

A NEW PROPOSITION FOR FURTHER EDUCATION AT THE HEART OF LONDON

Exploring closer collaboration between
City and Islington and Westminster Kingsway Colleges



CITY AND ISLINGTON
COLLEGE



Westminster Kingsway
central London's College

1 INTRODUCTION

The governing bodies of City and Islington and Westminster Kingsway Colleges in central London are exploring the potential for closer collaboration.

At the heart of their desire to collaborate is the firm belief that, by working strategically together, these two strong and well-established colleges can offer more and better opportunities to learners and employers across the communities they serve.

A collaboration has the potential to:

Bring about direct benefits to students – by increasing the breadth, depth and quality of provision, and offering greater opportunities for clear progression into work or further study.

Create new opportunities for staff – by the colleges developing joint professional development and support, sharing expertise and pedagogical practice through enhanced teaching and learning communities, and creating new internal pathways through which staff can develop and apply their professional skills.

Deliver on the skills needs of the capital – by the colleges establishing a wider offer of high quality intermediate and higher technical and professional training, growing their existing specialisms, extending and improving apprenticeship provision, and becoming a training hub for employers.

Enhance existing and create new partnerships with employers – by pooling their experience and expertise in a wide range of sectors the colleges will work more effectively and comprehensively with employers across the capital to; identify their needs more clearly, increase their involvement in shaping and delivering provision, and better prepare learners for the world of work.

Offer leadership and support to the FE sector – by growing in strength and quality to become widely recognised as London's leading college and playing a prominent role in the healthy evolution of the sector.

Maximise the resources available to support learners – by the colleges using scale to create more efficient delivery of operational functions.

The specific nature of the collaboration is yet to be decided. The Corporations of the two colleges have formed an Advisory Board to explore and test possible options, to consult widely and then make recommendations to the full governing bodies of each organisation, which have the responsibility for making decisions. The colleges aim to make decisions about the kind of collaboration they want to pursue towards the end of 2015, following a period of consultation, with a view to implementing any agreed changes by the start of the 2016/17 academic year.

This document shares important initial information about the new collaboration. It looks at the reasons for working more closely together, the benefits and likely impact, as well as potential models. Finally, it asks those who read it to comment on the outline proposals it contains.

2 ABOUT THE TWO COLLEGES

City and Islington and Westminster Kingsway Colleges are two of the strongest performing colleges in London. Both have excellent reputations that are underpinned by the consistent delivery of high quality provision; even during a period when the further education sector has come under considerable pressure.

The combined strengths of the two colleges are evident across a range of measures:

Ofsted judgements

The colleges are judged Good (Westminster Kingsway, 2011) and Outstanding (City and Islington, 2008).

Student outcomes

Across both colleges, overall student success rates are in line with the national average and higher than the provider group average. Progression into work and higher education is also strong and over 2,400 learners from the colleges went on to higher education in 2014.

Curriculum offer

Over recent years both colleges have expanded and improved their offer to students and businesses, with a particular focus on increasing the number of 14-19 students, apprentices, employer sponsored and international students.

Growth

Numbers of 16-18 students at both colleges have increased in recent years to over 7,500. The number of adult learners studying at both colleges is over 19,500, making a total combined student cohort of over 26,500.

Partnerships

Together the colleges have extensive and well-established partnerships with employers and their communities, significant examples of which include:

- **Transport for London (TfL)** – Westminster Kingsway is TfL's talent Partner for Apprenticeships for managers, rail services and IT
- **Red Carnation Hotels** – Westminster Kingsway provides apprenticeships, bespoke skills training, higher education and graduate programmes, as well as being a source of trained chefs, restaurant service staff, supervisors and junior managers
- **Arsenal in the Community** – City and Islington deliver a highly popular and successful Foundation Degree in Physical Education and Football Coaching with Arsenal in the Community as part of a wide range of sports science courses
- **Whittington Hospital** – City and Islington College is the first choice provider of level 2 and 3 apprenticeships at the Whittington Hospital, including in areas such as Pharmacy Science, Supply Chain Management and Business Administration

Financial health

Both colleges have been deemed outstanding in this area each year since 2010/11 (two of only 37 providers in the country (total 360)). The colleges are debt free and hold significant cash reserves to invest in student success and further growth. Their combined turnover is £85m.

SPECIALIST CENTRES IN THE HEART OF THE CAPITAL



Each college has world-class facilities housed in specialist centres across central London. The combined education and training opportunities currently offered by the two colleges span the capital from Finsbury Park to Holloway, Angel to King's Cross, and Soho to Victoria. All sites are accessible and within 30 minutes of one another by public transport.

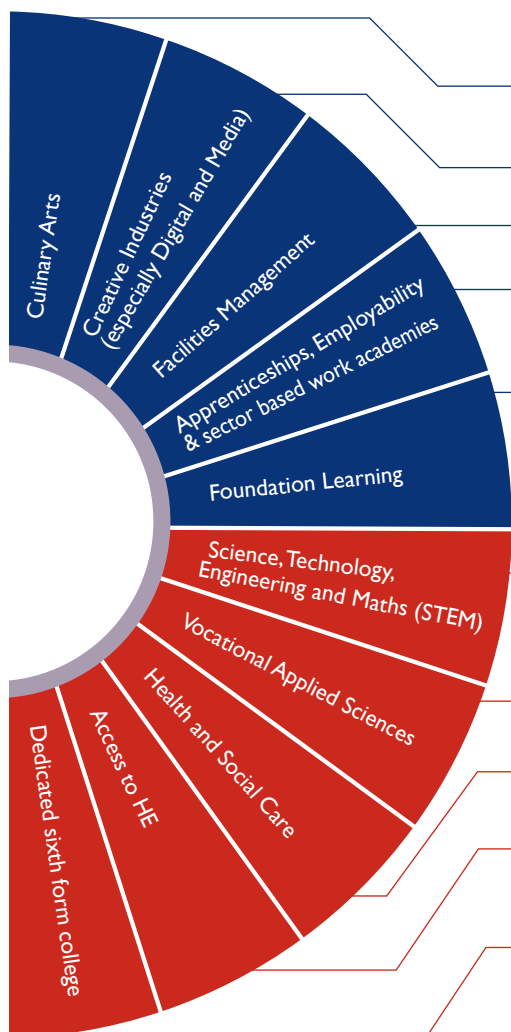
CITY AND ISLINGTON COLLEGE

- 1 Centre for Applied Sciences
- 2 Centre for Business, Arts and Technology
- 3 Centre for Lifelong Learning
- 4 Sixth Form College
- 5 Centre for Health Social Care and Childcare

WESTMINSTER KINGSWAY COLLEGE

- 6 King's Cross Centre – 14-19 and ESOL
- 7 Victoria Centre – Culinary Arts, Business and HE
- 8 Soho Centre – Access to HE and ESOL
- 9 Regent's Park Centre – Employability, Apprenticeships and ESOL

COMPLEMENTARY AREAS OF SPECIALISM ACROSS THE TWO COLLEGES



WESTMINSTER KINGSWAY COLLEGE

- Outstanding provision for Hospitality, with 95% of students progressing into sustainable employment
- Serving Soho and the creative heart of London
- From entry-level cleaning through to Foundation Degrees
- Largest college apprenticeship programme in London (1600 in 2013/14), underpinned by excellent partnership working and employer engagement
- Outstanding 14-19 provision re-engaging NEET young people with success rates of 83%, which is 6% above national benchmarks

CITY AND ISLINGTON COLLEGE

- 3,190 students studied Science Technology Engineering and Maths (STEM) courses in 2014 with female students and those from ethnic minority backgrounds being very well represented (countering national trends)
- A dedicated Centre for Applied Science delivers vocationally and occupationally focussed courses to 1100 students
- 90% pass-rate for students taking Level 3 extended diplomas in Health, Public Services and Care
- Largest provider of adult Access to Higher Education Diplomas in London serving around 400 students on 25 courses or pathways
- Largest dedicated sixth form college in London with over 1500 students and in 2015 70% of students achieved A*– C and 40% A*– B, with 157 achieving triple distinction (equivalent to AAA at A level)

3 REASONS FOR COLLABORATION

“Collaboration between our two colleges is a bold, strategic and sensible initiative to be considering. It has real potential to benefit students, increase our impact and leverage further benefits for the communities we serve.”

Alastair Da Costa, Chair of Governors at City and Islington College

If both colleges are already doing well, why collaborate?

The governors of the two colleges are looking to the future. They recognise the vital role the colleges already play as anchor institutions in the skills and economic development of their local areas and communities. However, they believe that together there is real potential to make an even greater contribution.

By establishing a collaboration between City and Islington and Westminster Kingsway that builds on each organisation's strengths, the two colleges will remain responsive to the needs of learners and employers, whilst also being better able to meet the expectations set by central government (e.g. increasing the numbers of apprenticeships and delivering higher level professional technical skills). Both colleges will continue to serve their local communities and business networks through delivery of a wide range of education and training opportunities, they will further develop their established specialisms as well as creating new opportunities for shared curriculum development and investment.

Ultimately, the collaboration between the two colleges will seek to deliver:

- Clear specialisation to meet the capital's needs, including comprehensive pathways to high-level technical and professional skills for students and employers
- Access to high quality and relevant education and training for all at the heart of London, accessible through easy transport routes across the capital
- Financial viability, sustainability, resilience and efficiency, and maximum value for public investment
- The flexibility and capacity to respond to changes in government funding priorities and future demand

REVIEWING POST-16 EDUCATION AND TRAINING INSTITUTIONS: AREA REVIEWS

The decision to proactively explore strategic collaboration is aligned with the focus and direction of national policy. Recent guidance from central government sets out an expectation that post-16 provision is reviewed in every area with the aim of ensuring that, across the country, there are strong education and training institutions that have high status and are genuine centres of expertise. The area reviews are designed to be driven by local leadership and present an opportunity to shape and influence local provision in the future.

‘We need to ensure that we have the right balance of provision, including capacity to deliver three million apprenticeships by 2020... Overall, we need to move towards fewer, larger, more resilient and efficient colleges. Another key aim is greater specialisation, with concentrated expertise to support progression through professional and technical routes, alongside excellence in core areas such as English and Maths. This will include the creation of a new network of prestigious Institutes of Technology and National Colleges to deliver high standard provision at levels 3, 4 and 5.’¹

¹ Reviewing post-16 education and training institutions: guidance on area reviews, HM Government, September 2015, <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/post-16-education-and-training-institutions-area-based-reviews>

The financial context for most public sector institutions remains challenging. In further education especially the significant cuts to funding will compromise both the quality and range of provision that some colleges are able to offer in the future unless new ways of existing providers working together are explored.

Larger organisations are not always more effective or efficient. However, there are some clear strategic advantages that it is possible to realise through scale in this context.

- Scale creates the ability to invest in new curriculum offers, for example in new and bespoke programmes which meet the skills needs of students.
- Scale can facilitate more coherent approaches to partnership working with public, private and third sector organisations, reducing the number and complexity of contractual interfaces.
- Scale can provide more efficient delivery that enables continued investment in high quality student facing services.
- Scale can create better opportunities for career progression and development that are attractive to both new and existing staff.
- Scale can deliver operational efficiencies and greater resilience.

Initial work by governors at the two colleges has identified a range of areas where collaboration would have a positive and sustainable impact. These four areas are set out in the table below.

POSITIVE IMPACTS OF COLLABORATION

QUALITY

Improve the quality of both existing and new provision to enhance student experiences and outcomes

We would:

Undertake joint curriculum design and improve curriculum quality by applying best practice pedagogy

Create shared investments in research and innovative practices (including the use of new technologies)

Invest in shared professional development and support for staff, and create internal pathways through which staff can apply and improve their professional skills

SPECIALISM AND GROWTH

Build specialisms for the workforce of the future in London and create opportunities to develop new sources of income

We would:

Develop a consolidated, combined offer that is more responsive to the needs of students

Invest in meeting new and emerging business skills needs

Create the capabilities and capacity to deliver quality on a larger scale

Collaborate to access new sources of funding and create new market-relevant propositions

EFFICIENCY

Generate financial benefits from collaborative delivery, including centralised and shared services

We would:

Identify areas where collaborative delivery can create more effective, efficient and sustainable operations, and where key investments could be consolidated

Allocate more of our combined resources to further improving the quality of provision

INFLUENCE

Shift the traditional proposition of FE and influence wider changes within the sector

We would:

Create a larger, more capable organisation with a differentiated offer

Become a stronger voice in the FE sector – leading and shaping the FE agenda, and supporting the sector more broadly

Build on our regional, national and international reputations to become recognised as the 'go-to' place for technical and professional training in London and the South East

Furthermore, there is the potential to make the most of clear synergies between the two colleges through the pursuit of very specific opportunities. These would include, but are not limited to:

1. BECOMING THE MAJOR PROVIDER OF PROFESSIONAL AND TECHNICAL QUALIFICATIONS AT LEVELS 3, 4 AND 5

“We have a productivity challenge in England and addressing it is a national priority. We can play a vital role in driving up productivity by developing a professional and technical education system which ensures all young people are on a high quality route to employment. To achieve this aim we need strong education and training institutions which have high status and are genuine centres of expertise.”²

Nick Bowles MP, Minister for Skills

Government has identified the need for a new system and approach to delivering professional and technical education. Currently provision in this area is spread thinly across a large number of institutions, making hard to achieve the scale needed to ensure adequate investment in facilities and staff to deliver a consistent and high-quality offering. To this end, it will establish a new network of prestigious Institutes of Technology that will provide the higher level skills that employers demand, primarily at levels 3 to 5.

The two colleges would be in a unique position to become an Institute of Technology at the heart of London. Together they would further develop their offer of the highest quality intermediate and higher technical and professional training, served by all major transport hubs across the capital.

2. BECOMING A REGIONAL CENTRE OF EXCELLENCE FOR APPRENTICESHIPS

“As a one nation government, we are committed to supporting three million quality apprenticeships over the next five years – to help strengthen our economy, deliver the skills that employers need and give millions more hardworking people financial security and a brighter future.”³

Prime Minister David Cameron

Collaboration will put both colleges in a stronger position to meet government ambitions and commitments on apprenticeships through the creation of a regional centre of excellence. Of all the colleges in London, Westminster Kingsway currently delivers the largest number of apprenticeships and City and Islington have some very high quality provision in this area that is set to grow. There is significant potential to draw on current experience to build and extend apprenticeship provision.

3. EXTENDING AND GROWING EXISTING SPECIALISMS

The government's area review process is seeking to reconfigure the current further education landscape by establishing the appropriate set of institutions to offer high quality provision based on the current and future needs of learners and employers within a local area. The reviews are intended to deliver ‘Providers with strong reputations and greater specialisation’ which ‘focus on what they can deliver effectively and to a high standard’.⁴

Collaboration will allow greater investment in both expert staff and facilities in areas of specialism where the colleges currently excel (e.g. hospitality at Westminster Kingsway and applied sciences at City and Islington). In doing so, this exceptional provision becomes accessible to a wider group of students and brings benefits to a greater number of employers.

4. FORMING A CENTRAL LONDON TRAINING HUB FOR EMPLOYERS

Both colleges recognise the critical importance of supporting people who are already in work to further develop their skills. The two colleges would consolidate and strengthen their engagement with employers by forming a hub through which employers access and co-design bespoke training programmes. By working together in a strategic way, the colleges would be better able to serve the needs of a wider range of employers, and take on larger-scale, pan-London projects which require greater investment and capacity.

² Reviewing post-16 education and training institutions: guidance on area reviews, HM Government, September 2015, Page 2

³ <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/pm-unveils-plans-to-boost-apprenticeships-and-transform-training>

⁴ Reviewing post-16 education and training institutions: guidance on area reviews, HM Government, September 2015, Page 4

4 POSSIBLE FORMS OF COLLABORATION

“The FE sector will be the focus for many changes over the next few years. This potential alliance will mean two successful colleges are at the forefront in responding to the opportunities these changes will provide.”

Ruth Duston, Chair of Governors at Westminster Kingsway College

It is clear that the reshaping and recommissioning of local further education provision is inevitable in the not too distant future.⁵ City and Islington and Westminster Kingsway Colleges have the opportunity to be at the forefront of these developments and to model what can be achieved when two strong organisations choose to realise the benefits of working closely together.

The specific form of the collaboration is yet to be decided. During the coming months a group of Governors from each college will be constituted to work with the two Principals to steer the initial phase. They will test options, oversee consultation, and make recommendations to the full governing bodies, who have the responsibility for making decisions. The evaluation criteria they will use include, but are not limited to:

- Any formal collaboration must be with institutions with significant reputations, robust financial health and high success rates
- The combined offer must be complementary, allowing the potential for growth and efficiency, rather than internal competition
- Any formal collaboration needs to be both manageable and deliverable by August 2016, and in a form that supports further collaboration and/or consolidation in the future

In considering the structure of collaboration, a number of options have been identified ranging from opportunistic collaboration, through creation of a federated structure to a full merger of the two colleges. These options are set out in the diagram below.

Whatever the final model, it is the clear intention of the governing bodies that the existing names and brands of both colleges will be retained for the foreseeable future. Both colleges will continue to recruit students across 14-19, basic skills, apprenticeships, professional and technical and higher education programmes, as well as serving their local, regional and business communities.

STRUCTURAL OPTIONS FOR COLLABORATION

In the long term governors expect that this collaboration could form a platform through which alliances with other providers could be brokered.



⁵ Fixing the foundations: creating a more prosperous nation, HM Treasury, Department for Business, Innovation and Skills, July 2015 <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/fixing-the-foundations-creating-a-more-prosperous-nation>

5 CONTRIBUTING YOUR VIEWS

Both colleges recognise that by engaging staff, learners, employers, other providers and local communities they will achieve a better informed, more well-developed outcome. This engagement is central to the overall success of any eventual collaboration, particularly as one of the key goals is to ensure that the profile of provision meets the current needs and future priorities of learners, employers and communities. This is an opportunity to gather initial responses to the outline proposals set out in this document.

The college governors would be grateful if you could take time to read and then respond to the following questions:

1. Do you agree that by working more closely together the two colleges will be able to more effectively meet the needs of central London's students, communities and employers?
 - a. If yes, what specific advantages can you see for the collaboration?
 - b. If no, please indicate what you see as the potential disadvantages of the collaboration.
2. What do you see as the key strengths of each college, and are there any areas or issues that you would wish to see addressed through the collaboration, e.g. local needs that are inadequately represented under current arrangements?
3. Do you have a view as to what form of collaboration would be most valuable in the long term, i.e. loose collaboration, federation or full merger? Please give any reasons.
4. How might you or your organisation be involved in or support the City and Islington and Westminster Kingsway colleges collaboration?
5. Please include any other comments you would like us to take into consideration.

Please submit your responses to these questions using the **[online feedback form by clicking here.](#)**

The deadline for responses is Friday 6th November 2015.