



## Access and Participation Statement 2017-18

### Introductory Statement

ICON College of Technology and Management (the College) is an independent College of higher education that was established in 2003 to meet the demand for quality education at affordable fees for both local and international students and to make world-class UK university degrees more accessible via the Pearson BTEC HND entry route. The College is committed to expanding access to higher education to individuals from those sections of the community, historically under-represented in the sector. Our commitment to widening participation is reflected in the profile of our student body. The College is proud of the fact that the vast majority of our students are mature, are from Black and Minority Ethnic Communities (BME) and come from lower socio-economic backgrounds.

The College aims to reach out to disadvantaged groups of students from all categories and is committed to diversity and equality in both student and staff recruitment. Today, the majority of our students come from areas of low education participation, low household income and/or socioeconomic status representing all age groups.

However, we are fully aware that other under-represented groups including carers; people estranged from their families; people from traveller communities; refugees; people with specific learning difficulties and children from armed service families need to be offered opportunities to study. We continue to consider ways we can further widen our participation to support as wide a range of disadvantaged groups as possible. This topic is regularly raised at our Staff Student Liaison Panel (SSLP) and the Student Affairs Committee (SAC) with ideas presented to our Senior Management Team (SMT).

### Recruitment and selection

For recruitment purposes, our figures show that our student entrants are mainly:

- Students from areas of low education participation, low household income and/or socioeconomic status
- Students of particular ethnicities
- Mature students
- Students from Black and Minority Ethnic communities (BME)

We look towards national data and our own internal data to inform us of which under-represented groups we need to target. We continue to encourage changes of thinking internally where necessary and set objectives for sustained change to broaden our recruitment horizons creating a fairer playing field for all students groups with protected characteristics under the Equality Act 2010. At the same time, we draw on data from Higher Education Statistical Agency HESA and other references available in Office for Students (OfS) website.

Suffice it to say, at present many student entrants join with only moderate qualifications. In this respect we see our role as one of enhancing opportunity by giving students, (most who come from the locality), a serious chance to succeed. For student access on entry, we operate a robust admissions procedure that ensures fair and equitable treatment for all, enabling each and every student the opportunity to sell themselves to the best of their ability. Every student is interviewed to a tight specification and interviewing staff are trained to enable all students to give of their best at interview.

## **The student lifecycle**

On joining the course of study, successful students attend an intensive induction programme that covers both academic and pastoral content. We use the induction period to reinforce both the enjoyment of students working in partnership and the usefulness of learning. We believe our approach is dynamic and exciting. Students learn in the induction programme that responsibility for good access to learning falls, with not only the College, but also students themselves. Over time, they are encouraged to take more responsibility for their own learning. In this way the majority of our students move into employment as independent, self-directive and autonomous learners.

We organise various activities that improve student accessibility, in addition to formal teaching. To ensure students learn from a variety of means, we offer various class activities (e.g. seminars, tutorials, teamwork, presentations and external speakers) events and visits throughout their studies and we have a Careers Advisor to support students' career prospects. All students are offered personal tutoring from day one to nurture improved access to their course. Each student is allocated a personal tutor who supports the student throughout his/her course of study and monitors each student's academic progress. We received a 'good practice' for student support from the QAA HER (AP) 2017.

Overall on completion of the programme the majority of our students move on to further study or employment. Having been taken through a two-year learning experience they depart with enhanced confidence, greater written oral and communication skills, assertiveness for further studies and employability.

## **Student engagement and active participation**

At the same time, we are strong on student engagement and encourage every opportunity to participate. We were pleased to receive a 'good practice' at our last QAA HER(AP) 2017 commending us on student engagement. All of our students are encouraged to make use of their voice to reflect on and where appropriate, enhance their learning experience. Not every student becomes a representative but we encourage as many as possible to do so and this promotes negotiation skills, teamwork, constituent feedback and a growth in maturity. It engenders a sense of responsibility for those students who take up the role. At the same time each student is invited to engage in student feedback at course and programme level. Every student's view is important to us and impacts on the learning experience. This raises their confidence that their view is important and that they are active participants in the programmes they study. In fact, we expect no less of our student body.

We collect and review every aspect of formal and informal student feedback covering unit and course content to improve our courses. This enables improvements to access, participation and learning that not only impacts on current students, but also offers dynamic experiences to the next cohort entering the college. It is a continuous process of improvement. The data from student surveys are discussed by staff and students at the different committees which continues to engender a robust student voice.

## **Student access to resources**

The College's general facilities provides access to good resources for all students and include books in the library, e-books, well-equipped classrooms, computer labs, reliable broadband access, stable networked resources and an excellent ICON VLE service (awarded good practice from QAA HER (AP) 2017). The ICON VLE provides the central pillar for all teaching and learning at the College and can be accessed from any location. Students can access the ICON VLE daily to obtain lecture notes and assignment briefs as well as to participate in helpful discussion forums, which can be initiated by either teachers or students. Summative feedback

and provisional grades are also provided through the ICON VLE and external examiner reports are made available to student representatives.

Our Teaching, Learning and Resources Committee with attendant student representatives, tests out and ensures appropriateness and accessibility of learning resources. We also ensure that classrooms are well equipped with modern equipment e.g. OHP's, white-boards etc. to nurture a positive learning environment and contributing to course accessibility. The rooms are laid out in such a way to ensure effective learning of applied materials and enabling students to work together as groups and to break out, where necessary, into small learning teams. In this way full participation of every student is encouraged and the feeling of being part of a wider, informed student body.

### **Learning, Teaching and Assessment Strategy**

Through our Learning Teaching and Assessment Strategy the College seeks to achieve the following:

- To widen participation from students who are mature, from Black and Minority Ethnic Communities, and come from lower socio-economic backgrounds
- To educate students who are motivated and self-directed critical thinkers, capable of independent enquiry
- To provide students with both sound academic knowledge and vocational expertise
- To foster independent and collaborative learning among students and to encourage lifelong learning leading to enhancing their career potentials
- To develop and implement approaches to feedback and assessment that maximise learning and student outcomes.

### **Supporting students with special needs**

The College is aware of how special learning needs and disability can prevent access to both physical facilities and learning opportunities. Thus, we offer a dedicated service to support students with special learning needs and disability. Students with special needs are identified at the time of admission by completing a disability application to identify their needs, monitored by the Disability Officer. Where a special need is identified each student is invited to undertake a Special Needs Assessment (SNA) which signposts him/her to the appropriate support mechanism.

Examples of support (dependant on the need and not exclusive) includes:

- a) Longer time on submission.
- b) Safe and easy physical access to all parts of the building.
- c) The provision of a link for counselling to the Private Therapy Clinic.
- d) The provision of information and signposting to available funding opportunities e.g. College Hardship Fund.

### **Access and participation priorities for 2018-19**

The College is in the process of registering with the Office for Students (OfS) to seek opportunities for validation enabling us to have greater ownership of our Courses. In this way we will develop courses that meet the needs of our students. With this model we can react quickly and effectively to changing environmental circumstances that ensure our courses are fully fit for the purpose, meet the needs of the community and this will impact on improved access and participation. Furthermore, we have the following objectives:

- a) To encourage student retention as we seek opportunities to offer Level 6 study.
- b) To build partnerships with local employers, offering greater opportunities for student employability and growing our guest speaker database.
- c) To improve our overall response rate for the National Student Survey
- d) To further enhance learning and assessment through the Teaching Excellence Framework.
- e) To continuously review learning and assessment methodology, thereby promoting greater commitment to learning, progression and retention.

### **Monitoring and Review**

The Access and Participation Statement will be reviewed annually by the Senior Management Team to monitor its operation and signed off by the Academic Board to ensure it continues to be fit for the purpose. Finally, as we come to produce a full Access and Participation Plan we intend to fully evaluate what we currently do, critically analyse it and amend accordingly to produce year-on-year an enhanced approach to access and participation for our students.