ESL Access and Participation Statement 2024-25

The purpose of the Access and Participation Statement is to support the 2024-25 strategy of Elizabeth School of London (ESL) in conjunction with the Institution's Equality, Diversity and Inclusivity Policy, to ensure widening access to higher education for a range of underrepresented student groups as identified by the Office for Students (OfS). ESL has a commitment to support these students as they progress through their relative programmes of study to facilitate successful outcomes.

This document meets the requirements of Office for Students (OfS) Regulatory Framework Condition A2 and Higher Education and Research Act (HERA) 2017 for approval of access and participation statements.

ESL collaborate with HEIs and universities across the UK to offer access to quality higher education qualifications to all students**.** Currently students of ESL are enrolled as students with [Bath Spa University, Canterbury Christ Church University, St Mary's University, University of Bolton, and Newcastle College Group]. As such, ESL is subject to each awarding institution's approach to access and participation, as detailed in their respective Access and Participation Plans, as well as ESL's own Access and Participation Statement. ESL's Access and Participation Statement is published on their website and updated annually and within 28 days of approval by the Board of Governors.

1.   Access

ESL currently operate across eight UK campuses in six cities (London Canary Wharf, London Holborn, Manchester, Birmingham Apsley House, Birmingham York House, Leeds, Northampton, and Leicester), with around 12,500 active students[1]. By opening schools in these areas, ESL aims to have a transformative impact on these communities by reaching out directly to those individuals who aspire for positive change, social mobility and the opportunity for success. Local provision ensures better access for students who are unable to live away from home in a more traditional HEI setting. Target student groups include mature learners from low socio-economic backgrounds; students with caring responsibilities; individuals whose first language is not English and for whom this creates a barrier for them to be more assimilated into society; full-time workers in 'low-skilled' jobs that require higher education (HE) qualifications for promotion and aspirations of social mobility; and adults who have extensive work experience but limited formal qualifications. By recruiting students from these underrepresented groups, ESL helps its HEI partners bridge the gaps as identified in their own Access and Participation Plans.

ESL's admission policy follows the guiding principles for admissions, recruitment, and widening access as set out in the UK Quality Code for Higher Education[2].

---

[1] To date: 22/03/2024
[2] https://www.qaa.ac.uk/quality-code

2. Progression and Success

ESL, first cohorts are yet to reach a point of completion and therefore the completion and progression to employment statistics are undeterminable at this stage.

ESL have recorded the following continuation rates across all programmes and partners:

Including all partners and all academic years, the most updated data shows the overall continuation rate of ESL standing at 78.3%, at the census date. This does not include the students who transferred to other providers and remained in Higher Education. As per the sector statistics, we anticipate that around 6-10% of our students would have moved to Higher Education provision with other providers.

In terms of academic years, our most recent statistics for continuation rate is 81.1% at the census date.

3. Ambitions and Strategy

Central to ESL's strategy are our values of Respect, Integrity, Excellence, Innovation, Community, and Individualism, which together help provide a supportive environment where students can thrive, feel safe, and foster relationships based on shared goals without having to compromise their own unique identity.

ESL's approach to access and participation is informed by the following principles:

- To provide an opportunity for those who have been out of education for a significant period and wish to return to study.
- To provide an opportunity for those who may not have previously had the confidence to undertake studies at higher education level.
- To enhance every student's personal confidence through success and achievement, underpinned by a supportive learning environment.
- To provide a welcoming and secure environment in which equality of opportunity, diversity of backgrounds and rich experiences are valued.
- To help each student identify and realise their career aspirations through diverse means of employment and/or further study

ESL are able to actively seek programmes that specialise in subject areas that interest and meet the demand of prospective students, and where such do not currently exist, make evidence-based recommendations to partners. Long-term, ESL aim to develop their own portfolio of accredited courses that meet such needs directly without the need for partnerships.

4. Target Groups

ESL aims to recruit and admit individuals to higher education from a wide range of underrepresented groups. These include the following:

- People from lower socio-economic groups or from a neighbourhood where higher education participation is low (POLAR Q1)
- People from low-income backgrounds.
- Ethnic groups from economically dis-advantaged backgrounds.
- Mature learners.
- People with caring responsibilities e.g. student parents

ESL is committed to maintaining its success at access and participation and welcomes individuals from all underrepresented groups in higher education. ESL aim to understand student needs from the initial application process, during enrolment, and throughout their educational journey.

We will approach recruitment and selection for admission to higher education through contacts with and advertising in local communities. Furthermore, many of our students come to us through recommendations from our past and current students. Community-based referrals have been and will continue to be a vital aspect of our strategic approach to reach out to the highly diverse and distinct communities that more conventional and traditional institutions of higher education find difficulty in contacting.

5.   Collaboration and Community

Being situated in the local community allows ESL to remain agile in its ability to meet the needs of its students, promoting local work experience and graduate employment opportunities. In this way, ESL value the building of positive relationships between students and employers to ensure all graduates can make connections and understand the desired skills to compete and succeed. This includes promoting positive work-based behaviours that boost employability by educating students about UK work culture and values.

5.1   Partners

ESL benefit from a track record of engaging with marginalised communities to understand the aspirations and needs of those wishing to explore the opportunities of HE. Additionally, ESL work closely with partners' academic schools and support services to understand their recruitment priorities and programme entry level expectations. This means ESL are best placed to advise on the most appropriate option(s) available to match applicant needs.

ESL's community-based engagement allows them to understand and identify arising needs and preferences regarding subject areas, skills, study mode, and need for flexible provision. This enables ESL to negotiate alternative programme structures and delivery models with current and prospective partner HEIs to ensure that students who might have otherwise been excluded due to their life circumstances can now find a path to participate. For example, programmes are condensed into 2-3 days' fulltime study, with blended provision.

6.   Student Voice

ESL value student feedback and consultation, which is facilitated through various mechanisms. Analysis of this data provides insights into areas that can be improved to enhance student participation, as well areas where positive experiences are acknowledged. This has already led to the improvement of cross-campus facilities; an investigative report into the accuracy of attendance capturing processes; efficiencies in marking turnaround; and training in specific pedagogies for academic staff. Such feedback can also be used to support measures to widen access to currently underrepresented groups, such as those with declared physical or mental health disabilities as identified under the Equality Act 2010.

6.1   Student Hub

This is an instant feedback mechanism for all academic and facilities related queries. It is accessed via a URL link or QR code and allows feedback to be given anonymously if preferred. Depending on the nature of the query, this determines who is responsible for monitoring and

responding to the feedback. For instance, if a query is submitted regarding campus facilities, this will be directed to the relevant Campus Coordinator.

6.2   Surveys

ESL conduct Mid-Module and End-of-Semester surveys as per partner requirements. In addition to this, the National Student Survey is conducted annually. Once final graduation years are entered and students successfully complete their UG/PG courses, the Graduate Outcomes Survey will also be used annually.

6.3   Student Voice Panels (SVPs)

The SVPs provide an opportunity for student reps to voice the opinions of their classmates for programmes related to each partner. The panels allow an exchange with senior level ESL staff who are then able to communicate the fulfilment of actions that result from the outcome of such meetings. This ensures students feel heard and allows them to access educational experiences that are continually improved.

6.4   Student Experience and Advisory Group (SEAG)

The SEAG is a cross-campus and cross-partner group of student reps. They meet to discuss and consult the student voice on key Learning Teaching and Assessment-related policies that impact their access and participation. They report directly to the Board of Studies and Academic Board, ensuring their influence is heard and acted upon.

7.   <u>Support for Students</u>

ESL provides all students with the resources, facilities, and support they need to promote academic excellence regardless of their background. There is also focus on personal growth and well-being. Before commencing their studies with ESL, students are required to attend an induction to become familiar with the staff, campus, and its facilities. In addition, the inductions provide an opportunity for students to learn more about the structure of their programme, and are informed about key policies including attendance, complaints, and code of conduct.

7.1   Training

ESL comply with UK legislation to ensure a safe and secure learning experience (PREVENT, Adult Safeguarding), where freedom of expression is valued and protected while respecting the rights of all, without inflicting bias or harassment based on protected characteristics, as identified by the Equality Act 2010. Training is provided for staff and students on the Equality Act 2010, Unconscious Bias, EDI, and Intersectionality, and additionally, for staff on PREVENT and Adult Safeguarding.

7.2   Employability and Careers Advice

ESL's LTA Strategy and Model for Educational Gain (MEG) both place employability and careers advice as central mechanisms to support student success and provide value for students' investment in their future. This is especially important for the student demographic at ESL, who primarily work fulltime alongside their studies and commence degree courses to impact chances of promotion, new opportunities, or career change. Feedback from various avenues (SVPs, surveys, Student Hub) has revealed that this is a priority for students.

Academic Managers lead teams to ensure employability is linked and embedded in every taught session, which can mean adapting or enhancing provided materials from partners.

Guest speakers and industry experts are invited to share practice, advice, skills, and knowledge with students during workshops and lectures, which occur each semester.

ESL provide careers advice throughout the duration of study and for several years post-graduation. This shows that ESL value their alumni as key partners in continuing success.

7.3 Accommodation Advice

The majority of ESL students already have accommodation with established families within their communities and therefore do not request accommodation advice during enrolment. However, for those that do require assistance, ESL provide students with a list of verified letting agents, verified private landlords, and links to an affordable housing register and support scheme with the relevant local council.

ESL do not currently offer their own student housing but are looking into providing this within each campus location with the aim to offer all students in need the option of ESL student accommodation at below market rates, for a minimum of one year of their course.

7.4 Student Success Tutors (SSTs)

As many ESL students do not have English as their first language and/or lack evidence of the conventional previous educational routes, ESL provide additional English Language and EAP support.

ESL support students' academic needs with designated Student Success Tutors who provide personal tutorials each semester. There is also a comprehensive Academic Study Skills Development (ASSD) initiative, which includes support across a variety of academic themes via five types of session delivery (for more details see: ASSD Initiative; Personal Tutoring Policy).

SSTs are key in identifying and supporting at-risk students to ensure they have the best chance of attainment and progression. They provide personal development plans for all at-risk students to ensure they can successfully reengage with their studies.

7.5 Wellbeing

This is a key component of ESL's Learning, Teaching and Assessment Strategy and MEG.
As many ESL students enter HE from non-traditional routes, many from deprived areas and who face difficult personal/family situations, wellbeing is a pivotal role in supporting the entire academic journey of students from entry to graduation. ESL Student Support Services provide a wide range of mechanisms that support students' academic journey, learning needs and differences, stress-related wellbeing, and declared mental health conditions. ESL ensure no students with protected characteristics identified by the Equality Act 2010 face additional challenges accessing learning and are not disadvantaged unnecessarily.

The Student Support team have designated officers situated in each campus.

8. Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

ELS takes an inclusive approach to recruiting and supporting individuals and groups of individuals with protected characteristics (as defined by the Equality Act 2010). ESL complies fully with the Equality Act 2010 and is committed to inclusive learning and teaching practices.

ESL respect individual choice and strive to create an inclusive, flexible, and supportive environment which recognises the diversity of every individual. ESL has implemented policies and procedures to promote inclusive participation and accessibility for all students, for example, producing an accessibility guide to inform creation of learning content and adjusting learning and teaching resources to meet individual student needs. This includes making accommodations for exam delivery and assessment modes e.g. ensuring the provision of an alternative assessment where necessary.

ESL acknowledge the report on Black, Asian, and Minority Ethnic (BAME) Student Attainment at UK Universities (published in April 2019 by Universities UK [UUK] and the National Union of Students [NUS]) and aim to implement its recommendations to address and eliminate attainment differentials so that every student has the same chance at success. ESL have identified gaps in BAME representation and aim to address this through improved marketing, recruitment, admissions and support processes.

ESL recognise gaps in student knowledge and exposure to people from underrepresented background and who may have protected characteristics. ESL addresses this by offering training to students and staff on EDI, Equality Act 2010, and this is enshrined in the terms of reference of ESL's EDI committee. This is supported by ESL's EDI Policy.

9.   Measuring Success

Semester Monitoring Reports for all partner programmes are made available to the Partnership Board of Studies, with recommendations for consideration and approval.

ESL are currently investigating whether specific demographic information reveals possible trends relating to the retention and progression of students to the next stage of partner programmes and how this compares to partners own direct entry students. This should help identify possible attainment gaps that may be negatively impacting this data. Consequently, it will also be useful to know how ESL's approach to access and participation impact partners' own Access and Participation Plans.

Additionally, data analysis will continue to highlight gaps in the student demographic, this will inform the strategies required to enhance student recruitment and admissions processes to attract more students from underrepresented groups.

Document Governance:

Name	ESL Access and Participation Statement 2024-2025
Version Number	2
Created	June 2024
Last Reviewed	July 2024
Author	Quality & Governance Team
Owner	Provost
Consultation	Deliberation: Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Committee (EDI)
Approved by	Recommend approval: Senior Leadership Team (SLT) Approval: Board of Governors
Next Review	June 2025
Audience	All Stakeholders

ESL Access and Participation Statement Version Control

Version Number:	Updates / Notes:	Approved by:
V1	Creation of the Access and Participation Statement	ESL Board of Studies –2nd April 2024 Academic Board – 2nd May 2024
V2	Partner Institution names added to introduction 2.0 Progression and Success – added continuation metrics 6.1 Student Hub – clarification on accountability - who is responsible for monitoring and responding to the feedback received 7. Support for Students – section on Induction has been added Document Governance – This document goes through the following committees for approval and for future reviews – EDI, SLT and Board of Governors	Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Committee (EDI) (Discussion) Senior Leadership Team (SLT) (Recommended Approval) Board of Governors (Approved)