



LUTHER KING CENTRE ACCESS AND PARTICIPATION STATEMENT

As part of its ethos statement, expressing the nature of the learning community at LKC 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 LKC 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 LKC 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 shows that the gender balance at LKC has slowly shifted in favour of female entrants. In 2021-22, the student body as a whole is made up of 32% who identify as men and 66% who identify as women. Of those joining the community this year, 75% of BA students are women (compared with 64% in 2016-17) and 70% of MA students are women (compared with 76% in 2016-17). Our staff team is similarly evenly balanced.

The ethnicity balance within LKC has changed over the years. In 2016 52% of new BA students and 31% of new MA students were from black and minority ethnic backgrounds. In 2021-22 BAME students make up 27% of the entire student body, though the percentage studying on the BA has dropped. All new BA and MA students in 2021-22 are mature students, with an average age of entry of 44 on the BA programme and of 45 on the MA programme. Most students have family responsibilities and work commitments which they need to fit around their studies.

The LKC admissions policies are rigorous, seeking to ensure that all who enrol on our courses are capable of study at degree level, and all of those accepted onto the course have a Level 3 qualification or above. Where potential students do not meet the standard entry requirements, LKC now offers them opportunities to prove their ability to study at degree level by taking 'taster' modules. If successful, those students are given appropriate support structures in order to help ensure that they have every possible opportunity to progress and succeed (see next section).

In 2021-22, 32% of both BA and MA students had one or more known disabilities (compared to 23% in 2016-17). This included 28% of the new intake. The Programme Handbook makes it clear that LKC '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 there are students who have made regular use of wheelchairs and the specially designed study area. There are deaf students who have successfully studied at LKC (making full use of signing and notetaking), and currently there are two such students accessing the degree programmes. There are a significant number of students 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. The number of students who fail is small, but no one with a diagnosed disability of any kind has done so.

In 2020-21 there were no students who failed their programme of study. There was a total of 2 withdrawals, both for personal reasons linked to ill-health. All other students successfully completed a qualification, with just 4 students graduating with a lower degree than the one they registered for. The majority of students achieved average marks in the 50s and 60s. It should be noted that a number of 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, 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 2021-22, 12% of new BA students have English as an additional language (compared to 44% in 2016-17).

LKH is constantly monitoring and seeking new ways to provide additional support for these students in particular. Despite the disadvantages faced, most have successfully completed 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 language support sessions provided as required; these are 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 helped to access proof reading when they are preparing assignments for submission.
- d) Even though its resources are limited, LKC 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.

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. LKC is a small community and this enables support structures to be effective at both informal and formal levels.

In response to a survey of student views at LKC, 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 LKC a welcoming and supportive community that constantly strives to improve the learning environment and academic standards it offers to a diverse group of learners.'

LKC 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 LKC for study as well as those who choose to study at LKC. 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 recent developments have taken place:

- a) Changes in validation arrangements mean that LKC is now beginning to offer the opportunity to take 'taster' modules, so allowing students to explore their potential for studying at degree level. We believe that there are students (including some to whom we are unable to offer a place) who will benefit from this possibility.
- b) LKC has recently appointed two tutors from ethnic minority groups. This facilitates and improves 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 LKC. For example, feedback processes have been resigned with help and input from the whole community.

Document title:	Access and Participation Statement
Reviewed and revised on:	Sept 2022
Approved by:	FMC