



ACCESS AND PARTICIPATION STATEMENT



September 2025

To be reviewed in September 2026

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1. Access and Participation Statement

The Islamic College is a small institution located in the borough of Brent in North London. While most students are based in London, those who can afford accommodation or have family residing in the area also benefit from access to the College's facilities. The Islamic College is fully committed to attracting and supporting students from all backgrounds in their pursuit of higher education qualifications at the College.

The 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 (HE) levels. Both BA-Equivalent and MA-Equivalent programmes have a representation of every member of the community.

While based in a relatively less well-off area of London, the College aims to contribute to a fairer society by increasing access to higher education for the local community. This approach supports social mobility and promotes economic growth within the region. In addition, our strong emphasis on supporting female students allows us to address existing inequalities in higher education for women in the community. The Islamic College has traditionally recruited students from underrepresented communities, resulting in a strong baseline for widening participation. The College has also responded to growing demand from prospective students across London and beyond, thereby serving both its local and national populations, as well as the wider 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.

The Islamic College endeavors to provide meaningful information to prospective students before they apply, enabling informed and timely decision-making. The College also maintains engagement with students throughout the period leading up to enrolment and attendance. Equally, academic support is provided to foster the development and continuous improvement of quality through a transparent and collaborative process.

The underlying principles of The Islamic College 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. Admissions are managed by the Student Administration Office, which ensures a cohesive approach by considering applicants' prior achievements and experience, career aspirations, and individual learning and welfare needs. The Head of Academic Programmes works closely with the Student Administration Office to ensure the smooth implementation of the admissions process.

The Islamic College has developed a range of higher education (HE) pathways to encourage young people—and their parents, carers, or guardians—to consider HE as a viable progression route. The College focuses on strengthening the study skills of both current and prospective students, providing a solid foundation for academic success. By working collaboratively with schools, community groups, and employers, we aim to raise awareness of the benefits of higher education for individuals, industry, and the local economy.

Examples of activities undertaken by the College to widen access to higher education include:

- Establishing an Arabic Language course, which provides opportunities for students from diverse backgrounds and educational levels to progress to university-level study, particularly into our BA-Equivalent in Islamic Studies or BA-Equivalent in Hawza Studies.
- Providing supportive funding for students wishing to progress from a BA-Equivalent programme to an MA-Equivalent programme.
- Collaborating with local and national institutions to raise aspirations and promote lifelong learning. These efforts focus on encouraging progression to MA-Equivalent programmes, including participation in college open days to offer guidance on academic pathways and progression opportunities.

The College recognises that it is not an awarding body but offers programmes aligned with equivalent academic levels. These are based on rigorous knowledge, assessment, and skills criteria comparable to formal higher education qualifications.

1.01 Definition of Widening Participation

The Islamic College defines widening participation¹ in line with the principles set out by the Office for Fair Access (OFFA). This involves actively working to remove barriers—particularly financial and structural—that prevent students from lower-income and other under-represented backgrounds² from accessing higher education.

To achieve this, the College engages in outreach activities and maintains strong relationships with external bodies such as mosques, religious institutions, and academic networks. These efforts are aimed at encouraging participation in higher education among disadvantaged and under-represented groups.

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

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

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 offer by the Islamic College.
- **Target Group 2: Students from Underrepresented Ethnic Backgrounds**
The College will focus on improving access for students from underrepresented ethnic backgrounds, with a particular emphasis on Black students, who remain significantly underrepresented in our Pogrammes of study. While the College has made progress in this area recently, further targeted action is needed to enhance representation and support inclusive participation.
- **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 number of students at the College is limited due to enrolment caps and restricted data, there is clear evidence that all targeted student groups face specific challenges. The critical focus within the student lifecycle is on supporting continuation and ensuring successful outcomes.

1.03 Measurement of access achievements

Prospective students are interviewed to assess their suitability for higher-level studies and their chosen programme, as well as to identify any support needs. The College actively encourages applications from disadvantaged groups and closely monitors recruitment and enrolment through its Annual Monitoring Report (AMR). Widening participation in our higher-level programmes has been a core focus for several years and is embedded within the ethos of the entire College. We carefully track the success of these efforts through retention and achievement rates. Students are actively involved in this process via the learner voice initiative and with the support of the Student Council (Student Representatives).

During the 2025–2026 academic year, the College aims to continue offering flexible approaches to higher learning. We will maintain rigorous monitoring and review of retention and achievement outcomes. Strategic objectives, developed through the College’s Strategic Plan, are evaluated annually through student feedback and the AMR, which highlights the participation levels of various student groups.
