



T H E
ISLAMIC COLLEGE

ACCESS AND PARTICIPATION STATEMENT



The Islamic College

REVIEWED

September 26, 2021

Quality Assurance Committee

Next review in September 2022

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1. Introduction

Islamic College is a small college situated in the borough of Brent in North London. Students tend to be mainly from London but students who can afford accommodation or have families residing in London have access to the facilities at the college. The Islamic College (IC) is fully committed to attracting and supporting students from all backgrounds in their achievement of higher education qualifications at the college.

Islamic College addresses a very important issue of female students' representation in Higher Education. Enrolment statistics show that the Islamic College has opened its doors widely for women who may find it difficult to go further in their studies to the Higher Education levels. Both the BA and MA programmes have a representation of female students.

While being based in a relatively less well-off area in London, the college seeks to play its part in creating a fairer society by providing greater access to higher education for the local community. This will improve social mobility and stimulate the economic growth of the region. Furthermore, our emphasis on provisions for female students provides us with the opportunity to address inequalities in Higher Education for women in the community. IC's traditionally recruitment has been largely from within underrepresented communities resulting in a strong widening participation baseline. Furthermore, the college has responded to the demand from potential students from throughout London thus serving its local population and employer community.

The college recognises that each student is an individual with varying academic potential and personal commitments; however, these are not barriers to the successful achievement of a qualification and future career opportunities. The college also embraces its role alongside the wider HE community and will contribute to the positive debate and commentary surrounding the benefits of HE and its opportunities.

IC endeavors to provide meaningful information to potential students prior to their applications to enable informed and timely advice and continue to engage with students prior to enrolment and attendance at the college. Equally, the academic support provided to manage the development and improvement of quality through a transparent and collaborative process.

The underlying principles of IC highlight the College's focus on access, participation, and diversity:

- **Caring for individuals:** we care about the development, success, and well-being of our students, and believe that a better future means quality education for all;
- **Commitment:** we support our students with the help they need to succeed in the professional pursuits;
- **Academic excellence:** we ensure a high quality of success through exceptional standards of teaching and engaging learning methodologies;
- **Community and diversity:** we promote and encourage diversity in our college, and are proud to embrace students from all backgrounds.

Furthermore, The Islamic College is committed to meeting local and regional needs to widen participation in Higher Education (HE) from under-represented groups. The College acknowledges that increasing access to HE in the field of Islamic Studies is particularly important given that the percentage of the population with higher level qualifications (Level 4 or above) in such fields is below the national average, contributing to a gap in the understanding of issues pertaining to Islam.

The College's strategies and policies set out clearly our commitment to fair access, including the minimising of barriers for applicants. In addition to setting transparent criteria for entry to programmes, the College welcomes applications from students from non-traditional backgrounds and values work related experience to encourage mature students into higher education.

As part of the admissions process, the College provides comprehensive information, advice and guidance. The admissions process is administered by the Registry Department. The Registry Department ensures a cohesive approach to admissions through consideration of students' prior achievement and experience, career aspirations, individual learning and welfare needs. The Director of Higher Education together with the Registry Department process and liaise together to ensure a smooth implementation of the admission process.

The Islamic College has developed various HE pathways to encourage young people in particular, and their parents, carers or guardians, to consider HE as a progression route. The College focuses on developing our existing and prospective students' study skills to provide the firm grounding needed for success. Working with schools, community groups and employers we raise awareness of the benefits of HE to individuals, industry and the local economy.

Examples of activities undertaken by the College to widen access to HE includes:

- Establishing a Foundation Arabic Language course which provide opportunities for students from diverse backgrounds and levels of education to progress to university level study and a BA in Islamic Studies or BA Hawza Studies.
- Providing Bursaries and Supportive Funding for Students who want to progress from a BA course to a Masters course.
- Working closely with local and nation institutions to raise aspirations and promote lifelong learning, targeting progression to Post-graduate courses and attending college open day events to promote advice and guidance on progression opportunities and offer advice

2. Definition of Widening Participation¹

The Islamic College engages in outreach which assists it in fulfilling the requirements of widening participation as defined by the Office for Fair Access (OFFA).

Removing the barriers to higher education, including financial barriers, that student from lower income and other under-represented² backgrounds face.

This is done by maintaining contact with external bodies like mosques and religious institutions and academics to engage disadvantaged and under-represented groups into education at the Higher Education (HE) levels.

¹ <https://www.offa.org.uk/glossary/> (Look at WP)

² <https://www.offa.org.uk/glossary/> - (Look at Under-represented groups)

2.1 Target groups

The College has targeted the following groups for particular focus, in the light of the data presented above:

- **Target Group 1:** The College will target **Female students**, who sometimes lack the opportunity to continue their studies to Higher Education. Islamic College's Annual Monitoring Report shows that female students are strongly represented in all programmes offered by the Islamic College.
- **Target Group 2:** The College will target **BAME students**: The College will focus on access for Black students in particular as they are only represented in the Post-graduation programme.
- **Target Group 3:** The College will target **students from low participation neighbourhoods** as it has scholarship programmes, which can assist greatly students from Quintiles 1 & 2 categories. The Masters programme has seen an uptake in the scholarships by students who cannot afford complete levels of Fees required for the courses.
- **Target Group 4:** The College will target **Disabled students**, since all facilities available at the Islamic College are fully accessible by people who may have disabilities. .
- **Target Group 5:** The College will continue to target **Mature students**, as this is the area in which the college specializes particularly in its Masters programme. In this case, the intent is to maintain and slightly increase the above-average level of access; to ensure that internal systems support the particular needs of mature students in terms of continuation and success; and the distinct employment needs of mature students are identified and addressed.
- **Target Group 6:** The College will continue to target **Mixed or Other Race students** who have multiple intersections of disadvantage: mature, non-White students from low participation neighbourhoods; mature disabled students; non-white mature students.

Although the numbers of students at College are low due to the capping and limited data, there is evidence that all these targeted areas of students have particular challenges. The key point of need in the cycle is continuation and success.

2.2 Aims and objectives

In light of Office for Student advice, the College has reviewed the targets which are detailed below: initial iterations of these targets were relatively conservative, largely because of the structural, long-term disadvantage experienced by most of these target groups, and the challenge of reversing those systemic issues within the relative short space of a student's HE degree studies. However, recognising the importance of this stage in shaping a student's prospects, and, based on projections of increased Government investment that will target disadvantage in those earlier stages, we have established more ambitious targets – particularly when attempting to address targets relating to success.

- **Target Group 1: Female students**
The aim of the College is to identify the female students in various communities who do not have an opportunity to further their educational aspirations.

The goal is to increase accessibility to Higher Education by students who would have otherwise finished their studies after completing their A Level studies. As it is, the data shows that female students are strongly represented in each programme, that does not mean that the Islamic College has plan has satisfied the needs of such students.

- **Target Group 2: BAME students**

The aim of the College is to identify the BAME community's Muslim populations and assess whether student levels can be highlighted in the respective communities.

The goal is to reduce this gaps between the communities studying at the Islamic College over a five year period, with the College also being committed to seeing this trajectory continue beyond 2025, to ensure a sustained and ongoing commitment to closing this success gap: however, it should be noted that this is not an 'unexplained gap,' but is due in significant part to the disadvantage experienced by these students prior to entry, evidenced by the range of entry characteristics that are closely coupled to performance (non-white students have, on average, a lower academic achievement profile at the point of admission than their white peers who do not fall into categories of disadvantage).

- **Target Group 3: Students from low participation neighbourhoods**

The aim of the College is to identify and reduce the success gap students from low participation neighbourhoods over a five year period (with an accelerating trajectory to see this gap close more swiftly over time beyond 2024-25). The College is committed to seeing this trajectory continue beyond 2025, to ensure a sustained and ongoing commitment to closing this success gap.

However, once again, this is not an 'unexplained' gap, but is due in significant part to the disadvantage experienced by these students from Quintiles 1 & 2 prior to entry, evidenced by the range of entry characteristics that are closely coupled to performance (students from quintiles 1 & 2 students have, on average, a lower academic achievement profile at the point of admission than their peers who do not fall into categories of disadvantage).

- **Target Group 4: Disabled students**

The aim of the College is to identify and maintain the level of access, success, and progression for students with a disability. In particular (PTS_4), the College will seek to ensure that a greater proportion of students who are eligible are supported to register for DSA.

- **Target Group 5: Mature students**The aim of the College is to maintain and slightly increase the level of access, success, and progression for mature students in the Islamic College's Under-graduate programmes. The aim is to increase the percentage of mature, disabled students and Mature BAME students over the next five years.

- **Target Group 6: Mixed or Other Race students**

The College will continue to focus on access for students of this category and comparison in nthis particular category are not available in most cases.

The aim is to address issues of continuation and success. The College is committed to seeing this category's improvement continue beyond 2025, to ensure a sustained and

ongoing commitment to closing any success gaps which may exist. Again, this is not an ‘unexplained gap, but is due in significant part to the disadvantage experienced by these students prior to entry, evidenced by the range of entry characteristics that are closely coupled to performance.

Links to QAA

The Islamic College went through a QAA inspection in November 2017 and the inspectors gave it the following judgments;

The QAA review team formed the following judgements about the higher education provision.

- The maintenance of the academic standards of awards offered on behalf of the degree-awarding body **meets** UK expectations.
- The quality of student learning opportunities is **meets** UK expectations.
- The quality of the information about learning opportunities is **meets** UK expectations.
- The enhancement of student learning opportunities is **meets** UK expectations.

With the following good practices;

The QAA review team identified the following features of **good practice**.

- The creation of inclusive and supportive learning environment that is embedded throughout the College to support the College mission and values (Expectation B2).
- The collaborative and personalised approach to student learning and achievement that enables students to develop their personal potential (Expectation B4).
- The College's extensive range of approaches to student engagement that promotes confidence and a learning partnership (Expectation B6).
- The combination of College and community outreach initiatives that enhance the student learning opportunities (Enhancement).

Measurement of access achievements

Prospective students are interviewed to assess their suitability for higher level studies and their chosen programme of study and to identify students’ support needs. The College actively encourages applications from disadvantaged groups and monitors recruitment and enrolment through its Annual Monitoring Report (AMR)³. Both The Islamic College and Middlesex University monitor data on performance presented in the AMR for finally approved within the Validation arrangements by Middlesex University and its Partnership Committee. We have been working to improve widening participation for our higher level programmes for a number of years, it is part of the ethos of the whole college running through all levels, and we monitor the success of this very carefully through retention and success rates. We involve students within this process through our learner voice process and with the support of the Student Council (Student Rep.) During 2021-2022 the college aims to continue and pilot some new flexible approaches to higher learning. We will be able to monitor the success through retention and achievement rates. Strategic outputs, developed through the college [Strategic Plan](#) are monitored through annual feedbacks from students and the Annual Monitoring Report which evidences the level of participation of differing student groups.

³ Annual Monitoring Report 2020-2021