.1%

The Access and Participation statement reflects LSEC's commitment to widening participation for learners from disadvantaged and underrepresented groups, and the 2024/25 EDI profile indicates that the University Centre broadly aligns with the diversity of its surrounding South East London community.

While London remains the most ethnically diverse region in England and Wales—with 46.2% of residents identifying as Black, Asian, Mixed or Other—the LSEC cohort demonstrates a similar pattern, with 37% of students from these groups. The proportion of Black students (23.9%) is significantly higher than the national average of 4% and broadly reflective of London's 13.5% demographic, suggesting strong engagement from local Black communities. Asian representation (6.8%) is below London's 20.7% but close to national levels, and Mixed ethnicity students (6.3%) are proportionately above the national 2.9%. The higher-than-average participation of adult learners (89.1% aged 19+) also aligns with the College's mission to provide flexible, inclusive routes into higher education for non-traditional and returning learners.

Representation across disability, gender, religion and sexual orientation shows a varied and diverse student body, supporting the College's commitment to fair access, targeted support and responsive provision. Overall, the data suggests that LSEC is effectively serving its local population and widening access in line with its Access and Participation priorities, while highlighting opportunities to enhance engagement with certain ethnic groups and strengthen targeted progression pathways.

This 2024/25 EDI profile provides a comprehensive understanding of the cohort and will support targeted actions to strengthen inclusion, accessibility and representation across all programmes. The stability of the 2024/25 EDI data provides strong assurance that LSEC's strategies to widen access and participation are effective, particularly in relation to engagement from ethnically diverse and adult learner communities. The current cohort profile demonstrates a significantly more balanced and inclusive ethnic representation compared to national averages, reflecting the College's success in serving the needs of its local South East London population.

These positive outcomes indicate that existing approaches are working well and should be retained, while future strategies should continue to build on these strengths to further enhance inclusivity, progression and targeted support. The development, delivery and ongoing monitoring of the Access and Participation Statement will remain the responsibility of the College's Senior Management Team, ensuring that good practice is sustained and that the College continues to respond effectively to the needs of current and future learners. Through this leadership, LSEC will continue to embed fair access, transparent guidance and flexible pathways that support learners from all backgrounds to enter, succeed and progress within higher education.

2. Statement on Access, Student Success, Progression and Retention

London South East Colleges Higher Education Strategy 2021-26, sets out how LSEC University Centre aims to improve equality of opportunity for the communities it operates in, providing students with access to a high quality, industry led offer that will enable progression and establish itself as a community anchor. Building on the Group social enterprise strategy, LSEC strives to be more than just an Educational Institution, with a relentless drive to add value to the communities, people and employers it comes into contact with.

There are five main strategic goals:

Goal One:	Innovative curriculum that meets employer skills requirements and is reflective of the local community needs, whilst providing the skills to access both the national and international workforce markets
Goal Two:	To create growth and opportunities for all prospective students through a college wide approach to access and participation
Goal Three:	To establish a University Centre structure that empowers accountability and fosters a culture that supports a career pathway approach throughout the college
Goal Four:	To demonstrate a commitment to enhanced student support that will cultivate and strengthen opportunities to increase Social value
Goal Five:	To develop a culture of high-quality provision, outstanding delivery and student success, which will be supported by timely and comprehensive data

While the growth of provisions provides a sustainable foundation for a high quality HE offer, ensuring that our access and participation strategies support our approach to Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) across the group is vital. It will form a cornerstone in our curriculum design, delivery models, support arrangements and marketing approaches.

As an institution we will seek to evaluate against cultural norms and plan how the University Centre will tackle difficult narratives to ensure positive cultural and behavioural change. The University Centre will meet the current challenges identified in Higher Education such as challenging critical Whiteness within organisational development to bridge the gap of Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) attainment gap.

We know that learners from non-traditional backgrounds typically need more support to sustain and complete their studies - both pastoral and academic. At LSEC there are a high proportion of learners from non-traditional backgrounds and there are many and varied resources for all learners that will enhance their journey e.g. additional learning support needs are clearly understood, identification and implementation of effective ALS monitoring is embedded into enrolment and curriculum planning systems, commitment to embedding well-being and mental health initiatives, boosting the skills required for progression onto higher-level employment and further study through a bespoke HE Career Advantage framework.

Maintaining retention and continuation is fundamental and will be achieved through a specific focus on student attainment e.g.

- sharing retention and attainment data, in a timely and accessible manner at a programme, department, school, and faculty level
- the use of differentiation and individual student data to ensure individual learning styles are explored and teaching responds to student needs to improve attainment and the development of graduate attributes
- promotion of peer-led learning to help build students' expectations and confidence
- address unconscious bias and develop equality and diversity competence in staff and students.
- embedding equality and diversity within policy and practice to increase retention and engagement, and enrich curricula, learning and teaching.

The college has strategic alliance with Canterbury Christ Church University and University of Greenwich to develop and deliver curriculum to promote access and widening participation.

The College's Admissions Policy is clearly aligned to the College's overall strategic aims, the Teaching, Learning and Assessment Strategy and our Excellence in Community Responsiveness. It is our intention to deliver the highest level of professional and Customer Service to ensure each individual from their first point of contact with London South East Colleges is directed to the right course, at the right level, with the right support. The overall aim of this policy is to ensure an effective, efficient and coordinated admissions process that upholds the values of equality and inclusion along with maximising the potential and employability of our current and future students. The College will achieve this aim by:

- Assessing each application carefully and fairly
- Ensuring appropriate course placement based on interest, entry criteria, assessed skill level (including English and maths) and aspiration
- Offering places to applicants who have the potential to do well in Higher Education at the College

In addition to setting transparent criteria for entry to Higher Education courses, the College welcomes applications irrespective of background and from mature students with industry experience. The College is committed to providing impartial advice and guidance to ensure our applicants and students are placed and supported on appropriate courses from application through to course completion and onwards to their future destinations.

This is outlined in full in the College's Admissions Policy.

The College actively conducts outreach work in the community engaging with local schools, other colleges, employers, community groups and working closely with Linking London and Partner Universities, University of Greenwich, Ravensbourne and Canterbury Christ Church University.

In addition, the College is committed to providing progression opportunities to best meet the needs of students, enhancing their career opportunities and long-term earning potential. This is achieved by building productive working relationships with academic, support staff, employer engagement teams and pastoral staff at the college. There is a wide range of higher education programmes on offer, enabling the target students to gain a broad understanding of the different types of higher education programmes that are available for local students.

The college works to maintain its links with Linking London and works to be part of ongoing initiatives to support access and participation. As well as continue internal College support working with our college Well-Being, Careers Team, Student Support teams and dedicated Higher Education ALS staff. Each of these resources support students in their requirements as well as sign posting them to further resources within the College.

We work closely with our University Partners and Employer groups to create opportunities and education around the support and the ongoing success of our students.

The aims of the Access and Participation work are to:

- Increase the target student's knowledge and awareness of studying in higher education;
- Build long-term relationships between target students and staff who are supported by undergraduates to raise aspirations;
- Understand the barriers that target students face, and offer solutions to overcome these barriers where possible;
- Support achievement inside and beyond the classroom to ensure that students are in a position to progress to higher education;
- Encourage student engagement with other interventions that are being delivered as part of the widening access agenda;
- Encourage the student to develop long-term aims and objectives linked to their career aspirations;

Transitional and on-going support for students are extensive both inside and outside of the classroom and include personal and welfare support, academic and study skills support and personalised support for students with additional learning needs.

3. Conclusion

London South East Colleges are focused on achieving excellence on our strategic aim and objectives outlined within our vision, mission and values. Adopting a variation of measures to manage quality processes for excellence will involve collaborative approach and innovative practices, whereby success indicators are an integral practice towards the attainment and monitoring of access and participation targets.