



LUTHER KING HOUSE EDUCATIONAL TRUST ACCESS AND PARTICIPATION STATEMENT

As part of its ethos statement, expressing the nature of the learning community at LKH and the values it seeks to uphold, the following commitment is made:

We believe in being an inclusive learning community – welcoming people with different theologies from different churches, with different backgrounds from different cultures, with varying abilities and disabilities, creating safe space where all can seek to know and love God.

This statement is backed up by agreed policies (including an Equal Opportunities Policy) to ensure that the opportunities for learning that are offered by LKH are open to all, and that there is no discrimination on such grounds as gender, ethnicity, sexuality, age and disability. Both Trustees and staff are committed to offering places for study to those who would otherwise be denied any possibility of a university education, including those who – for whatever reason - have been failed by the school system.

The ways our commitments and policies are being lived out

Each year the LKH Board, together with our staff, review the data we hold on the make-up of our learning community in order to understand the ways in which our desire to improve access, success and progression is being lived out.

Our enrolment statistics show that the gender balance at LKH is fairly even, with a gradual percentage increase in female entrants. In 2016-17, 56% of BA students and 65% of MA students were women, including 64% of new BA students and 76% of the new MA students. Our staff team is similarly evenly balanced.

The ethnicity balance within LKH has been steadily changing. In 2016 52% of new BA students and 31% of new MA students were from black and minority ethnic backgrounds. All new BA and MA students in 2016-17 were mature students, with an average age of entry of 44 on the BA programme and of 47 on the MA programme. Most students have family responsibilities and work commitments which they need to fit around their studies.

Though LKH admissions policies are rigorous, seeking to ensure that all who enrol on our courses are capable of study at degree level, and the majority of those accepted onto the course have a Level 3 qualification or above (normally around 70%), places are offered to those who do not meet the standard entry requirements. Appropriate support structures are put in place in order to help ensure that they are given every possible opportunity to progress and succeed (see next section).

In 2016-17, 23% of both BA and MA students had one or more known disabilities. The Programme Handbook makes it clear that LKH 'supports the rights of students with disabilities to attain their full academic potential and will make all reasonable adjustments to allow those with disabilities to access the programme.' The premises have full disabled access, and several past and present students make regular use of wheelchairs. Two deaf students have successfully studied at LKH (making full use of signing and notetaking), and there are a significant number who have been diagnosed with dyslexia or a related specific learning disability. Help is given in accessing the government's Disabled Students Allowance where appropriate, and a proof-reading service is offered to those who need it. The number of students who fail is small, but no one with a diagnosed disability of any kind has done so.

In 2016-17 there were no students who failed their programme of study. There was a total of 10 withdrawals, almost always for personal reasons that prevented them from continuing their course of study. All other students successfully completed the qualification they set out to achieve, and the majority of students achieved average marks in the 50s and 60s. But it should be noted that a number of BA students have multiple disadvantages caused by the complex interplay of a number of different factors. These include their minority ethnicity, having English as an additional language, being refugees or former refugees with ongoing experiences of major family upheaval and trauma, sometimes not meeting standard entry requirements, and having all the external responsibilities that come with being a mature student. Data shows that the average marks for students with these characteristics are often 10-15 marks lower than for those without these interlocking disadvantages. In 2016-17, 44% of new BA students had English as an additional language. These were almost all UK-domiciled students with current or former refugee status.

LKH is constantly monitoring and seeking new ways to provide additional support for these students in particular. Despite the disadvantages faced, most do successfully complete the BA programme with Honours.

The help and support we are seeking to give to our students

In order to assist all those who join our learning community, but particularly those who do not have a background of academic study, a number of support mechanisms are put in place. These are designed to enable students to progress and succeed at all levels.

- a) The timetable builds in regular study skills support and help. Intensive support is given during the early weeks of the programme, but this is reinforced by additional sessions throughout the course.
- b) Tuition support is provided for those who have English as an additional language. There are weekly language support sessions designed to improve comprehension and grammar, and to assist in improving writing skills.
- c) Students with English as an additional language and other language related disabilities are provided with proof reading help when they are preparing assignments for submission.
- d) Even though its resources are limited, LKH operates a bursary scheme that is designed to assist those students who lack the economic resources needed to study. In addition, there is a 'hardship fund' that offers small grants to students in financial need. There were 5 beneficiaries of the bursary scheme during the 2016-17 academic year.

This help and support is backed up by a system of pastoral care and support. Students are assigned a personal tutor with whom they meet on a regular basis to review progress (often weekly), and there is open access for all students to all tutors. LKH is a small community and this enables support structures to be effective at both informal and formal levels.

In response to a recent survey of student views at LKH, the following comments were made: 'The college, I believe, excels in its inclusivity, enabling people from all backgrounds, and with a variety of other commitments, to study in patterns that are most appropriate to their context. I have found LKH a welcoming and supportive community that constantly strives to improve the learning environment and academic standards it offers to a diverse group of learners.'

LKH has the primary task of providing education for those who have been accepted for ministry in the major Free Church traditions of our country. Thus, the make-up of the student body reflects those who are sent to LKH for study as well as those who choose to study at LKH. It is already very diverse as the data demonstrates, and there are challenges in helping all students to progress. To assist us in the future, the following steps are planned:

- a) Changes in validation arrangements offer LKH the opportunity to explore the possibility of providing access level courses. We believe that there are students (including some to whom we are unable to offer a place) would benefit from a course that helped prepare them for degree level study. This will be a matter to discuss with potential providers of validation in the future.
- b) At present, the teaching staff team at LKH does not include any representation from ethnic minority groups. It is our ambition to appoint at least one teaching staff member from this sector, partly to facilitate and improve the support offered to students from this same sector.
- c) Steps have been taken to improve the involvement and feedback from students in developing the educational programmes and support at LKH. For example, there was a specific consultation regarding the professional development programme provided by Open College that particularly supports many of the minority ethnic groups. It is our intention to deepen and extend this process of involvement in the future.

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