



ICON College of Technology and Management: Revised Strategic Plan 2020 – 2025

Variation to the 2020-2025 Strategic Plan

Introduction

1 All universities and colleges have long term plans to set direction and provide a framework for operations and development. These plans come in many forms. Ours is designed to be a flexible working document that will be updated as necessary, particularly in these uncertain times.

2 ICON College of Technology and Management is an independent alternative provider of higher education in East London. In December 2020 we have approximately 1,500 students (March 2022: 1,400 students) studying for Higher National Diplomas and for degrees as part of a new academic partnership with Falmouth University.

3 ICON College is a shareholder owned business

4 The responsibility for the implementation of this strategic plan is shared between the Principal, Professor Nurun Nabi and the Managing Director, Azizur Rahman who are the principal shareholders. They are supported by the Management Board which is the senior team responsible for day to day operations. The College is governed by the Board of Directors, known as the Board of Governance, which is made up of Professor Nabi, Mr Rahman and three non-executive directors. The Board is supported by an Academic Board and Finance and Audit Committees.

5 This Plan has been approved by the Board of Governance during a period of great uncertainty for higher education brought about by the uncertainty of Brexit and the consequences of the Covid-19 pandemic. We expect to adapt our Plan as circumstances evolve. At present it reflects our ambitions and the road map to achieving those ambitions.

Vision

6 Our vision is to be an inclusive high-quality independent London-based education provider operating from our own campus within five years and progressing toward the attainment of degree awarding powers.

Mission

7 Our mission is to:

- Provide accessible higher education for students aligned to socio-economic requirements and employability.
- Raise and widen educational participation in East London and beyond.

- Equip students with marketable skills for effective and rewarding careers.
- Offer an educational experience that maximises student support, thus ensuring students reach their full potential.

Values

8 ICON College is a culturally diverse and inclusive community where our Board, management, staff and students work together. As a College we value:

- A high-quality learning experience for all
- Personal support for students as they progress through their education
- Providing value for money to students who are entitled to consumer protection
- Diversity and equality, achieved through inclusiveness in our recruitment in students and staff
- The continual professional development of all our staff
- Strong and prosperous relationships with our wider East London community and academic and business stakeholders
- Being socially responsible to our stakeholders and wider community
- Sustainability, by which we mean sustaining ourselves as a College and playing our part in environmental sustainability.
- Co-production in course development, teaching and learning.

Operating environment

9 The College operates as an 'alternative provider' registered with the Office for Students (OfS). As such it has to navigate complex regulatory rules. It also has to compete with other HE providers of which there are many in London including established universities. The political environment is always uncertain and this makes planning difficult. However, the East London community is ever-changing. We rely on its rich cultural heritage, nurtured by the Olympic legacy. It is a vibrant community, progressive and driven by a spirit that enables young people to express their creative and entrepreneurial talents.

In addition to these enduring elements of the business environment, the College has been adversely affected by Brexit, given that we have traditionally recruited many EU nationals. The College will increasingly aim to recruit mainstream students through the UCAS process, including target groups identified in its APP. In addition, the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic is becoming clearer. We cannot be sure what students' appetite to attend universities and colleges will be in the next year or two; our contingency

plan to obtain Tier 4 approval and recruit from overseas is ongoing; and there are many risks to our teaching and business processes. However, we hope that our local community members will continue to be inspired by the prospects of lifelong learning, second careers. This will allow us to help and support them in their educational journeys with a high degree of flexibility.

10 We continue to identify and mitigate risks in the interests of maximising career opportunities of our students. We are also alert to the potential impact on the economy of Brexit and the Covid-19 pandemic, and hence on education.

11 The College has a number of strengths and these will provide the resilience needed in difficult times, including:

- our Silver status in the Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF),
- an upgraded registration status with the Office for Students (OfS),
- excellent NSS results,
- a new partnership with Falmouth University to offer validated degree courses,
- new membership with UCAS,
- a track record of supporting a diverse student population,
- robust finances.

Strategic aims

12 Our strategic aims in the period to 2025 are to:

- *Education:* Maintain and enhance the quality of teaching and learning and the student experience as a whole.
- *Recruitment:* Focus on recruiting school leavers from London schools, academies and Further Education institutions, through UCAS.
- *Widening access and participation:* Offer access to all, particularly groups of people presently underrepresented in higher education, leading to realistic work and entrepreneurial opportunities.
- *Course provision:* Widen our portfolio of courses including at postgraduate level.
- *Sustainability.* Maintain financial sustainability and provide investment for new College premises.
- *Management and governance.* Manage and govern the College effectively, ensuring the involvement of staff and students, thereby giving confidence to all stakeholders.
- *Collegiality:* Develop a more collegiate culture through academic partnership that offers delegated authority towards taught degree awarding powers.

Strategic Aim 1 Education

13 Our **educational aims** are to:

- Maintain the quality of our provision and reinforce the practical goals of

rewarding career placement for our graduates and building a skilled labour-force to support economic growth.

- Diversify our range of provision, offering higher level courses designed to enhance students' career opportunities and support society's burgeoning economic need.
- To meet the expectation of OfS targets for graduate outcomes, including progression, completion and employment rates

14 We will achieve our aims as we:

- Offer a variety of challenging courses that meet students' diverse expectations
- Maintain our statistical record of continuation and completion including progressing culturally diverse students from Higher National Diplomas to our new Bachelors and projected Masters' degrees
- Support our permanent academic staff in obtaining professional accreditations through the Higher Education Academy
- Develop an active exchange of ideas with employers in London so that our curriculum can give students the potential to improve their skills as required by local and national economy
- Establish an Employers' forum and outreach partnerships that nurture graduate employment and placement opportunities.
- Encourage and facilitate Alumni feedback into College development.

15 Our key performance indicators will be to:

- Maintain our continuation rate at 85% or more, our rate of progression into employment or further study at 80% or more
- Achieve a high student satisfaction rate in NSS annual survey across the courses
- Achieve HEA Fellowship or Associate Fellowship status for at least 50% of our permanent academic staff.
- Achieve TEF Gold status
- Be ready to commence an application for taught degree awarding powers.

Strategic Aim 2 Widening access and participation

16 Our aims in respect of **widening participation and equal opportunities** are set out in our Access and Participation Plan (APP) and we have identified gaps in our recruitment and achievements with different groups of students and set targets that are challenging but

attainable. We intend to keep our APP under continuous review because there is major potential disruption to higher education and to the population of London as the impact of Brexit and the Covid-19 pandemic becomes clear and as government policy evolves.

17 This strategy fits with the College's overall mission which is to provide an opportunity for quality higher education for aspiring and willing students including those from culturally diverse and socially challenged backgrounds in and around London.

18 We will achieve our aims as we:

- selectively target recruitment from groups that are underrepresented in higher education in East London; and
- specifically target low participation Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) individuals; people with disabilities; people from low socio-economic backgrounds. We will also aim to maintain our record of success at offering opportunity to mature students and will work to ensure that in diversifying we do not impact our record of success and progression with this group.

In summary, our target groups are:

- Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic students.
- Students with disabilities.
- Students from low-socio economic backgrounds
- Mature students aged 21 or over.

19 The College began to offer Level 6 qualifications from academic year 2020/21 following our agreement with Falmouth University. The broad aim for attainment will be to ensure that the widening participation groups identified here achieve a comparable level of attainment to the other groups of students in due course.

20 Our commitment to fair and equal access for students is consistent with our open attitude to staff recruitment. We are committed to fairness and equality of opportunity in respect of our management of staff and this is reinforced by our robust Equal Opportunities policy.

21 Our key performance indicators will be:

- To recruit a share of the under-performing but promising school-leavers and FE students with level-3 qualification from London boroughs.
- To increase our intake of BAME students
- To recruit an additional number of students with disabilities.
- Across all students, to maintain our continuation rate and course completion rate above the relevant sector benchmark.

22 Our targets for staff development are to:

- Ensure that our employment and career policies and practices are applied fairly.

- Target a 50/50 Male - Female staff mix at all levels
- Maintain our diverse mix of academic and admin staff at all management levels.

Strategic Aim 3 Course provision

23 Our **aims in developing course provision** are to:

- Deliver top-up, undergraduate and postgraduate degrees in partnership with
- Falmouth University
- Broaden our portfolio of courses with the addition of at least one new career focused course
- Seek opportunities, for example, through apprenticeships and placements, to offer career education and training options for our potential student population

24 We will achieve our priority goals as we:

- Maintain our high quality HND provision
- Enhance the professional expertise of our administration and support staff; and
- Intensify the career and entrepreneurial elements of our provision.

25 Our key performance indicators will be:

- Our provision will range from HND to Masters' level within 5 years.
- We will offer at least one new course
- Our completion and employment data will be highlighted in the College Annual Report.

Strategic Aim 4 Sustainability

26 Our **aims in respect of finance and sustainability** are to:

- Increase our income annually throughout the strategic planning period.
- Maintain a high level of liquidity,
- Accumulate sufficient capital to fund the purchase of our own premises.

27 We will achieve our priority goals as we:

- Ensure that students receive value for money
- Generate a surplus on trading activities that provides a return to investors and generates capital to support development plans
- Manage resources to support strategic opportunities and minimise risk.
- Broaden our educational offer including by opening up to students from

overseas (Tier 4) based on Government's future immigration policy.

- 28 Our key performance indicators will be:
- Increase turnover by minimum of 10% every year
 - Maintain minimum of 6-10 months' operational cost
 - Provide at least 40% of capital to fund the acquisition of new College premises

Strategic Aim 5 Management and governance

- 29 Our **aims for governance and accountability** are to:
- Develop corporate and academic governance arrangements that meet and exceed the regulatory obligations imposed on us as a higher education provider
 - Fully involve our staff and students in our academic and corporate governance including through a students' representation.
 - Reflect the best oversight arrangements for higher education thus providing a firm foundation as we seek degree awarding powers.
- 30 We will achieve our priority goals as we:
- Implement the reforms agreed in our 2020-21 governance review
 - Consolidate the Management Board as the key senior management forum directing the College's operations
 - Add and benefit from externality on our Board of Governance, Academic Board and key committees.
- 31 Our key performance indicators will be:
- Retain our registration with the Office for Students and attain full fee cap status
 - Comply fully with the legal obligations required of directors in respect of financial reporting, taxation, employment, health & safety and 'Prevent.'
 - To be ready to apply for degree awarding powers at undergraduate degree level in business and/or hospitality courses.
 - Staff turnover of not more than 15% in respect of permanent staff.

Note: The two Executive Directors will review and monitor the progress of the plan annually and report to the BoG. In addition, other relevant staff would be allocated specific responsibilities to ensure the smooth running of the plan.