

Access and Participation Statement

Introduction

1. Situated within the London Borough of Tower Hamlets midway between the affluent Canary Wharf and the City, Brit college is sensitive to the diversity within the demographics of its location. Tower Hamlets is projected to be the fastest growing borough in London over the next ten years, at 26% compared to 10% for Greater London and 7% for England.^{1,2} The borough is ranked 6th most deprived in England and highest in London³, with one quarter of its residents being income deprived. This is based on the income domain measure (the proportion of residents in an area who are experiencing income deprivation).
2. Brit College has been operating a widening participation-driven strategy since 2015, with a view to resolve the social and economic imbalances within the borough between the affluent and the deprived groups of the Borough. Target groups identified in the College's widening participation agenda are in line with the criteria Office for Fair Access (OFFA) specified in the strategic plan for 2015-2020. These include disadvantaged groups within the borough who would not otherwise have access to and benefit from higher education, the disabled and disadvantaged lower social-economic groups who may experience income deprivation such as carers for children or the elderly and ethnic minorities under-represented in higher education.
3. Although the College has maintained fees at the designated level for Alternative Providers (AP), the main aim of its strategy is to provide fair access to its programmes, to these disadvantaged sections of the local community. The College's commitment to widening participation is enshrined within its five year strategy to 2021. The strategy⁴ defines widening participation as taking higher education to the harder to reach sections of the communities within Tower Hamlets and neighbouring boroughs. The College's mission, central to this strategy, is *"...to become a leading provider of skills development to hard-to-reach communities through the delivery of innovative and customised learning programmes focusing on Employability and Widening Participation"*.

¹http://www.towerhamlets.gov.uk/Documents/Borough_statistics/Population/Population_Projections_for_Tower_Hamlets_January_2016.pdf. Accessed 17 August 2016

²http://www.towerhamlets.gov.uk/lgnl/community_and_living/borough_statistics/population.aspx. Accessed 17 July 2016

³http://www.towerhamlets.gov.uk/Documents/Borough_statistics/Income_poverty_and_welfare/Indices_of_Deprivation. Accessed 17 August 2016

⁴ Brit College Strategic Plan 2016 to 2021

4. [Employability, Student Engagement and Enhancement](#) themes support the widening participation strategy.

5. Widening participation does not only allow the harder to reach sections of the community to secure higher education, but also helps to increase their retention on their course of study. This in turn enables such students to progress to achieve their ambitions. Current statistics⁵ show that students 40% of the College's leavers progress to run their own businesses, 30% to university and 25% to employment on completing their studies.

Implementation of Fair Access

Commitment to the needs of the communities

6. Brit College has demonstrated its commitment to the needs of its local communities by taking deliberate steps back in 2013 which saw an increase in the intake of residents of the local boroughs from 15% to 90% by 2015. It modelled its curriculum around employability, the primary need of the area, and selecting optional units on the HND programme designed to impart to its students personal development, enterprise, leadership and management skills as well as the ability to integrate developing technologies in marketing, sales and everyday business

7. The college established an Employers' Forum to help identify the local employment needs, provide opportunities for work experience and offer job placements, and to develop the curriculum that appropriately meet these needs.

Mirroring demographics

8. The college recruits students that mirror the population profiles of the local boroughs. Fifty five per cent (55%) of the population of Tower Hamlets are BME communities⁶ with the highest unemployment rates⁷ and often disadvantaged in accessing higher education. This is mirrored by the College's student body that has 60% BME's.


Narrowing the age gap

9. Sixty Eight per cent (68%) of the population in Tower Hamlets is above the age 21. These at 94% constitute the highest number of students at the College recruited through the mature entry route. However, the College

⁵ Brit College Annual Monitoring Report 2015-16

⁶ http://www.towerhamlets.gov.uk/Documents/Borough_statistics/Ward_profiles/Census-2011/RB-Census2011-Ethnicity-2013-01.pdf. Accessed 16 January 2017

⁷ http://www.towerhamlets.gov.uk/Documents/Borough_statistics/Census_2011/2015_06_11_Unemployment_and_ethnicity_Census_factsheet_draft.pdf. Accessed 16 January 2017



values the future employment needs of the disadvantaged younger members of society and aims to increase the intake of recent school leavers from the current 6% to at least 20% through the provision of favourable entry requirements to those of its applicants with recent GCSE and A' Level qualifications.

Addressing Gender Imbalances

10. Brit College operates a range of timetables which are presented to students during the recruitment stage, mostly those that promote applicants with childcare needs, who are often female applicants. Whilst this strategy promotes applications from these disadvantaged groups, it also increases their retention through a sense of belonging among peers with similar backgrounds. Its intake of women has therefore increased from 22% in 2014 to 36% in 2016. These figures reflect 100% of all eligible applicants. The college continues to offer favourable attendance patterns to female applicants with a view to increasing their intake to at least 50%. This strategy is clearly defined in the college's 2015-16 annual internal monitoring report, and for current cohorts, is responsible for an increase in retention among female students from the average of 85% to 92%.

Fair access for the disabled

11. Brit College has taken active steps to build internal expertise to support disabled students. It has not only admitted such students, but has made reasonable adjustments where possible to allow, for example interpreters and note-takers to attend classes together with students with hearing difficulties. The College has also assisted such students to access additional funding through charitable organisations. Students with other learning needs receive opportunities to discuss individual needs, and their requirements are effectively met by the teaching and learning support team. However, the College observes that at only 5%, the number identified to have and receiving support with special needs is still low and plans to take positive steps to increase their participation.

Financial support

12. The College currently provides hardship fund to learners who need it, on case- to- case basis. Through this system, 1% of the students' college have received help. The College plans to increase this facility to make such funds accessible to more students.

Further Considerations

13. Brit College will endeavour to continuously identify opportunities for providing fair access to all stakeholders. We believe that this is vital to the success of our strategic plan.