

ALL NATIONS CHRISTIAN COLLEGE

ACCESS AND PARTICIPATION STATEMENT 2021-22

1. Introduction

All Nations is committed to widening access to and participation in our high quality teaching programmes to all those who have the capacity to benefit from them, regardless of their background and circumstances. The College especially welcomes those who, due to particular life circumstances, might not otherwise have had this opportunity. This document sets out how we are seeking to remove any barriers which might prevent disadvantaged groups from accessing our programmes and achieving their study aims.

As one of the few centres in Western Europe focussing entirely on the training of missionaries through Biblical and intercultural mission studies, we actively seek and welcome students not just from the UK but from all over the world to study together in an intercultural learning community. This enables our domestic and international students to meet the learning objectives of their intercultural programmes of study. This also prepares them for their future intercultural service.

Whilst the UK government require all higher education institutions to provide evidence that they are improving access to disadvantaged UK citizens, for the above reasons the College's target student body is worldwide. Therefore, this document seeks to demonstrate what we offer to disadvantaged groups from the UK, Europe and the rest of the world and particularly the Global South.

2. Diversity

The diversity of our community is not only reflected in the 36 different nationalities and ethnicities represented in our student body last year, but also in their ages (ranging from 19 to 65); marital status (singles, marrieds, and families with children of all ages from the not-yet-born to school-leavers); socioeconomic background (manual workers to professionals); and educational background (some having left school at 16, and others having already completed post-doctorate studies but joining us to study for a lower award).

The timetable is planned so that parents can attend lectures while their children are in nursery or school. The College supports parents who bring carers with them to look after their children while they study. We also work with expectant mothers to facilitate them being able to complete their studies during and after their pregnancy.

Example 1: We supported two couples from Romania and the Czech Republic throughout their pregnancies enabling them to continue their studies.

We continue to work towards attracting an increasing number of mature students, families and those from diverse nationalities and ethnicities. We are actively engaged in connecting with and training those from diaspora churches around the UK and for whom we offer special financial support.

Example 2: One pastor and one leader from different diaspora churches have been able to study here with our financial support.

In 21/22 we will continue to expand and deepen relationships we have built with multi-cultural churches in the UK and Europe. We anticipate that this will lead to an increase in students from

different ethnic backgrounds and disadvantaged groups (including refugees) participating in our programmes.

We have run many training courses in partnership with mission organisations, churches, theological institutions and INGOs from around the world (in 12 nations and 4 continents). These have been held both virtually and residentially and, at the same time, have drawn people from numerous other countries into those programmes. We also encourage our partners to make the training accessible to both men and women, young and old. We intentionally encourage students who participate in these global course to further their studies by engaging with our undergraduate and postgraduate programmes.

Example 3: Two couples (one from China and the other from Romania) both initially studied on our short global courses and joined us again last year on our degree programme.

We run a non-accredited online Prayer for the Nations course as well as monthly online Prayer Ignite seminars which attract those from all backgrounds from all around the world. Non-accredited residential prayer retreats offer individual guidance and are accessible to all and also highlight greater awareness of the training we offer.

3. Financial Support

Socioeconomic diversity is also a feature of our student body. This diversity is reflected in the different ways people fund their training. However for good reasons, those from poorer backgrounds sometimes choose not to get a student loan. This is because most missionaries need to raise their own support in order to engage in the mission work to which they feel called. Therefore, they feel that raising these funds and discovering how God wishes to supply their needs and support their studies is a necessary part of missionary preparation.

Some students sacrificially sell their homes if they have them, others are supported by their savings and/or friends, families and institutions sympathetic to their vocation and some access government funded student loans. College bursaries are also there to provide extra support for those who need it and this scheme supported 26% of students last year were granted bursaries of an average of 37% of each student's tuition fees. The College has also been able to target Trusts keen to support those who meet their criteria and will benefit from financial assistance, with much success. However, we find that students who fundraise even 5% of their fees engage better with their learning as they are invested more in the process. Those receiving funding from a trust are also required to raise a proportion of this funding themselves.

Across the board, our lower than sector average fees also help all those who would not otherwise be able to afford to access higher education. For example, undergraduate and postgraduate (one year) annual fees for 2020/21 were £7,635 (plus £525 Open University fees). Since student loans do not provide more than £6,000 towards these fees, students have been able to successfully apply for a College bursary to cover the shortfall, where needed.

As a College that attracts international students, we also plan to continue sponsoring those from lower socioeconomic backgrounds from abroad, since we recognise and value the importance of providing access to students from these countries. We offer significant financial support to students from the Global South and also put them in touch with Trusts who are keen to sponsor them.

Example 4: We provided a large bursary for a student from Rwanda who was unable to raise the full amount to study with us.

Example 5: We also provided a bursary to several students from the UK who were ineligible for a government student loan, to meet their shortfall in funds.

We also offer targeted bursaries to churches and individuals from disadvantaged or marginalised backgrounds for our shorter courses. We anticipate from past experience some of these applicants will progress to become students on our undergraduate programme. Similarly, we have collaborated with a mission partner to share financial support for a student and will seek similar collaborations in the future.

4. Educationally disadvantaged

As already stated, our students come from educationally diverse backgrounds.

Our Admissions policy outlines a minimum level of the equivalent of a school-leaver certificate (A levels in the UK) in order to study on the Undergraduate Programme. However, where applicants do not meet the academic requirements due to life circumstances, a written piece of work may be set to assess their academic suitability for the programme for which they have applied. This enables applicants who may not have had the opportunity to obtain any requisite qualifications to access tertiary education with us.

The flexible nature of our undergraduate and postgraduate programmes also mean that students may sign up to the Certificate/PG Certificate programme and either leave with a qualification or progress seamlessly to the Diploma/PG Diploma. They may do the same at the end of the second, Diploma stage and thereby progress to the full degree award. This flexible approach helps many who do not feel confident at the outset of their studies that they can undertake the full degree, to exceed their own expectations.

Example 6: Last year, 44% of students who originally intended to leave with a Cert (HE) progressed instead to the next level. Also, 22% of students changed from the unvalidated to the validated study.

Non-accredited short courses are completely open to students regardless of their educational background, although two courses have English proficiency recommendations to enable students to benefit fully from the programme. Again, it is not unusual for attendance at one of these short courses to lead to these students accessing an accredited undergraduate and even postgraduate programme.

5. Disabilities and Learning Support

The Learning Support Team are available, in discussion with the applicant concerned, to guide those with medical conditions and/or learning disabilities to access the support they need. The Team also seeks to support students with hidden disabilities through assisting them with applications for DSA support, one-to-one academic support and the provision of general academic support.

Reasonable adjustments are put in place by the College wherever practicable in order to facilitate their learning. In addition, the Learning Support team works with Disabled Student Allowance (DSA) provided mentors. These measures have enabled such students to achieve qualifications which would not have otherwise been possible.

Where students develop health issues or a learning issue becomes apparent during their studies, the College seeks to make reasonable adjustments to accommodate these unfolding circumstances.

Example 7: On the undergraduate and postgraduate courses and in collaboration with the students, we make particular adjustments for those with dyslexia.

Example 8: A student was required to shield for medical reasons and was therefore unable to attend lectures in person. Arrangements were made for the student to attend lectures remotely and provided access to pastoral support as needed throughout their time of isolation.

Example 9: A student suffering from dyslexia was provided with handouts on different coloured paper whereas another student suffering from the same condition required a different background on lecture slides.

Example 10: During the pandemic lockdown, the College was able to transfer to teaching live via remote access which enabled lectures to continue with very little disruption and facilitated group and class discussions to continue. Tutorials also took place online.

Study skills classes provide additional support for ESL students, those for whom English is not their first language and those who may not previously have experienced an academic environment. This support is critical when assisting those from disadvantaged and under-represented groups in their studies. The effectiveness of such classes is monitored through ongoing feedback which allows the College to gauge whether these classes have had a positive impact on student's success in obtaining their degree.

The Library now offers a full scanning service for its physical books and is working to enlarge its collection of e-books. This facility allows students with any visual disabilities or reading difficulties to enlarge the texts on their computer screens to ease the reading of them or to use scan to voice applications to access the texts.

Within the limitations of the College's buildings (including some that are Grade 2 or Grade 2* listed), the College continues to do all that it can to make learning accessible to all, irrespective of any form of disability. All previously installed physical measures (e.g. ramps, handrails, signage etc.) are maintained in good working order to facilitate on-going use. Where physical accessibility is an issue, arrangements are made to change a cohort's lectures to a ground floor venue.

All teaching rooms are now equipped for hybrid learning, meaning that students can access learning from anywhere in the world and that physical barriers to accessing classrooms have been removed for those who access lessons remotely. Within the limits of their own sight and hearing levels, remote students are able to see and hear all that goes on in the classroom, and all lessons are recorded so that each student can play them back again in their own time.

Where required, the College has installed enhanced acoustic solutions, to improve the sound quality for both in-class and on-line students. The hybrid nature of lessons also enables greater participation in lessons for students who may not otherwise attend lessons in person should their mental or physical health preclude them from physical attendance from time to time.

Similarly, the accommodation department has worked with individual students with particular physical or mental health needs to ensure that their accommodation provides them with an optimal living environment to support their physical and/or mental health and the achievement of positive learning outcomes.

6. Pastoral Support

In order to become better equipped for Christian ministry, a student's time at All Nations not only involves knowledge and skill acquisition but also emotional, attitudinal, relational and spiritual development. Students are therefore encouraged to reflect on and seek to resolve personal issues as they become aware of them through interaction with their course material.

The Personal Development Tutor is available to all members of the college community for confidential consultation on any matter. Each student is also assigned to a personal tutor who meets with them regularly or by appointment, to discuss academic issues and progress, personal or pastoral matters, personal development and spiritual growth.

Supportive peer support is also the common experience at College, which is encouraged and facilitated through the tutor groups that students are assigned to at the beginning of the academic year. Depending on the circumstances, students may be encouraged to seek medical assistance and/or professional counselling.

All of this pastoral support has been particularly invaluable to many students who have been estranged from their families or other support networks, in enabling them to achieve their intended award despite challenging life circumstances.

The College enlarged its pastoral care team in response to the growing need for pastoral and mental health support during the COVID-19 pandemic so that all students, whether physically on site or studying remotely, could access this support. During the early months of 2021 when universities were closed to most students, the College worked within government guidelines to allow international students who had no alternative accommodation or those who declared that they required additional support to remain on our campus. This included students with mental health issues and those who declared that they did not have access to appropriate study spaces or facilities in their vacation accommodation. Thus students with complex needs were able to continue to access and participate in their learning online at the same time as having a safe and appropriate place in which to live and receive the support they required.

Our on-site asymptomatic Covid-19 testing station and later our home testing programme were major contributory factors in keeping the College site free from COVID-19 throughout the academic year and in maintaining consistency in teaching and learning for all students.

Example 11: Pastoral support was increased to deal with the greater number of students dealing with anxiety or depression caused by the pandemic. In some cases, students were able to transfer to part-time study to alleviate some of the pressures on them.

Example 12: Another student was able to receive extra pastoral support and a break in their studies to care for a terminally ill parent and for the subsequent loss and bereavement suffered.

In response to student feedback, whilst female students were pleased to approach female members of staff for pastoral care, some male students reported that they would appreciate being able to speak with a man on certain issues. The College responded by increasing the male pastoral support available. Subsequent feedback has been positive and pastoral care provision overall has been appreciated.

7. Flexible Delivery and Partnerships

Wider participation is enhanced by our flexible delivery methods.

The undergraduate and the postgraduate programmes are available through classroom and online blended delivery. (Students from all over the world “Zoom” in to participate with the students in the classroom). It is also possible to spread studies over a longer period of time as a part-time student. This enables those with other commitments to access the training in a manner which suits them. Increasingly postgraduate students are accessing flexibly with some online students studying full time, where it is clear that there are good reasons for this.

Those local to the College Campus at Easneye (unemployed, working and retired) often take advantage of accessing individual modules as and when they wish as part of our Guided Personal Study programme. This, and also increasingly those accessing via lectures via zoom, are able to fit their studies in with their other commitments.

The College now offers a non-validated Certificate and Diploma programme, in addition to our OU validated undergraduate and postgraduate programmes. This was introduced to help students with young children and others attracted by the fact that assignments are only graded pass or fail, thereby reducing academic pressure.

Example 13: A couple with school-aged children, both on our undergraduate programme, decided to take the non-validated Dip (HE) option to help with the challenges of their circumstances

Those who have taken our 10-week non-accredited programme often stay on to access modules from the undergraduate programme. Others go on to take the full Level 4 Certificate course. Frequently these students have already been accepted by their future employer (typically a mission agency) and the College works with the mission agency to deliver the training specifically required by that agency for their prospective missionaries.

8. Progression and Retention

The College has excellent progression and retention statistics, regardless of a student's background. We attribute this to the provision of tailored study skills sessions, a dedicated learning support team and an academic staff who all consider their role to be vocational rather than simply a job (something which is often noted in student feedback).

In 2020-21, 95% of students on the undergraduate programme either completed the requirements for their intended award or for progression to a higher level. 12% of students transferred to a higher award than originally intended. However our aim, as far as practicable, is to offer each student the training that will equip them effectively for mission. Therefore, each year, a relatively small number of students take Level 5 studies only, because they feel that these modules will best equip them for their future ministry, despite the fact this will not earn them an award.

Similarly, it is also not unusual for some students, particularly those who already have a degree in another discipline, to change from an undergraduate award programme to our non-accredited Guided Personal Study. They do this because they wish to access modules from all three levels and therefore tailor their training more closely to their ministry. The College supports them in this.

9. Student Participation in Widening Access and Participation

Finally, the College continuously reviews the way it might remove any further barriers to those from disadvantaged groups being able to access and participate fully in the programmes we offer. Students have the opportunity to suggest new ways of achieving this through the termly undergraduate and postgraduate committee meetings which are attended by student representatives from each level of the relevant programme.