

ALL NATIONS CHRISTIAN COLLEGE

ACCESS AND PARTICIPATION STATEMENT 2020/21

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 their learning objectives. Whilst the UK government require all higher education institutions to provide evidence that they are improving access particularly to disadvantaged UK citizens, given the diversity of our target student body, this document seeks to demonstrate what we offer to disadvantaged groups from the UK and overseas.

Diversity

The diversity of our community is not only reflected in the 30 different nationalities and ethnicities represented in our student body, but also in their ages (ranging from 19 to 64); 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.

We continue to work towards attracting an increasing number of mature students, families and those from diverse nationalities and ethnicities. This includes, for example, our hosting of a diaspora church leaders consultation in 2019 in collaboration with other like-minded mission organisations, thus raising our profile amongst Christian diaspora communities in the UK.

In 20/21 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 students from different ethnic backgrounds and disadvantaged groups (including refugees) participating in our programmes.

Looking to the future, we are exploring the provision of mission training together with a local partner who work with UK teenagers from a wide variety of backgrounds. It is hoped this could increase our profile amongst this demographic so that they would look to us for future higher education provision.

We run a non-accredited School of Prayer and attend a wide variety of conferences all over the world, all of which are attended by people from diverse minority people groups within the UK and have attracted students to our study programmes.

Financial Support

Socioeconomic diversity is also a feature of our student body. However, although diversity is reflected in the different ways people fund their training, the way people raise their funds is not necessarily related to their background. Since some missionaries need to raise their own support in order to engage in the mission work that they feel called to, raising these funds and discovering how God wishes to supply their needs and support their studies is often 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. A growing number access government funded student loans (20% of students received maximum maintenance support in 2018/19). College bursaries are also there to provide extra support for those who need it and this scheme supported 15% of students last year with bursaries of between 15% and 90% of each student's tuition fees. The College is also able to target Trusts keen to support those who meet their criteria and will benefit from financial assistance.

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 2018/19 were £6486 (plus £475 Open University fees).

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

Educationally disadvantaged

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

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. It is not unusual for attendance at one of these short courses to lead to these students accessing an accredited undergraduate programme.

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.

Disabilities and Learning Support

In discussion with the applicant concerned, the Learning Support Team are available to guide those with medical conditions and/or learning disabilities to access the support they need. Reasonable adjustments are put in place by the College wherever practicable in order to facilitate their learning. In addition, the team will work with Disabled Student Allowance (DSA) provided mentors. These measures have enabled such students to achieve qualifications which would not have otherwise been possible.

Study skills classes provide additional support for ESL students, those who come from non-English speaking countries and those who may not have come directly from an academic background. This support is critical when assisting those from disadvantaged and under-represented groups in their studies. The effectiveness of such classes is monitored through feedback which is received at the end of the year which allows the College to gauge whether these classes have had a positive impact on student's success in obtaining their degree.

Where students develop health issues or a learning issue becomes apparent during their studies, reasonable adjustments can be made to accommodate these unfolding circumstances.

Within the limitations of what is possible with a Grade 2 Listed Building, the College has provided ramp access and disabled toilet facilities to assist wheelchair users and will continue to increase this provision. It also readily adjusts the accommodation provided, the location of lecture rooms and the teaching programme when the need arises and wherever practicable to accommodate the physical needs of all students.

We plan to continue upgrading our facilities to make them more accessible by those with physical disabilities. We also constantly review how we may enhance our support for people with long-term medical conditions and/or those with physical and/or learning disabilities. This includes training for staff and students in mental health awareness.

Student 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. In certain circumstances students may be encouraged to seek medical assistance and/or professional counselling.

This 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.

In response to student feedback, we are including pastoral support particularly tailored for the needs of male students who require a different approach in order to express and discuss any issues facing them.

Flexible Delivery and Partnerships

Wider participation is enhanced by our flexible delivery methods.

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

As well as our undergraduate and postgraduate programmes, we also run a variety of short courses from a few days to 13 weeks in length. Many of them go on to take undergraduate studies afterwards.

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 required by them for their future missionaries.

Some of our non-accredited courses are accessed by students from around the world and the UK who form an online community, while others access the residential training. In recent years, the College has been able to take this training, often in partnership with other mission agencies, to other locations in the world, thereby raising the profile of the College and extending our training to those who would otherwise be unable to train as a residential student.

The undergraduate programme is accessed through classroom delivery because experience has demonstrated that this leads to the best student experience and outcomes. This delivery method has also facilitated access for local people (working and retired) to access individual modules as part of the Guided Personal Study programme. This enables them to study while fitting in with their other commitments.

The postgraduate programme is available through online, classroom and blended delivery. (Students from all over the world “Zoom” in to participate in the classes with the students in the classroom). The postgraduate programme can also be accessed part-time, which enables those with other commitments to access the training in a manner which suits them.

Given the success of the postgraduate blended delivery study mode, we are exploring how this may be expanded to include the undergraduate programme. This transition is anticipated to take several years.

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 skill 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 2018/19, 91% of students on the undergraduate programme either completed the requirements for their intended award or for progression to a higher level. 20% 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 that this will not earn them an award.

Similarly, it is also not unusual for some students to change from an undergraduate award programme to Guided Personal Study since they wish to access modules from all three levels and are more concerned with tailoring their training to their needs than gaining an award. The College supports them in this.

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.