



HIGHER EDUCATION STRATEGY

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Both external and internal drivers inform the College's HE strategy. External drivers alone would prompt expansion of our HE portfolio to meet the perception and expectation held by all the main political parties that HE in FE is key to building our economic future and ensuring aspiration and effort are rewarded.

"There is more to university than Club 18-30 – going away from home for three years when you are 18. Vince Cable and I – a phrase I use a lot these days – are absolutely determined to ensure more diversity in higher education. It means more two-year degrees, more part-time students, and more courses with placements in business. That's the future of higher education under this Coalition Government". (*David Willett's speech at Conservative Party Conference 4th October 2010*).

"The Government is committed to good universities, but it is equally serious about social mobility. The two must go hand in hand. And I hope you will recognise the strength of feeling within the Coalition that one of the non-negotiables in all this is that universities must deliver on broadening access. The challenge is to achieve this with imaginative and equitable policy – not with clunky quotas or crude social engineering. I believe we can do it." (*David Willett's speech at HEFCE Annual Conference 21st October 2010*).

The internal drivers informing our HE strategy continue to be myriad. At the heart of our ambition is a desire to provide first class education and training – an ambition which is predicated on our belief in social justice and that everyone deserves the best. As such, our HE strategy will further underpin this ambition and sits well with the College's mission and values.

We believe we are well placed to meet the needs of the regional economy through upskilling the local working population, and building for example, a technician class. A vibrant, expanded FD offer will allow us to develop further our areas of specialism, providing an escalator of opportunity from Entry to Level 4/5 for our own students who want to stay local. This strategy is informed by our whole College Teaching and Learning objectives with their emphasis on providing successful outcomes for all our learners.

Realisation of the strategy will enhance our role as a global educational provider as we believe that FDs have the potential to attract international students. Fee paying students from abroad and more directly funded students will help the College to generate more income and be less dependent for funding from the Skills Funding Agency. An enhanced FD offer will give us the opportunity to emulate best practice models of delivery of

Level 4/5 provision which are to be found in the community Colleges in countries such as America and Canada.

2.0 THE AIMS OF THE STRATEGY

In support of the College's mission and three year Strategic Plan 2011-14 our HE aims are as follows:

- Provide students with the best possible educational experience delivered where and when it is most appropriate to student need.
- Develop both freestanding Foundation Degrees and, where appropriate, articulation routes which complement the delivery of our HEI partners.
- To develop and grow the number of HE students benefiting from the College's approach to HE delivery.
- Develop a portfolio of post graduate diplomas and level 4/5 license to practice qualifications.
- To gain Foundation Degree Awarding Powers.
- To bid for and gain our own HE numbers.
- Widen access and participation for adult learners;
- Meet the requirements of employers for a workforce with higher skills.
- Develop and deliver courses which meet the standards and skills identified by the relevant professional bodies.
- Provide organisation, management and governance that enables HE to flourish and therefore enhances the student experience.
- Develop appropriate, stimulating and relevant curricula including the use of blended learning where appropriate.
- Continue to cluster courses in subject areas to widen the educational experience of the student.
- Continue to improve levels of learner support and retention.
- Work with other agencies such as lifelong learning networks and our university partners to meet overall aims.
- Develop courses for people in work and those seeking employment.

3.0 THE COLLEGE IN CONTEXT

3.1 Contextual Information About the College

City and Islington College (CIC) is a general FE college based in the London borough of Islington. As a large, successful FE College it was a founder member of the 157 group of like Colleges. More so than many London Colleges, it attracts a high proportion of students from Islington itself as well as from the neighbouring boroughs such as Hackney, Haringey. However, it attracts students from across the South East for courses (including HE) in Scene of Crime Investigation and Optics. In both cohorts, 82% of the students are deemed to attract widening participation funding – a measure based on postcode analysis. The College operates a Centre-based model of delivery and HE/Level 4/5 provision is offered in four of the five Centres – the fifth one specialising in academic qualifications for the 16-18 cohort.

3.2 Institutional Context: HE in FE

As said in the introduction our primary purpose/mission is “to deliver outstanding education and training” and to champion “learning, excellence,

aspirations, diversity and equality, employability, results and social justice.” We bring to HE in FE a proven record of excellence which underpins aspiration. This record includes:

- OFSTED May 2008 Inspection – College graded outstanding in all categories.
- Twice winner of the Queen’s Anniversary Prize (1994; Widening Access and Progression to Higher Education; 2007: Creating Pathways to Employment and Higher Education in the Sciences).
- Successful IQER May 2007.
- Beacon status.
- 1,326 students from Level 3 to HE in 2011.

The latter figure for HE progression is undoubtedly one of the highest figures across the post 16 sector and is without doubt the highest for BME progression.

The key strengths identified by OFSTED such as “consistently good teaching and learning,” “outstanding support for students” and “successful promotion of equality and diversity” apply in equal measure to FE and HE provision. The escalator model we champion and the rooting of HE in FE provision in our four Centres (Lifelong Learning, Business, Arts and Technology, Applied Sciences, Centre for Health, Social and Childcare) ensures that our teaching and learning strategies and quality processes apply “across the piece”.

Our commitment to both expand HE and to improve the learner experience finds expression in the three year Strategic Plan devised by the Senior Management Team in consultation with the Corporation members. The plan is updated annually and in 09/10 included commitments to explore the acquisition of Foundation Degree Awarding Powers and to explore the creation of FE/HE STEM Centre as well as growing student numbers and income. The Strategic Plan for 2011-14 has a section entitled “a new Higher Education landscape” that says that in the next 3 years we will:

- Develop higher vocational and occupational qualifications, especially in STEM areas.
- Offer affordable, flexible, vocationally specific foundation degrees that are provided locally.
- Ensure a good student to teacher ratio on our programmes, with a high proportion of higher education teachers having industrial/professional specific experience.

Also included is how we will ensure that our growing provision is attractive to our existing and potential students. We are creating a new higher education centre and dedicated support for our higher education students. The new centre will encourage the development of a real community of HE students with some shared modules in academic skills and employability alongside the vocational specialism chosen. For existing students studying at level 3 we will continue to expand the number of higher qualifications they can go on to study at the College in an environment that feels special and different.

3.3 The Wider External Context: HE in FE

Islington is the 10th most deprived borough in the UK. Health is poor and worklessness is endemic. Unemployed adults are more likely to be longer out of the labour market than elsewhere in the region and country as a whole. There are more NEETs (proportionally) than in any other London Borough. Yet alongside worklessness and other indices of deprivation there exists wealth and prosperity for the professional classes who have made Islington their home. There are few large private sector employers but employment opportunities abound in the public sector in Islington and surrounding boroughs, including the City of London.

All analyses (including the Islington Fairness Commission 2011) concur that new jobs will increasingly be at Technician (FD) Level and above. CIC must be ready to move forward to meet the commitment first articulated in the Skills Strategy, namely, “We will set a new overarching ambition for our higher education and skills systems that three quarters of the population should participate in higher education or complete an advanced apprenticeship or equivalent Technician Level course by the age of 30.” (Skills for Growth: the National Skills Strategy).

4.0 HE IN FE – WHERE WE ARE NOW

The portfolio of programmes offered is outlined in Appendix 2. Strengths of present provision include:

- Specialisms/niche provision eg. FD Ophthalmic Dispensing and FD Crime Scene and Forensic Investigation.
- Escalator model in the Arts, Sciences and Business.
- Courses which meet employers’ needs and provide opportunities for the local community to gain further skills and qualifications.
- Strong partnerships with our local universities and employer bodies.
- Long history of teacher training courses level 4 and above in Literacy, Numeracy, English, Employability Skills and generic post 16 teacher training.
- Workbased learning focus of the Foundation Degrees.

5.0 HE IN FE: REALISING OUR AMBITIONS – PLANNED CHANGES

5.1 Adding Value

What the college is able to offer is a learning environment which supports hard to reach, sometimes vulnerable adult returners. Strong tutorial support, smaller classes than in HE and pedagogic practices focussed on learning rather than teaching are our hallmarks. Building on existing experience with our level three offer (400+ Access students and 400+ BTEC NDs) as well as our FDs, we believe we can play a significant role in increasing participation and reaching the target of three quarters of the population participating in higher education or completing an advanced apprentice or equivalent technician level course by the age of 30.

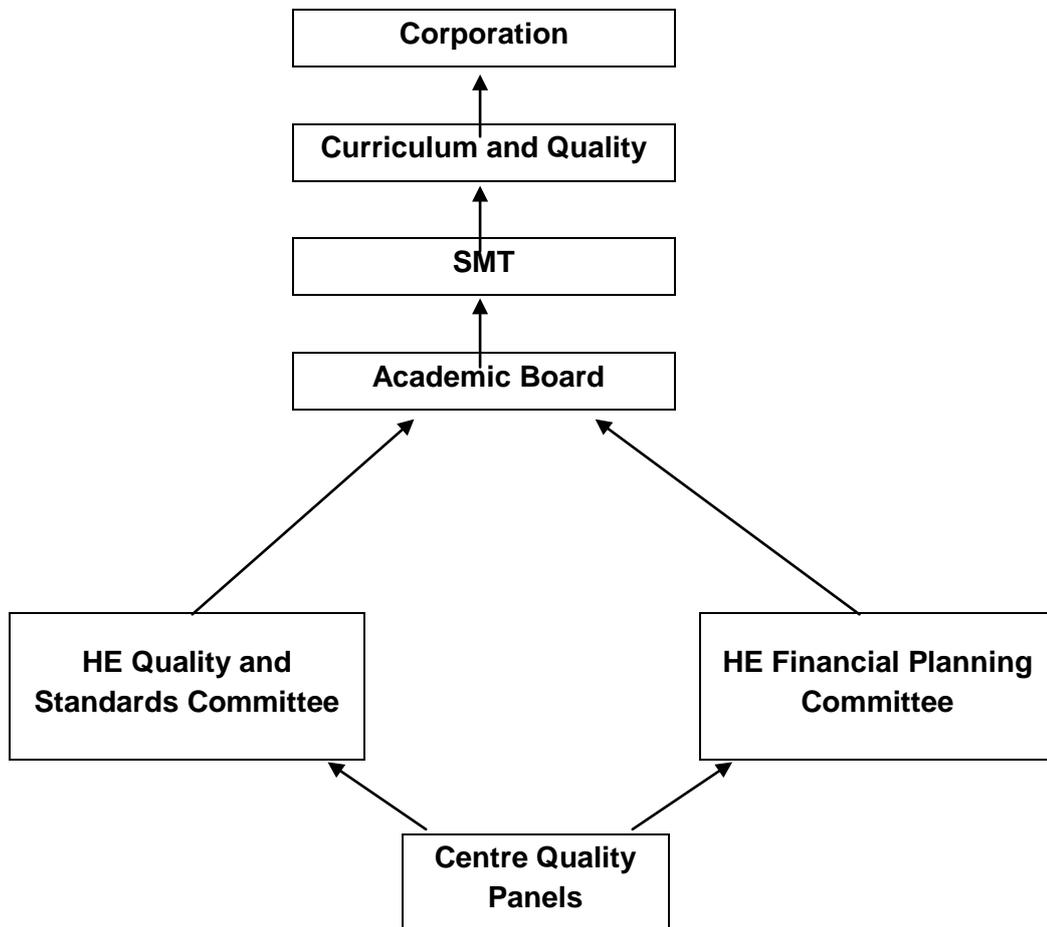
5.2 The Management and Governance of Higher Education

Traditionally, HE courses have sat within the whole offer of a curriculum area and have been managed alongside other courses within that area. However, as was detailed in Section 3.2 the College is intent on creating

northern and southern HE hubs in order to enhance the student experience. Eventually, as number of students expand it would be logical to concentrate line management of all courses in the Hub under its aegis whilst seeking the continued input of specialist curriculum leaders in the Centres.

In order to promote consistency of delivery, understanding of, and adherence to the HE academic infrastructure and a robust business model into the future, a new reporting structure has been introduced (see diagram below). The membership of both HE committees includes the Directors of Centres, the Clerk to the Corporation, Deputy Principals and the HE Quality and Development Manager. Matters originating in these Committees are reported to SMT, the Academic Board and thence to the Corporation or its Committees.

Additionally, the HE Quality and Development Manager is a member of the Teaching and Learning Unit headed by the Deputy Principal and Deputy Director: Teaching and Learning. The Unit is the primary locus of the College's quality improvement initiatives across the breadth of the curriculum.



The outcomes of the committees will be reported to and monitored by the Curriculum and Quality Committee with an annual report to be considered by the full Corporation.

5.3 Curriculum Development

Future developments are twofold, namely, revision to existing courses to reflect sector skills changes and both the development of new FD courses and/or “clustering” of existing courses under the banner of Creative Industries or Applied Sciences etc. The “clustering” model allows students to draw upon the expertise of a dedicated area of the curriculum and share some modules with students from other programmes within the cluster. We believe that this model gives students a richer learning experience. Going forward shared generic modules will include academic skills and employability. As skills needs change so will our development of new courses. Likewise, we will continue to develop new level four and above courses that are complementary to existing level three ones and offer internal progression opportunities. An example of the latter might be Veterinary Nursing, a new specialism being developed at CAS and Multimedia Games Design at CBAT. Another area for curriculum development involves meeting the higher apprenticeship agenda as is in progress at CAS with Cogent - the power Industry’s Sector Skills Council. All course are developing blended learning modules that mix face to face contact with e-learning content.

5.4 Resourcing of HE

The College continues to invest resources in key HE-facing staffing: The HE Quality and Development Manager, the Deputy Principal: Curriculum and Quality and the Clerk to the Corporation all of whom are involved in this area as are Centre Directors and teams. A permanent position of HE Quality Manager will be in place from April 2012 and for September there will be a dedicated Student Support Officer and an administrator to work with/for HE students.

Being a provider with considerable vocational provision at level 3 there are specialist facilities in place such as Apple Mac suites and a dedicated digital media suite. As new programmes are developed, the necessary resources are found from the annual capital plan. As mentioned earlier, there are plans to create two distinct HE hubs, the first of which will be at CBAT.

Our Learning Centres will continue to select resources based on teaching staff recommendations and to provide an individual programme which includes the use of the College’s VLE – Moodle.

5.5 Professional Updating and Scholarly Activity

There are well-established and ongoing opportunities for professional development with our partner universities. College staff and university staff work together in teams to approve programmes and annually, review programmes. Following this process College staff become familiar with the academic infrastructure, in the same way as their colleagues in universities. There are other events and meetings with partners pertinent to aspects of the academic infrastructure. An example is the Partnership Days held by London Metropolitan University. Additionally, there is the City University Research Fellowship which funds a practitioner from City and from the College to work together on a research project related to FE/HE.

Internally, training for HE tutors has become an integral part of the Continuing Professional Development Programme the Teaching and Learning Unit offers. Sessions which involve the sharing of good practice are held regularly, on Professional Development Days. These practices will continue into the foreseeable future.

In agreement with the teaching union (UCU), we have made provision, pro rata, for those teaching on level 4+ courses to have remitted time for what in HE would be called scholarly activity. It is expected that the remitted time would be used for any of the following activities:

- Appropriate courses run by the College (excluding PDD).
- Industrial secondments or work shadowing.
- Writing and developing material for the College's virtual learning environment.
- College approved projects with Sector Skills Councils.
- Research and publications.
- Study towards the achievement of higher qualifications, eg. Doctorates or Masters.
- HE curriculum development, often with HEIs
- Activities which contribute to the enhancement of teaching and learning.
- The study and development of assessment methodologies.
- Peer review methodology.
- Conference(s).
- Towards a thesis or dissertation where it is related to the curriculum.

All scholarly activities undertaken as part of this remitted time will be subject to staff members providing feedback to staff and students (staff will also be expected to complete a review of their scholarly exercise (a proforma will be designed by HR), the outcomes of which will be recorded within the appraisal process.

5.6 Recruitment, Retention and Progression into and through HE

The College has and will continue to develop segmented Marketing materials. Thus, an HE prospectus will continue to be produced and the College website used to promote our offer. Another strand of activity is promotion to level 3 students of the FD offer. Many of our students are attracted by the possibility of a smooth transition from level 3 to 4/5 in a learning environment they know and with which they feel comfortable and secure.

In terms of retention and progression to HE, the College will continue to monitor courses with poor retention and/or achievement via the course SAR audit and the Centre achievement reviews.

Also, every effort will be made to develop further the links between the receiving institution and CIC with regard to articulation to honours degrees.

A future development with all our HE partners is to extend partnership working to local schools, especially our four partner schools. Together, we will take the HE "aspirational" agenda into Islington secondary schools alongside community and employer partners such as Arsenal FC and Access to Sports.

5.7 Relationships with Employers

A key strength of our FD provision is the links with employers and employer bodies. Work-based assessment practices were singled out as good practice in our IQER. Employers have taken and will continue to take an active role in the development and delivery of programmes. Close working relationships have occurred with, among others, Arsenal Football Club, Skills

Active, SkillSet, IRIE Dance, General Optical Council, Cogent, Children's Workforce Development, Cambridge Education Authority and the British Transport Police.

A new departure which will be pursued further into the future is that of delivering a part or the whole of an FD programme on an employer's premises. The FD in Dance is part taught at the IRIE Dance Company's premises in Lewisham. Likewise, Football Coaching in the Community is taught partly at Arsenal and partly in College with the work placements identified and chosen by Arsenal FC.

5.8 Relationship with Higher Education Partners

The College has two formal partnerships with HE institutions and works closely and strategically with one other. The formal partnerships are:

- Partnership for Excellence with University College London (1999 –
- Strategic Alliance with City University (2005 -

Additionally, we work very closely with London Metropolitan University on the development, delivery and awarding of FDs, plus partnership working with the University of London. .

The partnership with UCL centres round raising aspiration among widening participation students rather than focusing on the joint development and delivery of FDs which is the core focus of the City – CIC alliance with City as the awarding body. As an Institutional Partner since September 2006, the College has been closely engaged in developing and refining City's Institutional Partnership Framework including validation. In like manner, the College has worked with London Metropolitan University to introduce a whole College – University Course Board which, like its City equivalent receives and considers external examiner's reports etc.

5.9 Involvement with other Agencies and HE Networks

From its inception CIC has been a Board member and active participant in the Lifelong Learning Network for London. This involvement will continue into the future as the LLN is a source of "brokered progression agreements", research/good practice sharing and curriculum development monies and a conduit for additional student numbers.

CIC is a member - indeed the founding member of a peer review group for 157 FE Colleges in the South of England. Fellow Colleges are:

- Sussex Downs
- City of Bristol
- Nottingham City College
- Cornwall College

This peer review grouping allows opportunities for sharing and benchmarking HE practice. For example, the College is working with Cornwall and City of Bristol on a LSIS funded project developing our capacity to manage the KIS requirement (Key Information Sets) into the future.

5.10 Assessment and Management of High Level Risks

The College compiles a risk assessment register which is reviewed quarterly by SMT and is presented to the Corporation. The register covers

putative/potential, financial, reputational, achievement and student-related risks. Actions are identified to treat particular risks and new risks added as they emerge. An ongoing risk is the withdrawal of indirectly funded student numbers by our HEI partners as they seek to boost their own core numbers. Another ever present risk is that of under recruitment in a crowded market place not helped by the inflexibility of the FE lecturers contract. We are seeking Foundation Degree Awarding Powers to:

- Protect existing provision.
- Develop the shape of the curriculum offer to provide a more complete escalator model.
- Develop a HE offer which will be attractive to local residents – ie. a two year occupationally focussed degree which teaches and assesses skills and aptitudes specific to the workplace.
- Capitalise on our reputation as an outstanding provider of education and training.

And, very importantly, add value by attracting adults who want and need the support which the College can offer rather than become lost in a bigger HE institution.

Mary Rimington
Deputy Principal Curriculum & Quality
9th March 2012

Appendix One

Mode of Study (full-time and part-time) (based on 1st November starts)

Mode	2009/10	2010/11	2011/12
FT	507	412	400
PT	147	140	179

Projected Growth

HE Provision	Additional numbers 12/13	Additional numbers 13/14	Additional numbers 14/15	Additional numbers 12/13
HNC/D	40	40		40
Franchised Foundation Degrees	45	45		45
Pearsons		25	25	
Open University		25	25	
FDAP CIC			85	

Appendix two

Higher Education Programmes

Programme name	Awarding body/Partner institution
FdSc Ophthalmic Dispensing	City University London
FdSc Crime Scene and Forensic Investigation	London Metropolitan University
FdSc Personal Training and Fitness Consultancy	London Metropolitan University
FdSc Football and Community Sports Coaching with Arsenal FC	London Metropolitan University
Foundation Year for an Engineering Degree	City University London
HNC Business Management	London Metropolitan University
FdA Fashion with Textiles	London Metropolitan University
FdA Photography	London Metropolitan University
FdA Digital Media Design	London Metropolitan University
BTEC HNC/D Photography	Edexcel
BTEC HNC/D Graphic Design	Edexcel
FdA Dance	London Metropolitan University
BTEC HNC/D Advanced Practice in Work with Children and Families.	Edexcel
FdA Early Childhood Studies	London Metropolitan University
FdA Public Service Management	City University London
FdA Working with Children and Young People	City University London
HND in Music Production	Edexcel
NCC level 4 Programme for International Students	NCC certificate
NCC level 6 Programme for International Students	NCC certificate