

City Lit - STRATEGIC OVERVIEW 2010/2013

This document provides an overview of City Lit's detailed Strategic Plan covering the period 2010/2103

Foreword by Chair of Governors and Principal

City Lit has again continued with the very successful trend of the last few years of growth in provision, optimisation of courses and fees, and diversification of income. To have maintained this impetus at the time of the worst recession in modern times is quite remarkable and the college has continued to grow in terms of courses run, learner numbers and fee income. The additional photography studio is doing well and the recent agreement to use additional classrooms at the Fashion Retail Academy gives us even more scope for expansion.

Our learners also continue to praise the quality of provision and to succeed in their aspirations, as highlighted this year in the very positive outcome from our major student survey. City Lit again did very well in winning regional awards for our learners, demonstrating how much difference we really do make to many peoples' lives.

We have set ourselves a demanding aim of being outstanding at the next inspection. Our excellent work, such as improvements in observation of teaching and learning methodology and numbers of observations, measurement and use of performance data, the skills for life cross college strategy, our development focus of equality and diversity practices and improvements to other quality procedures, for example course outlines, are building good foundations to support this aim.

The change in government is having a significant impact on the adult lifelong learning landscape, with initial, positive messages suggesting that the value of all lifelong learning is getting more recognition than previously. However, we can't be complacent as the full impact of the need to reduce the budget deficit is not yet known. Nevertheless we are as well placed as we could be to weather the storm.

As in previous years, the need to diversify our income has not been without worrying implications and we remain particularly concerned about the impact of increasing fees on our student profile, especially the ability of the less well-off to be able to afford to attend courses at City Lit. For 2010/11 we have again made a conscious decision to try and provide added protection to concessionary fee payers. We have also maintained our 'force for good' provision, although some of our outreach work is under threat, primarily due to reduced availability of project funding.

2009/10 was without doubt another very good year for City Lit, and all staff should rightly feel very proud of the way the college continues to thrive, improve and above all meet the needs of the ever increasing number of learners who cross our threshold. This plan gives strategic direction so that everyone within City Lit has a clear understanding of what is required in the coming years to fulfil our mission and prepare for future challenges.



Peter Davies CB CBE
Principal/Chief Executive



Carole Stott
Chair of Governors

Summary of Strategic Plan

City Lit is a Specialist Designated Institute (SDI) under the 1992 Further and Higher Education Act, receiving about half of its income from public funds, but with significantly increasing fees from students and employers. City Lit's main provision has always been non-accredited learning for adults and it has a great reputation as a provider of high quality, diverse learning, which meets the demands of London's adults.

City Lit is Europe's largest adult education centre and has been described as 'Britain's pre-eminent adult education institution' (The Guardian). We now offer over 4,000 courses a year to over 27,000 adult students. Subject areas include: performing and visual arts, languages, psychology and counselling, humanities, health and movement studies, computing, care work, teacher training, access to higher education and English and maths. We also have specialist provision in speech therapy, courses for Deaf adults, for people with

learning difficulties, community outreach, family learning and for homeless people.

Based in Covent Garden in a purpose built building, which was opened in 2004, the main facilities include:

- 56 Bright, modern classrooms
- 8 additional tutorial rooms
- 5 student lounges and balconies
- roof-top sculpture court and garden
- improved computer facilities
- a comprehensive and well equipped library and learning support centre
- information and advice centre
- modern catering facility
- specialist facilities for music, dance, drama, art, health, complementary therapies and for Deaf people
- extensive Integrated Learning Technology systems

In addition we rent a dedicated studio for photographic courses and 18 additional classrooms offsite in the evenings and some on Saturdays.

City Lit's key areas of provision are:

- Non-accredited courses
- Accredited courses – namely attract a national qualification
- Skills for life courses (English and Maths)
- Train to Gain provision for employers
- Community Outreach programmes
- Employer sponsored learning

As part of our commitment to diversity, City Lit has also set itself the aim of maintaining a proportion of provision to create a “force for good” for adults in London where, due to their circumstances, they may have difficulty in accessing education or need specialist provision, which is important to their lives, employment or contribution to society. This commitment encompasses provision in Deaf education, speech therapy, dedicated courses for those with learning difficulties, outreach work and access to Higher Education. In order to achieve this balance, a cross subsidy is required from more profitable areas of City Lit provision.

All our provision makes a difference to learners in many ways including:

- Helping people with disabilities or learning difficulties
- Helping people, including many with challenging backgrounds, get back into learning and progress to higher and broader areas of study
- Vocational courses aimed at providing a specific skill and qualification for employment, self-employment or as a visual or performing art practitioner
- Enabling people to career change or improve professional skills
- General health and well being, both physical and mental
- Wider social and community benefits
- Lifelong Learning culture in its own right
- Impact on London as a cultural capital

Vision

To be the best provider of adult lifelong learning in London

Mission

To enhance the lives of adults and develop the employers' workforce by providing inspiring life-long learning opportunities

Core values

In support of City Lit's mission our core values, which we will aim to adhere to, are:

- providing consistently high and professional standards in our provision
- putting the needs and aspirations of students at the centre of all that we do
- ensuring that students' expectations, both personal and professional, are exceeded
- ensuring that employers' needs and expectations are met
- striving for excellence in success rates, retention and student satisfaction
- helping adults back into learning and using learning as a tool to combat disadvantage
- ensuring that all staff are well motivated and qualified to achieve their potential
- maintaining an open, honest, accountable and fair approach in all our communications and dealings with staff, students and stakeholders

- valuing and promoting equality and diversity.

Customers and stakeholders

City Lit's primary customers for core business are:

- the Skills Funding Agency (SFA), who provide the major element of City Lit funding against agreed targets
- individual learners regardless of funding route
- employers who sponsor learners or contract directly for provision
- organisations and agencies who contract for specific outputs or partner with City Lit in delivering programmes, primarily in the community outreach and information, advice and guidance areas
- local authorities, especially under the emerging 'place' policy
- partner organisations (e.g. universities).

Other stakeholders are the Department for Business Innovation and Skills (DBIS), John Laing Integrated Services (JLIS) our facilities management contractor, other organisations which deal directly with City Lit and all City Lit staff.

City Lit has two student governors and has an active learner engagement strategy, including an effective learner panel. In addition views of learners on courses are sought at the end of each course.

Strategic Background

Funding pressure - The past Government focus on education for 14-18 year olds, the skills agenda, meeting the needs of employers and the current economic pressures, together with the resultant rebalancing of funding priorities, has had a significant impact on City Lit, with reduced or capped Government funding over the last 5 years.

At present City Lit is still unsure about the exact implications of the savings announced in the Comprehensive Savings Review announced in October 2010. But with the current perilous position of the public sector finances and continued emphasis on priority areas, the college is considering what impact further reductions of public funding over 2-3 years might have.

City Lit, with the other SDIs and adult education organisations, also needs to continue to engage with the Government and the opposition parties to ensure our value and role is well understood.

Informal Adult Learning (IAL) – The Government has issued a White Paper ‘The Learning Revolution’ following on from the IAL consultation. There are a lot of good aspects to the paper, but also risks, primarily around the fact that the majority of our more formal and structured taught courses are now in the IAL category alongside book clubs and voluntary groups. There is a specific mention of the SDIs in the white paper, which hopefully will give us some longer term stability, although with some caveats which we will need to consider carefully.

Machinery of Government - The funding for 14-19yr old students now comes to us from a new agency the Young People Learning Agency, although this is a very small proportion of our income. For adults the Learning and Skills Council was replaced by the Skills Funding Agency (SFA) in April 2010. The position of the SDIs in the emerging responsibility/funding matrix is as yet unclear. The new Government have an ambitious change agenda around funding methodology and increased freedoms for Further Education colleges, as well as increased focus on apprenticeships.

Homeless related projects - Pressures on European Social Funding, changing priorities over the last couple of years and the increasing emphasis by the big homeless organisations on their own in-house training has made winning significant contracts in this area increasingly difficult. Equally City Lit has built up considerable expertise with our past work. Alternative funding streams, eg charitable grants, might be needed to ensure this excellent work does not disappear.

Demand for courses – Despite the recent recession, the demand for City Lit courses has increased over the last few years and this has allowed us to grow year on year, with, for example, enrolments up by 8% in 2009/10 compared to the previous year. Whilst there has been an increase in demand for vocational courses leading to employment, there has also been an equivalent, and in some cases an even greater increase, in demand for courses for personal development and interest. The other area which saw a significant increase in the recession are more practical courses, such as dress making, where people are perhaps conscious about costs, as well as environmental issues of our consumer society.

Underpinning our growth strategy has been significant improvements in our customer focus, marketing and communications with successful initiatives including:

- A new and more modern website which improves the customer experience and enhances our ability to market courses and new initiatives
- Web based enrolment, with circa 25% of enrolments now fully online
- Customer journey work focussing on enhancing all aspects of the customer journey

City Lit has set itself three key objectives:

All areas to be Grade 1

To be an outstanding college with all areas aiming to achieve Grade 1 at next inspection in 2011

Expand to meet demand

To expand and diversify our offer to meet the needs of more of London's individuals and employers

To ensure the college's future financial position

To ensure a robust financial position in a context of potential reductions in Government subsidies for non-accredited learning

Key actions to support these objectives include:

- Development and implementation of a robust Quality Improvement Plan, which is set against the new common inspection framework from Ofsted. This builds on our self assessment process and aims to make sure that we can show continued improvement and tackle any weak areas
- The further development of our learner involvement strategy to enhance the involvement of learners in college business, building on the initial success of our student panel and student reviews of courses, as well as enhanced use of the website and other social networking sites to improve communications with our learners
- In accordance with our customer journey strategy, monitoring and seeking to deliver excellence in customer service, in line with changing expectations in the context of fee increases and the

proliferation of online discussions, reviews and social commentary about City Lit and our courses – with advocates and detractors able to spread the word further and wider than ever before

- Equality and Diversity are always at the forefront of our thinking, but there is always room to do more, and a number of initiatives are being progressed to improve both physical access to the building and facilities as well as ensuring equality of opportunity for all students
- A process of continuous change to some of our provision to make it more attractive to London workers, for example more short courses including an increased weekend offer
- Level 2/3 provision (Equivalent to 5 GCSEs and A Levels). In line with government and economic priorities we continue to look for ways to increase the number of target bearing courses we offer, which includes full Level 2 and Level 3
- Train to Gain; The Government has now decided to stop funding Train to Gain programmes and focus on apprenticeships. Accordingly City Lit will need to review its small but very important offer in this area.
- On going work to embed the cross college vision and strategy for skills for life
- A strategy to improve the college's overall financial position by growth and optimisation (GO strategies). This includes ensuring profitability of courses (other than those covered by the 'force for good' objective), fee increases to maximise revenue, maximising numbers in classes, and improving overall room utilisation, as well as overhead efficiencies and growth. In 2009/10 fee income increased by 7% compared to 2008/09
- identification of further additional premises to sustain growth of provision and overcome some issues with existing outstations, in accordance with our property strategy
- Working with Department of Business Innovation and Skills as they develop specific proposals from the "Learning Revolution" White Paper
- Managing the impact on us of the changes from the LSC to the Skills Funding Agency
- Migrating accredited courses to the qualification and credit framework as appropriate
- Work to achieve Centre of Excellence recognition for Deaf Education.

Targets

City Lit's performance is publicly assessed through targets agreed annually with the Skills Funding Agency. They encompass:

- learner numbers both on accredited and non accredited courses
- success rates, including numbers of learners on Skills for Life programmes passing the national test, increasingly these are benchmarked against national minimum levels of performance

Other targets are agreed with the Governing Body and key ones are reflected in a Balanced Score Card.

Staff

City Lit staff comprises some 250 fulltime/fractional staff and circa 850 part time tutors. Overall City Lit has a dedicated and committed workforce with a very low turnover and low absence rates, both of which are below benchmarks for equivalent public and private sector organisations. With Investors in People Silver Accreditation, we also have comprehensive and well focussed staff development activities. In two annual staff surveys of both establishment and part time tutors, over 90% of staff said they would recommend City Lit as a good place to work. Key staff development aims for the future include:

- Meeting Government requirements around qualifications of tutors and registration with the Institute for Learning
- Raising awareness of tutors about equality of access and opportunity for disabled learners
- College wide implications of emerging legislation around safeguarding of vulnerable adults

In addition John Laing Integrated Services and its subcontractors provide building maintenance, security, cleaning, catering and general services.

Resources

The current asset base is valued at £18m and a resource budget of £16m, with the income of circa £8m from the SFA, £6m from fees and £2m from other contracts.

Diversity

City Lit values and promotes equality and diversity to ensure that people are treated fairly and with respect for their individual dignity. Equality is about creating a fairer culture where everyone can participate and fulfil their potential free from discrimination, harassment and victimisation. Diversity means respecting, valuing and celebrating what makes us unique as individuals and that we contribute because of these aspects, not in spite of them. New legislation and greater inspection and quality requirements and increasing customer expectations mean we have revised our approach to valuing and promoting equality and diversity. We have a new equality and diversity policy and, for the first time, have an equality and diversity strategy; we will also revise our equality schemes as required by the Equality Act 2010. The SAR contains increased analysis of student progress by a number of diversity strands and equality impact assessments can be shown to lead to improvements in service and performance. We have targets of increasing the number of black and ethnic minority staff and students that are reflected in departmental SARs and we will continue to strive to improve the quality of our teaching by implementing and embedding superior diversity practices. We have started a major staff development programme focused on improving equality and diversity practices in the classroom, this training will be available to all teaching staff in 2010/11.

As part of our commitment to diversity, City Lit has set itself the aim of maintaining a proportion of provision to create a 'force for good' for adults in London where, due to their circumstances, they may have difficulty in accessing education, which is important to their lives, employment or contribution to society. This commitment encompasses provision in deaf education, speech therapy, skills for life, dedicated courses for those with learning difficulties, outreach work and access to higher education. In order to achieve this balance, a cross subsidy is required from more profitable areas of City Lit provision. Equally City Lit has started a process to review 'force for good' areas to try and put them closer to a break even position in terms of direct costs, accepting that overheads and other indirect costs will still require a cross subsidy.

Risk

Risk management is integrated into all of our strategic and management processes. A comprehensive risk register is maintained by the college and reported to governors at regular intervals, including an assessment of the top 10 risks. Overall at a strategic level the main risks are:

Financial - High probability of increasing financial pressures and high impact if major reductions in funding and/or sufficient action is not taken to alleviate. Risk is primarily due to the uncertainty about future government funding in the current political and financial climate. To date the college has done well to offset reducing or capped funding with a strategy of growth and optimisation, although this also carries risk in terms of profitability and impact on quality and the learner experience. Part of this mitigation work has been significant increases in student fees and the robustness of the market, with increasing personal pressure on disposable income in the future, needs to be watched carefully. In addition any impact on student profile and our ability to maintain our 'force for good' offer needs careful monitoring.

Quality - Medium probability of failing to meet quality expectations and high impact if the college gets a less than good inspection. The college is striving to be outstanding at the next inspection and is investing considerable effort into continuous improvement. Equally, the expected standards are increasing and the growth strategies also have an impact on our ability to maintain quality, both in terms of tutors and off-site premises. In the past there have also been issues about the ability of the inspection authorities to fairly and realistically assess non-accredited learning. Overall it is felt the college is on track to meet the objective of being outstanding, but it does require an unremitting focus on quality and learner experience and outcomes.

Equality, diversity and safeguarding - Medium probability of not being able to demonstrate that we are good in these areas and, mainly in the case of safeguarding, also not compliant with legislation; high impact, especially as these are 'limiting' assessments during inspection for overall grade. Again a lot of work has and continues to be undertaken, but ensuring all members of staff, especially part time tutors, are trained, conversant with the requirements and, most importantly, actually ensuring good practice in the classrooms remains a challenge.

Bursary Scheme: The ability of the less well-off to be able to access City Lit courses is an area of growing concern. To try and alleviate this problem City Lit has launched a bursary scheme and is fundraising. It has already been used to good effect:

Caroline Hunter, said “Going to City Lit has given me that rarest commodity – hope. I was made redundant in the beginning of 2008. Going back to study has made a huge difference to me, it is so exciting to be learning, moving forward and being active. Without the **student bursary**, it would not have been possible.”