



Document Title:	ACCESS AND PARTICIPATION STATEMENT
Version:	1.0
Date:	November 2025
Approved By:	Board of Director
Circulation:	BOD, Academic Board, Senior Management Team, Staff
Classification:	Public
Review Date	November 2026
Linked Document	Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy Equality Impact Assessment guidelines

Theme 1: Areas we address

1. Statement and Purpose

1.1 Watney College (WC) is committed to making higher education accessible to a diverse student body and to expanding our offerings to meet a wide range of interests and needs. WC provide higher education and higher professional programmes designed to serve local and regional communities as well as employers.

1.2 WC is committed to expanding access to higher education and supporting the success of all learners. With a longstanding tradition of serving students from diverse, underrepresented, and non-traditional backgrounds—including those from low socio-economic circumstances—WC continues to uphold its mission of delivering inclusive, high-quality educational experiences that empower every student to achieve their full potential.

1.3 In promoting access and participation, we operate in accordance with the following regulatory frameworks:

- Sections five of the Higher Education and Research Act (HERA) 2017
- OfS Equality Impact Assessment (OfS 2018.09)
- Office for Students Regulatory Advice 7 (OfS 2018.07) published Feb 2018
- Office for Fair Access Guidance

1.4 To demonstrate our genuine commitment to improving access, success, and progression for students from all backgrounds, we regularly review the data we hold on students' backgrounds. We use this information to evaluate our performance and identify areas for improvement. In addition, we draw on a range of following external references and benchmark to further enhance our practices in the future.

- Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA) performance indicators
- UCAS national and provider statistics
- Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF) metrics
- National Pupil Database
- ESFA Individualised Learner Record (ILR) – traineeship programmes
- Department for Education destination measures and free school meal statistics
- Student Loans Company data on students receiving the maximum maintenance loan
- Transparency information (Condition F1 of the OfS Regulatory Framework)
- Graduate destinations data

2. Commitment Statement

2.1 WC is committed to enhancing access to and participation in higher education, particularly for the following groups:

- Students from Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) communities
- Mature students
- Students from POLAR4 Quintile 1 areas
- Students with disabilities
- Estranged students
- Care leavers
- Young adult carers
- Students from Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities
- Refugees and asylum seekers
- Students with specific learning difficulties (SpLDs)
- Students from armed forces/military families

2.2 Our goal is to help every student realise their potential by offering tailored support to enable them to thrive academically and personally.

2.3 The College ensures equity in recruitment and admissions through inclusive, transparent processes. Our policies—covering Terms and Conditions and available on the WC website—are regularly reviewed for fairness, accessibility, and regulatory compliance. These processes support student success from entry to graduation and into employment or further study.

3. Demographic Overview

3.1 Watney College is located in Tower Hamlets, one of the most densely populated and demographically diverse boroughs in London. The borough has a relatively young and economically active population profile, with a substantial proportion of residents within the working-age bracket. Population growth projections and the borough's demographic structure indicate sustained demand for vocational education, workforce development and higher-level learning opportunities.

3.2 The College's recruitment catchment extends beyond Tower Hamlets to neighbouring boroughs including Newham and Barking and Dagenham. These boroughs share similar demographic characteristics, including relatively young populations, high ethnic diversity and significant numbers of working adults seeking skills development and career progression. Tower Hamlets and Newham also record some of the highest poverty levels in London, creating additional demand for accessible vocational education, upskilling and progression opportunities.

3.3 Tower Hamlets is characterised by a highly diverse population, including a large British-Bangladeshi community and other minority ethnic groups. Educational participation among learners from these communities has improved significantly in recent decades, with increasing numbers progressing into further and higher education pathways. This demographic profile provides a strong foundation for vocational education providers that offer flexible and inclusive learning models.

3.4 Watney College aims to widen participation by providing accessible learning opportunities for mature learners, working adults and students from diverse backgrounds within Tower Hamlets and neighbouring boroughs. Through flexible delivery models, employer-aligned vocational programmes and community engagement, the College supports progression into regulated professions, higher-level vocational qualifications and workforce advancement.

4. Operational Overview

4.1 As an independent higher education provider, Watney College delivers a range of accredited vocational and professional programmes through recognised awarding organizations including NQUAL, ATHE and ESB. The College operates from its centrally located campus at 80–82 Nelson Street, London E1, within the London Borough of Tower Hamlets.

4.2 Located in one of the most diverse boroughs in the United Kingdom, the College seeks to meet the educational needs of local communities through flexible and accessible learning opportunities. Provision focuses primarily on Health and Social Care programmes at Levels 2–5, alongside professional development training and planned programme diversification in areas such as Artificial Intelligence and digital skills, subject to awarding body approval and governance oversight.

4.3 The College's operational model prioritises mature learners and working adults, many of whom are already employed in sector-aligned occupations. Delivery models therefore emphasise flexible timetabling, blended learning and employer-aligned vocational pathways designed to support workforce progression and professional development.

4.4 Through its location, programme focus and delivery approach, Watney College seeks to support local workforce development, widen participation in higher-level education and provide structured progression opportunities for learners from diverse socio-economic backgrounds.

5. Student Features

5.1 WC recognises the diverse characteristics of its student body and is committed to increasing representation from underrepresented groups. This includes:

- Individuals from low-income households
- Ethnic minority backgrounds
- People with disabilities
- Care leavers and estranged students
- Mature learners

5.2 To promote success and retention, WC offers targeted academic and pastoral support services, with a focus on inclusivity and student well-being.

6. Access

6.1 WC prioritises efforts to increase the entry rates of underrepresented groups, aiming to bridge the socio-economic participation gap in higher education.

6.2 WC is actively working to reverse the declining trend in higher education participation among mature students from underrepresented groups.

7. Student Support

7.1 WC is committed to providing high-quality support services that address the unique needs of each student, particularly those from underrepresented backgrounds. This includes a combination of academic and pastoral support designed to foster student well-being and success.

7.2 WC offers a Virtual Learning Environment (VLE) that provides all students with access to a range of resources beyond the classroom, ensuring continuity in learning even for students who may face barriers to attending in person.

7.3 An Academic Resources (Study Skills Hub) page is available on the VLE, which offers study skills resources tailored to higher education demands, particularly at levels 3, 4 and 5, to support students' transition and ongoing academic development.

7.4 Each student has access to academic advisors and personal tutors who provide one-on-one support, guidance on academic challenges, and referrals to relevant resources.

7.5 WC also provides a dedicated Study Skills Manager/Coordinator to offer formative feedback on study skills, helping students develop essential skills for higher education success.

7.6 Students have access to mental health resources, including counselling and well-being workshops, to ensure they receive holistic support during their academic journey.

8. Success

8.1 WC is dedicated to improving non-continuation rates among underrepresented groups, specifically those from minority ethnic backgrounds and students with disabilities, by providing tailored support to foster persistence.

8.2 The College aims to close attainment gaps between underrepresented groups and the

broader student body, focusing on academic equity for minority and disabled students.

8.3 A comprehensive range of support services is available, including a Mitigating Circumstances policy, tutorial support embedded within the curriculum, and clearly defined appeals processes for admissions and academic decisions.

9. Progression

9.1 WC is committed to supporting the transition of underrepresented students into graduate-level employment or further study. Efforts focus on improving progression rates for students from any backgrounds, working to equalise outcomes with other student groups.

Theme 2: Ambitions and Strategy

10. Access and Participation Strategy

10.1 WC is committed to widening access to its programmes, engaging students from diverse backgrounds and supporting them throughout their academic journey.

10.2 The College remains active within the local community, continually enhancing access and participation levels, and seeks to maintain a strong reputation as part of its ongoing efforts.

10.3 WC acknowledges areas for growth, especially in supporting disadvantaged groups like disabled students, care leavers, carers, individuals estranged from families. The College has identified these groups as priority areas for improvement and aims to bridge any existing equity gaps within the student lifecycle.

Theme 3: Our Commitment to support students

11. Commitment

11.1 WC has in place a range of support strategies so our students can achieve success and have a positive experience. We provide feedback sessions continually to evaluate the way in which we support our students. We have a robust student voice cycle to methodically gather student views but also capture feedback informally at all other times. All feedback is during our programme team meeting and academic committee meetings as an integral to our quality assurance framework and shared with governor's integral to the quality cycle.

11.2 WC acknowledges that our HE students have different educational experiences, qualification types and work-place experiences and we invest time in preparing them individually for and supporting them through their HE courses.

11.3 To ensure that students have access to resources required to succeed academically and provide all the teaching and learning facilities. Furthermore, we provide personal tutoring sessions and extended support with groups and on a 1:1 basis with students with study skills such as academic referencing.

11.4 Employer engagement and work experience is pivotal to our courses for those students who require help with volunteering placements we have a good partner care homes.

11.5 Students considered at risk according to the equality of opportunity risk register will be provided with additional support where possible to mitigate the risk. For example, students in need of knowledge and skills will be signposted to additional support classes.

12. Summary

12.1 WC's accessible programmes and extensive support services enable students from all backgrounds to achieve academic success.

12.2 The majority of WC students come from socio-economically disadvantaged areas, reinforcing the

College's focus on serving underserved populations.

12.3 With over 90% mature students, WC's student composition significantly exceeds the national trend, highlighting its dedication to accessible education for non-traditional students.

12.4 Approximately 50% of students enter WC with non-standard qualifications, indicating the College's commitment to supporting those with diverse educational backgrounds, including international and mature learners.

Relevant Sources

1. <https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/populationandmigration/populationestimates>
2. <https://www.ons.gov.uk/census>
3. <https://data.london.gov.uk/dataset/gla-population-projections>
4. <https://data.london.gov.uk/>
5. https://www.towerhamlets.gov.uk/lgnl/community_and_living/borough_statistics/Borough_profile.aspx
6. <https://www.trustforlondon.org.uk/data/>
7. <https://www.trustforlondon.org.uk/data/poverty-borough/>
8. <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/>
9. <https://www.skillsforcare.org.uk/adult-social-care-workforce-data/Workforce-intelligence/publications/national-information/The-size-and-structure-of-the-adult-social-care-sector.aspx>
10. <https://www.hesa.ac.uk/data-and-analysis>

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