



# ACCESS AND PARTICIPATION STATEMENT



September 2024

To be reviewed in September 2025

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## 1. Access and Participation Statement

Islamic College is a small college situated in the borough of Brent in North London. Students tend to be mainly from London but students who can afford accommodation or have families residing in London have access to the facilities at the college. The Islamic College (IC) is fully committed to attracting and supporting students from all backgrounds in their achievement of higher education qualifications at the college.

Islamic College addresses a very important issue of community representation in Higher Education. Enrolment statistics show that the Islamic College has opened its doors widely for minorities who may find it difficult to go further in their studies to the Higher Education levels. Both BA Equivalent and MA Equivalent programmes have a representation of every member of the community.

While being based in a relatively less well-off area in London, the college seeks to play its part in creating a fairer society by providing greater access to higher education for the local community. This will improve social mobility and stimulate the economic growth of the region. Furthermore, our emphasis on provisions for female students provides us with the opportunity to address inequalities in Higher Education for women in the community. IC's recruitment has been traditionally from within underrepresented communities resulting in a strong widening participation baseline. Furthermore, the college has responded to the demand from potential students from throughout London and outside thus serving its local and national population and employer community.

The college recognises that each student is an individual with varying academic potential and personal commitments; however, these are not barriers to the successful achievement of a qualification and future career opportunities. The college also embraces its role alongside the wider HE community and will contribute to the positive debate and commentary surrounding the benefits of HE and its opportunities.

IC endeavors to provide meaningful information to potential students prior to their applications to enable informed and timely advice and continue to engage with students prior to enrolment and attendance at the college. Equally, the academic support provided to manage the development and improvement of quality through a transparent and collaborative process.

The underlying principles of IC highlight the College's focus on access, participation, and diversity:

- **Caring for individuals:** we care about the development, success, and well-being of our students, and believe that a better future means quality education for all;
- **Commitment:** we support our students with the help they need to succeed in the professional pursuits;
- **Academic excellence:** we ensure a high quality of success through exceptional standards of teaching and engaging learning methodologies;

- **Community and diversity:** we promote and encourage diversity in our college, and are proud to embrace students from all backgrounds.

Furthermore, The Islamic College is committed to meeting local and regional needs to widen participation in Higher Education (HE) from under-represented groups. The College acknowledges that increasing access to HE in the field of Islamic Studies is particularly important given that the percentage of the population with higher level qualifications (Level 4 or above) in such fields is below the national average, contributing to a gap in the understanding of issues pertaining to Islam.

Thus our Equivalent level 4 programmes aim to address this shortfall.

The College's strategies and policies set out clearly our commitment to fair access, including the minimising of barriers for applicants. In addition to setting transparent criteria for entry to programmes, the College welcomes applications from students from non-traditional backgrounds and values work related experience to encourage mature students into higher education.

As part of the admissions process, the College provides comprehensive information, advice and guidance. The admissions process is administered by the Registry Department. The Registry Department ensures a cohesive approach to admissions through consideration of students' prior achievement and experience, career aspirations, individual learning and welfare needs. The Director of Higher Education together with the Registry Department process and liaise together to ensure a smooth implementation of the admission process.

The Islamic College has developed various HE pathways to encourage young people in particular, and their parents, carers or guardians, to consider HE as a progression route. The College focuses on developing our existing and prospective students' study skills to provide the firm grounding needed for success. Working with schools, community groups and employers we raise awareness of the benefits of HE to individuals, industry and the local economy.

Examples of activities undertaken by the College to widen access to HE includes:

- Establishing an Arabic Language course which provide opportunities for students from diverse backgrounds and levels of education to progress to university level study and in our BA Equivalent in Islamic Studies or BA Equivalent Hawza Studies.
- Providing Supportive Funding for Students who want to progress from a BA Equivalent programme to a MA Equivalent programmes.
- Working closely with local and national institutions to raise aspirations and promote lifelong learning, targeting progression to MA Equivalent programmes and attending college open day events to promote advice and guidance on progression opportunities and offer advice. The College recognises that it is not an awarding body but merely presenting equivalent levels of study based on knowledge , assessment and skills criteria.

### **1.01 Definition of Widening Participation<sup>1</sup>**

The Islamic College engages in outreach which assists it in fulfilling the requirements of widening participation as defined by the Office for Fair Access (OFFA).

*Removing the barriers to higher education, including financial barriers, that student from lower income and other under-represented <sup>2</sup> backgrounds face.*

This is done by maintaining contact with external bodies like mosques and religious institutions and academics to engage disadvantaged and under-represented groups into education at the Higher Education (HE) levels.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.offa.org.uk/glossary/> ( Look at WP)

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.offa.org.uk/glossary/> - ( Look at Under-represented groups)

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## 1.02 Target groups

The College has targeted the following groups for particular focus, in the light of the data presented above:

- **Target Group 1:** The College will target **Female students**, who sometimes lack the opportunity to continue their studies to Higher Education. Islamic College's Annual Monitoring Report shows that female students are strongly represented in all programmes offered by the Islamic College.
- **Target Group 2:** The College will target **BAME students**: The College will focus on access for Black students in particular as they are barely represented in our programmes of study and in achieving this aim the college has been successful lately but needs further enhancement.
- **Target Group 3:** The College will target **students from low participation neighbourhoods** as it has scholarship schemes, which can assist greatly students from Quintiles 1 & 2 categories. Our programmes have seen an uptake in the scholarships by students who cannot afford complete levels of Fees required for the courses.
- **Target Group 4:** The College will target **Disabled students**, since all facilities available at the Islamic College are fully accessible by people who may have disabilities.
- **Target Group 5:** The College will continue to target **Mature students**, as this is the area in which the college specializes particularly in its MA Equivalent programmes. In this case, the intent is to maintain and slightly increase the above-average level of access; to ensure that internal systems support the particular needs of mature students in terms of continuation and success; and the distinct employment needs of mature students are identified and addressed.
- **Target Group 6:** The College will continue to target **Mixed or Other Race students** who have multiple intersections of disadvantage: mature, non-White students from low participation neighbourhoods; mature disabled students; non-white mature students.

Although the numbers of students at College are low due to the capping and limited data, there is evidence that all these targeted areas of students have particular challenges. The key point of need in the cycle is continuation and success.

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## 1.03 Measurement of access achievements

Prospective students are interviewed to assess their suitability for higher level studies and their chosen programme of study and to identify students' support needs. The College actively encourages applications from disadvantaged groups and monitors recruitment and enrolment through its Annual Monitoring Report (AMR). We have been working to improve widening participation for our higher level programmes for a number of years, it is part of the ethos of the whole college running through all

levels, and we monitor the success of this very carefully through retention and success rates. We involve students within this process through our learner voice process and with the support of the Student Council (Student Rep.) During 2024-2025 the college aims to continue the flexible approaches to higher learning. We will continue to monitor and review the success through retention and achievement rates. Strategic outputs, developed through the college [Strategic Plan](#) are monitored through annual feedbacks from students and the Annual Monitoring Report which evidences the level of participation of differing student groups.

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