

# Higher Education (HE) Strategy 2022-2027

## Executive Summary

1. The Newham College of Further Education's Higher Education Strategy 2022-2027 sets out the direction of travel that will ensure we continue to deliver outstanding provision that is highly valued by our students and our communities as well as contributing positively to economic growth and community wealth building.
2. The strategy aims to build on our success as the highest performing FE College in London<sup>1</sup> and to rebuild our reputation as a trusted provider of distinctive, high quality Higher Education (HE) focused on L4/5.
3. In 2021, the Corporation approved its Strategic Plan for 2022-27, targeting valued and trusted relationships with students, employers, staff and stakeholders in four key areas of activity: anchor employer, pathways to great jobs, collaboration and sustainability.
4. The overall strategic direction of travel for the College curriculum was approved by the Corporation in 2018, and drives the Strategic Plan over the next 5 years. The key curriculum drivers were to target the college's investment into curriculum specialisms delivered up to level 5 in areas most closely aligned to sustainable well paid employment. In the first instance, these areas have been identified as digital; health and life sciences; and construction, engineering and the built environment. Significant major funding has followed this strategy:
  - a. HTQ funding secured in 2022 to develop L4/5 capability in digital;
  - b. Health & life sciences pathways boosted through Barts Health Futures, a Joint Venture between College and Barts Health NHS Trust, co-funded by the GLA in 2020;
  - c. A £28m investment in the London City Institute of Technology (LCIoT) to develop L4/5 programmes in digital, engineering and built environment, opening in 2022.
5. This paper sets out 5 priorities established in setting the direction of HE for the College:
  - a. Priority One - Student Experience – Quality
  - b. Priority Two – Curriculum Offer
  - c. Priority Three - People
  - d. Priority Four - Promotion
  - e. Priority Five - Governance and Structure

## Background and Context

6. Newham is an area characterised by lower qualification levels, lower employment levels, and lower salary levels relative to the rest of London. Pathways to high skilled well-paid employment are a priority.
7. The area is well served by three year residential degree programmes, but despite fierce competition in the market for prospective L6 students, there is very little supply of high quality provision at L4/5 – seen by the government as the “missing middle” between A Levels and degrees, and a key to improving the UK's productivity.

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<sup>1</sup> National Achievement Rates Tables (NARTS) - DfE March 2020 – the latest available comparative data

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8. The College's strategic intention, even prior to the decision by OfS in 2017 not to register the College, has been to exit the L6 market and instead focus its offer on L4/5. This strategic direction of travel has been endorsed by funding bodies, as noted in paragraph 4.
9. To ensure the College is in a strong position to respond to the changes in the marketplace, the College has undertaken a thorough review of its HE offer to determine what is fit for purpose, financially sustainable and resilient. In addition, this revised offer will need to be responsive to student requirements as well as the economic climate.
10. **To ensure we achieve these, our key priorities will be to:**
  - a. Facilitate a highly effective student experience, whereby students gain sustainable employment through the development of work and life skills including digital literacy.
  - b. Review and revise the current HE offer and provide products for students and employers that are consistently high quality and meet local and regional skills and education priorities in a sustainable way.
  - c. Ensure the deployment of our people provides leadership at all levels and develop the education, employer and community partnerships, which enhance and help grow the HE curriculum.
  - d. Ensure the promotion of our offer fully informs students, parents/carers, employers and local communities including progression and career opportunities.
  - e. Provide a Governance structure that facilitates effective management and oversight of the curriculum.

### Priority One - Student Experience – Quality

11. Facilitate a student experience which is outstanding whereby students gain sustainable employment through the development of work and life skills including digital literacy. **This will be achieved through:**
  - a. Empowering students to make informed decisions in partnership with staff. This will facilitate students in taking responsibility for their learning, in a co-creation model, which recognises students and staff as equal partners that together create an academic community. This approach enables our students to be involved in planning their learning experience, stretching and challenging themselves and their peers, as well as those who teach them.
  - b. The channelling of student feedback to further enhance the quality of the provision and draw on their experience and ideas that lead to change and development. This will initiate enhancement to their own and future students' experiences and will support the College to continuously innovate approaches to learning, teaching and assessment.
  - c. Preparing students for a world where employment opportunities are dynamic and changing, where students may be required to bid for contracts, commissions and projects in a freelance capacity, and the ability to work effectively in teams to achieve common goals over a short timescale will be key to developing a successful career.
  - d. Continuing to invest in learning resources recognised by students as creating a realistic working environment in the fields in which they are studying.
12. **We will know that this has been achieved and is highly effective when:**
  - a. The learning, teaching, assessment and academic support is judged excellent by our students.
  - b. Students are stretched to achieve their highest possible grades in their awards so that they realise their potential academically and professionally.

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- c. Students' views are channelled into decision making processes by the course teams with appropriate action set and monitored and this is recognised by students through internal and external surveys.
- d. Students engage with a range of Quality Assurance processes that lead to improvements and students participate in course development, including new course validation.
- e. The College and the Students Parliament work together to ensure that there is independent advice and support for students.

### Priority Two – The curriculum offer

13. Review and revise the current HE offer and provide products for students and employers that are consistently high quality and meet local and regional skills and education priorities in a sustainable way. **This will be achieved through:**
  - a. Curriculum developments being informed by national, international and local research into workforce trends, labour market intelligence, and developments in education and industry.
  - b. Effectively working with employers to co-create higher level pathways for accreditation by the relevant Awarding Body.
  - c. Building on curricula, that already have a strong reputation, are resilient and have unique selling points.
  - d. Extending our network of industry specialists and employers who contribute to the design and delivery of HE programmes, ensuring sector relevance as well as securing skills for progression to employment for our graduates. This enables the College to meet local, regional, national and international employer needs for an appropriately skilled and qualified workforce.
  - e. The further development of appropriate Higher Education routes, e.g. the extension of the HNC/D offer, Higher Apprentices, alternative modes of study such as day release and distance learning and the development of part time provision to attract a wider demographic.
14. **We will know that this has been achieved and is highly effective when:**
  - a. The curriculum offer is desirable and modes of delivery are flexible to meet employer and student requirements which leads to an increase in student recruitment.
  - b. We build on the delivery of qualifications and skills appropriate to enter employment, progress to higher-level study, set up as freelance or start a new business. This will be reflected in strong progression to highly-skilled sector-specific employment.
  - c. Facilities are maximised which in turn leads to growth within popular and successful curriculum areas.
  - d. Employers and sector specialists participate in and contribute to curriculum in all areas of HE delivery including content design and input.

### Priority Three – People

15. Ensure the deployment of our people provides leadership at all levels and develop the education, employer and community partnerships, which enhance and help grow the HE curriculum. **This will be achieved through:**
  - a. Recruiting leaders who deliver excellence and who are able to perform to the College's high expectations.
  - b. Ensuring course leadership is effective in delivering high quality education that contributes to an outstanding student experience.

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- c. Providing opportunities for all HE teachers to engage with employers in the adaptation of training to current and evolving industry need.
- d. The extension of our academic network through the joint sharing of pedagogic research with other academics from other universities, including Queen Mary University of London, our partner in the LCIoT.
- e. Staff, who are themselves educators and practitioners, work with students effectively to enable them to find things out for themselves and create original work.

### 16. We will know that this has been achieved and is highly effective when:

- a. Strong and effective leadership at all levels leads to excellent outcomes for students.
- b. Staff maximise their strong industry experience and links to further enhance student experience.
- c. Teaching teams are skilled in creating curricula and pedagogies which suit the needs of their students and their sector.
- d. Staff are recognised internally and externally for the quality and reputation of their work. This includes staff undertaking continual professional development which enhance the quality of the students' learning experiences.

### Priority Four – Promotion

### 17. Ensure the promotion of our offer fully informs students, family units, employers and local communities including progression, career opportunities and value for money. Growth, and therefore financial stability, will be supported by adopting a 'whole college' approach to marketing and recruitment which will include collaboration with widening participation and internal progression activities. **This will be achieved through:**

- a. College staff (curriculum and support) seeing marketing and recruitment as a shared responsibility, are engaged with all recruitment activities and events and use every opportunity to positively promote the College.
- b. Targeted marketing activities and course teams providing engaging activities and excellent service for applicants at every point of contact.
- c. The continued development of vocational and academic routes from entry to higher levels that enables students to move through clear progression pathways, with a line of sight into employment.
- d. Ensuring the progression routes from Further Education to Higher Education are clearly mapped and communicated effectively to all stakeholders.
- e. Building on our partnerships with schools, other colleges and community partners to further open up access to education for more of our community and to lead new developments in widening participation with our Student Ambassadors.
- f. Through our dedicated widening participation team continue to build effective partnerships with schools, colleges, community organisations and care leaver teams offering impartial HE IAG and taster activities to students in our local community.
- g. Ensuring our offer demonstrates good value for money through the quality of teaching, fair assessment and feedback and learning resources.

### 18. We will know that this has been achieved and is highly effective when:

- a. Course teams co-create content and are proactive in generating leads and maximising marketing opportunities which leads to increased student recruitment.
- b. We are successful in meeting our Widening Participation policy to make accessible pathways to economically valuable courses to local people.
- c. Contractual targets for recruitment at L4/5 meet the conditions of grant for the LCIoT and HTQ programmes.

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- d. Internal progression to Higher Education has improved by 20% year on year. 85% of L4/5 students achieve positive destinations into employment or higher level study.

### Priority Five - Governance and Structure

19. The College has created a governance structure, with appropriate governor skill and expertise, that facilitates effective management and oversight of the L4+ curriculum.
20. The responsibility for the strategic direction of all College provision including HE lies with the Board of Governors. The College Executive Team is the body within the College with overall responsibility for the management of the College, including its HE provision.
21. The Corporation devolves responsibility for curriculum matters to the Curriculum & Quality Committee that has set up a formally constituted HE Oversight Board to provide specific oversight and ensure regulatory compliance with respect to L4+ programmes. The HE Oversight Board includes student representation. It is served by an executive-led HE Steering Committee, chaired by the Deputy Principal, into which reports two operational committees – the Academic Development and Quality Committee (ADQ) and the Data Registry and Finance Committee (DRF). Together these structures have responsibility for the curriculum rationale, academic standards and the quality of HE courses.
22. The HE Oversight Board regularly monitors the performance of HE provision through reports and key performance indicators, reporting up key issues to the Curriculum & Quality Committee and Corporation.
23. The governance structure remains a crucial function for the College with accountability at all levels within the organisation. The structure ensures the Executive Management Team retain a clear line of sight on all matters related to HE from quality, recruitment and course approvals as well as shaping the priorities for HE, beyond this, the Board of Governors have final approval on the direction of HE and the overall strategy.
24. In addition to the internal governance infrastructure the College's application for registration with the Government's Office for Students requires the adherence to the regulatory framework that is underpinned by the functions, duties and powers given to it in the Higher Education and Research Act 2017 (HERA). The regulatory framework sets out four objectives against which the College is assessed by the Office for Students:
  - a. All students, from all backgrounds, and with the ability and desire to undertake higher education:
    - i. are supported to access, succeed in, and progress from, higher education;
    - ii. receive a high quality academic experience, and their interests are protected while they study or in the event of a provider, campus or course closure;
    - iii. are able to progress into employment or further study, and their qualifications hold their value over time;
    - iv. receive value for money.