



Access and Participation Statement 2022-2023

Collective Acting Studio is a new actor training provider that draws on the experience of a large pool of progressive practitioners to advance the model of sector-related education and attain our central mission:

“Collective strives to make our society a fairer place by providing access to the highest-quality training for actors from underrepresented groups, particularly in terms of ethnicity, disability and class.”

“We aim to show leadership in making the performing arts a more representative industry that better reflects the rich diversity of our society. To achieve this, we aim to become the leading provider of training in the U.K. for actors from underrepresented groups.”

We believe our society is structurally unfair, recognising that some demographics and groups are routinely advantaged over others. We believe that needs to change. Our response is to champion actors, storytellers, teachers and leaders from underrepresented groups, particularly in terms of ethnicity, disability and class. We know if we help to amplify these fresh, new voices this can help rebalance our society – as artists change the world.

A good education has the power to fundamentally alter the course of a student’s life for the better. It is that important. So, we will always make the



individual choices that ensure our educational experiences are uplifting, empowering and transformational. This is a demanding profession, where skills can only be acquired through hard work, dedication and a constant desire to learn and evolve. So, we lovingly provoke each other, and our students, when we see someone is not constantly renewing, challenging and invigorating themselves.

We believe that a diversity of perspectives, cultural heritage and life experience produces better ideas. We always aim to broaden the range of voices in our community, seek out opinions that differ from our own and actively aim to disprove our own positions and assumptions. We are a community, and believe that being part of a community isn't time-limited. Part of our core mission is to continually reach downwards, upwards and outwards – to ensure our students and staff remain a part of our Collective before, during and after their time with us.

This Access and Participation Statement has sections three main sections, as highlighted by the Office for Students (OfS): Areas We Are Seeking To Address; Our Ambitions and Strategy; and Our Activities and Support for Students. This Statement will be reviewed annually to ensure our values, aspirations and measurable outcomes keep moving in the name of progress.

Areas We Are Seeking to Address

Whilst we believe in providing access to all within the Higher Education actor training sector, we aim to champion students from underrepresented groups, particularly in terms of ethnicity, disability and class. A large proportion of our students are, and will be, from the Global Majority and/or a working-class backgrounds. We shall also consistently reach out to ensure 10% of our students are disabled artists on the BA Acting – as this group is chronically underrepresented within the industry.

Whilst we acknowledge that our Part-Time and Short Courses will mainly be serve students from London, with our HE Courses, our students will come from across the U.K. Collective will be based in Newham, and will meaningfully



commit to providing outreach throughout the borough and surrounding areas who have high percentages of marginalised demographics.

We commit to continually reaching out to local schools and arts-based institutions to develop partnerships and increase access to exceptional quality Higher Education actor training. Organisationally we have already partnered with The Boury Academy, London Bubble, Theatre Peckham, Hoxton Hall, and Company Three. To ensure we meet our targets relating to representation of disabled students, we have forged relationships with Dark Horse Theatre and Access All Areas.

We recognise that to make changes with regards to representation, this is about speaking directly to potential future students early, so opinions can be changed, and communities reassured that this is a potential pathway for them. As such, we will be running a Youth Academy that will run in conjunction with Theatre Royal, Stratford East.

As educators, we understand the importance of visibility and legibility when working to address diversity and representation. Furthering this, having listened to the voice of our already growing community, Collective commits to ensuring that the student body can see themselves in the practitioners who teach them. Our Outreach Team will also be Global Majority practitioners. We commit to engaging a truly diverse body of staff, and to a truly diversified curriculum that speaks not only to the needs of the industry and the training – but also to the community that it serves.

To further expand our outreach and widening participation work, we will engage with local business to acquire sponsorship and funding, to ensure we can maximise our reach within the community. From our very first day, we have committed to offering two free scholarship places on each of our short courses. We commit to continuing this, and finding new ways to aid those from



lower socioeconomic backgrounds to access education and training. On the degree pathway, we aim to not only commit to rigorous training, but flexibility in training to meet the students where they are.

By continually listening to the student voice and marrying this with the needs of the industry alongside our staff's observations, we will continually offer a curriculum that is not only representative but relevant – from all perspectives. By balancing these considerations, and centring student voice and aspiration, we aim to excel in areas related to retention, and by contextualising the training in the world the student body sees and values, we aim to achieve engagement and attainment across the board that can be deemed first rate.

Following our customer questionnaires and focus groups, it was revealed that students appreciated: a high number of weekly contact hours; feeling genuinely welcomed at audition; good quality facilities; alumni track record; values and ethics aligned with their own; and teachers that work in the industry and represent the student body. The most important element they looked for in a curriculum was Acting for Camera. Acknowledging this feedback, we have built our curriculum around these considerations.

To continually work to improve graduate outcomes and attainment, we will work to have a close relationship with the industry, recognising that attainment on this front within this sector goes beyond academic awards achieved. To attain this in a meaningful way, Collective will continue to expand its range of industry contacts (acknowledging the breadth of professional connections that already exist amongst its Senior Leadership Team, who bring in excess of 50 years industry experience collectively). This process is already taking place with the Short Courses, and Collective commits to assigning every student engaged on the degree pathway with an industry mentor from the point of their second year of study. This ensures students will not only be continually situating their learning in the context of the world of work, but also



moving towards incentivising students in their learning journey. There is, in addition, a member of the Senior Leadership Team who has responsibility as Industry Liaison to further enhance this area of our work.

Collective will continually work to engage with its alumni community, firstly in our commitment to professional development with our Short Courses, but, and perhaps moreover, by embracing them within the mentor programme as they gain industry experience.

Our Ambitions and Strategy

Further to those factors already disclosed and in line with our mission to increase access to higher-quality actor-training, we intend to design and run courses that reach downwards, upwards and sideways. We want to offer inspiring opportunities for teenagers from underrepresented groups who might not believe acting is a viable career option for them. For our alumni, and other professional actors, we will provide an ongoing training network so that they can continue to develop their skills, and be part of a wider acting community after graduation – helping them avoid the sense of isolation that many actors feel once they leave drama school. And, alongside our degree courses, we will also provide more flexible options of training for adults who wish to learn outside of the Higher Education system. Within the degree pathway, we will find ways to accommodate students with different needs and backgrounds to ensure they are held without jeopardising the rigour of their training.

As a values-driven organisation, we are motivated by providing quality education whilst reducing inequality within the sector. We are committed to continually monitoring the effectiveness and the impact of our access and widening participation work. We will not only measure these by output, but, primarily, by their impact. This will provide us with the required evidence to: continually enhance our Access and Participation Plan; to increase access for underrepresented demographics; and narrow (if not eliminate) industry-standard gaps in attainment and progression



Collective aspire to recruit students from low-participation neighbourhoods (POLAR4), disadvantaged backgrounds (IMD) and the ethnic minorities through evidence-informed recruitment activities. Our outreach work and our growing partnerships with both arts organisations and feeder schools will contribute heavily to our success in this area.

We have committed to recruiting at least 10% of each new cohort who identify as physically or sensorially disabled, and will continue to work with our partners (Access All Areas and Dark Horse Theatre) to ensure staff are appropriately trained, and that these targets are fulfilled.

Our Activities and Support for Students

Acknowledging the limitations of ‘blind casting’, Collective commits to colour, gender and identity conscious casting. This is not only to increase equality of opportunity, but to cultivate a climate in which social change can be meaningfully discussed and employed. This will be implemented in addition to our previously stated commitment to a diversification of the curriculum, learning materials and teaching community. Through our access and widening participation endeavours, Collective will prove itself as not only a provider of first class education, but a resource for the local community.

As a specialist Higher Education provider, we acknowledge the intensity – and difficulty – of this learning pathway, especially for those who come from communities with lower exposure to the arts. This can take a great deal of adjustment. With this in mind, alongside contemporary considerations (such as the mental health epidemic amongst young adults, and the coronavirus pandemic), we recognise the importance of centring student wellbeing and learning support. This becomes vital to ensure that students are not left feeling like they do not fit the system, but can be safe in the knowledge that the bespoke nature of the training can be shifted through reasonable adjustments to ensure they are not socially or societally disadvantaged, allowing them to meet the work from where they are. With a support team in place, Collective will ensure that additional one-to-one advice and support is available where



necessary to assist them on their learning journey. Collective will work with its team of specialists and its community of learners to develop a reasonable adjustment process. In addition to this, Collective will commit to ensuring there are sufficient First Aiders and Mental Health First Aiders on site at all times.

Whilst we will offer both pre-emptive and remedial support for students in need through our Student Welfare Officer, we also believe in a proactive, preventative approach to foster good mental health across our whole community. Mindfulness, meditation, regular exercise and community forums will be embedded in our courses to make Collective a safe and healthy environment for both our students and staff. This was a consideration that was raised by students in our questionnaires and focus groups.

We recognise that, outside of the particular target groups outlined in our Mission Statement, our students possess other protected characteristics that must also be carefully considered. It is our intention to create psychologically safe space for every student and member of staff to embrace identity and inclusivity, and we note in actor-training generally, and particularly in terms of casting, the need to take careful account of the characteristics such as gender, age and sexual orientation.

Collective, recognising its worth and need, also commits to ensuring all staff receive regular training related to anti-racist pedagogies and up-to-date unconscious bias training. This will be reviewed periodically.

The course will not only develop in relationship with the needs of the industry, but with the shifting needs and aspirations of our learning communities – past, present and future. As such, developing and sustaining a community around the institution is paramount. We will work to establish and implement processes of reporting and feedback from the student body, so their voice can be heard, and the pedagogies, practices and course content shaped based on



their experience. Collaboration will be positioned at the heart of all we do – both within the teaching and students bodies, and between the two – for we are, after all, a collective. We will strive to break down restrictive binaries to ensure our learners are supported at every stage of their training and development.



Collective Acting Studio