Education & Student Strategy 2021
Co-creating the student experience
At City, we work closely with our students to ensure they thrive and are successful academically, personally and professionally. We achieve this in partnership with our Students’ Union and by promoting the breadth of opportunities offered as part of City life. Our commitment to academic excellence and student engagement is reflected in our approaches to education and assessment. As a diverse community, we recognise the importance of personal, tailored support for all of our students.

City’s learning spaces are equipped with the latest educational technology and are designed to facilitate collaboration. We value and celebrate education, diversity and innovation and strive to deliver the best services to support our students. We invest in our colleagues and support their professional development. Our partnership with our students is inclusive and collaborative; and ensures that together we shape an excellent student experience.

The Education & Student Strategy 2021 is our roadmap to achieve this vision and purpose. As a sub-strategy of City’s Vision & Strategy 2026, its role is to help us to achieve our ambition to be ‘better’ and ‘bigger’ by building on previous work to improve educational quality and the student experience. It sets clear priorities for investing our time and resources. Implementing the actions set out here will enable City to achieve its academic Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) for student progression, satisfaction and employability, the areas we believe are most important to our students.
The Education & Student Strategy sits alongside the Student Experience Factors, a narrative we have designed in collaboration with colleagues and students, which articulates the broad City student journey and the experience we believe our students would like to have. While the factors provide us with a detailed vision for the student experience in 2021, the Education & Student Strategy 2021 builds on it through providing clarity on five priority areas, where we intend to deliver our most tangible changes for students.

**The Five Priorities**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Priority 1: Student Journey</th>
<th>Priority 2: Student Opportunity</th>
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<tr>
<td>&quot;It felt challenging at times, but I understood what was needed and received a lot of support, every step of the way. It felt like City knew what help to offer me and when.&quot;</td>
<td>&quot;I am proud to be a City student. I have had fantastic experiences that have helped me to grow as a person. I feel confident and excited about the future.&quot;</td>
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<tr>
<td>By 2021 we will provide students with increasingly personalised, expert and timely support as they progress from their initial enquiry about studying at City, to their future careers. To support this aim we will:</td>
<td>By 2021 all our students will feel part of a vibrant community and will have variety and equality of opportunity to enrich their student experience. To support this aim we will:</td>
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<td>1.1 Develop an infrastructure that helps us better understand and support the needs of students as learners and individuals</td>
<td>2.1 Inspire students to enjoy their time at City and to join in opportunities that help them to meet people, explore new perspectives and develop their career goals and employability.</td>
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<td>1.2 Help students to access the right support at the right time to ensure their success and protect their wellbeing</td>
<td>2.2 Collaborate with the Students’ Union to ensure the student voice contributes to significant strategic change priorities</td>
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<td>1.3 Encourage peer-to-peer support and mentoring as tools to foster a supportive community and to build students’ skills and potential</td>
<td>2.3 Celebrate City’s diversity and promote an inclusive, dynamic and sociable community</td>
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<td>2.4 Strengthen City’s approach to access and participation to reduce differential opportunities and outcomes.</td>
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PRIORITY 3: OPERATIONAL EXCELLENCE AND CULTURAL CHANGE

“Everything at City just worked for me. There were good communications and I had all the resources I needed. My Programme Team made sure everything ran so smoothly. This meant I could focus on my studies.”

By 2021, education-related operations and services will be increasingly seamless and will continuously deliver an excellent student and staff experience. To support this aim we will:

3.1 Create a simplified, harmonised and transparent approach to the implementation and management of core processes that underpin the student journey with documented frameworks and clear accountabilities

3.2 Create an IT infrastructure that enables the delivery of projects designed to improve the student journey and personalised experience as defined by this Strategy

3.3 Operate a robust framework of academic policies that are student-focused and meet both internal and external requirements

3.4 Evolve our communications with students to provide clear, timely and personalised information in appropriate formats

3.5 Invest in vibrant and state-of-the-art physical and virtual spaces to facilitate learning, wider student life and community

3.6 Join with the intentions of the People Strategy to support academic and Professional Services colleagues working in a changing environment.

PRIORITY 4: CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT

“My course was interesting and engaging, with a balance of academic interest and focus on future related careers. I understood exactly what was being asked of me in assessments and performed to the best of my abilities.”

By 2021 our innovative, research-informed and engaging curricula will better prepare students for future employment and lifelong learning, supported by an environment that fosters different forms of learning. To support this aim, we will:

4.1 Embed the development of discipline-specific and generic graduate attributes at all stages of programme design, enabling our students to gain appropriate employment on completion

4.2 Use appropriate learning and teaching approaches to engage students actively in their learning

4.3 Use appropriate assessment tools which enable students to demonstrate success and achievement

4.4 Analyse data to understand any differential outcomes for student groups and to work with LEaD to explore teaching, learning and assessment approaches that improve student outcomes.

PRIORITY 5: TEACHING AND LEARNING PRACTICES

“The academic staff have been great, using technology and different innovative learning methods throughout my entire course.”

By 2021 we will effectively, consistently and proportionately support colleagues to engage in continuing professional development to enhance their teaching practice and promote excellent teaching and student support. To support this aim we will:

5.1 Support and encourage colleagues to gain recognition for their education experience and achievement

5.2 Recognise and celebrate colleagues’ excellence in teaching and student support

5.3 Develop colleagues’ excellence in teaching and student support.

DELIVERY PLAN

The Strategy Delivery Plan sets out agreed institutional activities. It is a dynamic document evolving in response to feedback from students and colleagues; and sector developments during a time of significant change.

To help colleagues and students understand the scale of change we plan to deliver each academic year, we group activities into the following three categories:

• Change – priority activities for each academic year, which will directly enhance the ways we work and deliver our educational provision or broader student experience. Change activities are likely to have significant impacts for students and colleagues.

• Explore – activities we are committed to developing alongside colleagues and students, which will require further internal review and sector research to consider whether they will become Change activities.

• Continue – critical business-as-usual activities that contribute directly to our priority factors and new activities where we are still embedding a change into our practice and culture.

We are realistic about our gaps and how we will work to address them. Our Schools, Programmes, Professional Services and the Students’ Union work collaboratively and we will keep colleagues and students informed of progress towards our shared goal. Our Annual Programme Evaluation process supports programme-level action planning on KPI performance and other strategic priorities. By implementing actions in tandem across the institution we can ensure that we meet our objectives and deliver on the factors by 2021.
The Student Experience Factors
2018 – 2021
The Student Experience Factors
2018 – 2021

RECRUITMENT, SELECTION, ADMISSION

“The information I need about what City has to offer is easy to find and understand. I know I can make direct contact to ask any questions I have and, when I do, staff are friendly and helpful. I understand the fees and the other costs of studying my course and this helps me to budget. I can imagine myself being at City and am excited by the course, opportunities and friendships that lie ahead. I am confident I made the right choice and I am looking forward to starting.”

PRE-ARRIVAL

“I received a welcoming email from my Course Officer to let me know they were my main point of contact. My Personal Tutor also got in touch to say hello and to tell me about what their role was. They also talked with me about any extra help I might need to bridge the knowledge and skills I have from school to what I will need to know before I start my degree – they even asked what my career aspirations were which showed they were interested in my plans.”

“I have all the information I need about practical arrangements to start my programme and most are already in place and it all makes sense. It’s great that I can complete so much on-line so when I get to City I can focus on settling in to my new life. The online pre-arrival information and activities really boosted my confidence. I’ve already had contact from my Students’ Union and I’ve had the opportunity to meet my peers online; I am looking forward to attending SU Welcome Events with them. My CityBuddy from Year 2 of the programme has also emailed me.”

“Overall, I feel reassured that City makes a real effort to help me be part of its community, understand my needs and helps me prepare to arrive.”

TRANSITION, INDUCTION, WELCOME

“Arriving at City meant I could finally meet with those people I’d connected with virtually. This early contact gave me confidence in meeting other new people and helped me to feel at home. I have already started to make friends on my course and across the university.”

“My induction planner really helped me organise my time and activities that most interest me and I accessed all the information on my phone. The induction itself was planned so that I didn’t feel overwhelmed by all the information that I needed to absorb and the people that I needed to meet.”

“I was so pleased to have had pre-arrival information, including from my CityBuddy, about how the relationship with my lecturers worked, as well as expectations of us such as independent learning and critical thinking. The academic and career readiness assessments I’ve done provided a good basis for my first face-to-face personal tutorial.”

“I really liked the chance there was to chat informally to academic staff at the welcome lunch as well as hear about the more formal parts of university life at the presentation.”

“The Students’ Union is active around campus and helping to bring students together through lots of relevant societies and diverse events. The Freshers’ Fair was fantastic and I joined a number of student societies, including one for my course.”

PROGRAMME, TEACHING AND LEARNING

“Starting my programme was definitely a very different experience to studying at school so I was pleased to have had some information and discussions beforehand about what it might be like. The study skills sessions help me with this change, especially the ideas of independent learning and more extensive academic writing and research.”

“Early in my course, the Students’ Union came and spoke about the importance of Student Representatives on my course; as a result I nominated myself in the election to become my Programme’s Representative and attended really useful training so I can fulfil my role in partnership with my programme director.”

“The content of my programme is what I expected based on the prior information I received. The modules are relevant to the knowledge and skills I need to succeed on my degree and future employment. Later in the programme, I get some choice in which modules I take to suit my interests.”

“The rooms in which I have lectures and seminars have great technology and rarely are any of the sessions disrupted or delayed due to technical issues.”

“I like the variety of approaches that keep me interested – I particularly like the smaller group sessions as I feel more able to ask questions and connect with other students and the module tutor. On a 1-1 level, any module tutor will also offer extra advice if there is a topic I’d like to understand better, and this even happens when the module tutor is just visiting City. If I want to revisit a topic by myself, I can do this by accessing Lecture Capture which is used consistently across my programme.”

“Those parts of my programme that connect directly to developing my future employability and skills make a real difference; it is helpful that I am able to access employability resources online. I am encouraged to think about and plan for life after City and my Personal Tutor helps this. Also, the variety of placement opportunities that fit around my other commitments have a good way of gaining practical experience that will stand me in good stead with future employers.”

“I understand that it is important that I engage with teaching and tutorial sessions and that my attendance is checked so that both my Personal Tutor and I can make sure I am doing OK, including around my non-City commitments. I know that I can speak to my Personal Tutor and Course Officer if I need to be absent from my course for a short time. Overall, my programme is really interesting, I feel supported and I would recommend it.”
The Students’ Union Study Well campaign was a real community event and reminded me of the wide range of support and advice that was available to me to support my performance and wellbeing during the exam period. I enjoyed the fun aspects as much as the study skills.

I understand that assessments are designed to assess my skills, knowledge and understanding – sometimes this will be assessment of facts or skills I have been taught and some will require my own critical thinking and individual research. I understand what I need to do to succeed; when and how I will be assessed in each of my modules and the criteria against which my work will be marked.

I know exactly when and where my marks and feedback will be available. It’s great to access this online from wherever I am. This feedback is useful, provided in good time, consistent across modules, importantly it helps me to improve as I progress through my course. I welcome early attempts in a module to test my understanding and thinking of key concepts and how to apply them. Personal feedback on all of my exams is especially beneficial so that I can understand where I could do better in the next year.

Having an approachable tutor who I can go to for further advice makes a massive difference too. Some of my friends have needed more support in several modules and tutors understand that each student learns in different ways.

I expect tutors to have considered the pacing of assessments across my modules, so tests and essays don’t unfairly all come at once making it difficult for me to achieve my best. I receive an assessment schedule for my overall programme at the start of each term.

I understand why there are assessment submission deadlines and I know that City is fair in applying late penalties consistently across the whole university. Where I have had a genuine reason for not being able to make a deadline, I can discuss this with my Personal Tutor, Course Officer or Students’ Union Advice Service and I understand the exasperating circumstances process.

I review my academic progress when I meet my Personal Tutor. This takes into account my marks, feedback I have received and my overall engagement with the programme. My tutor is also aware of my commitments outside City when we meet.

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Moodle is my one place to go for everything relating to my modules. This material can be accessed on my phone or tablet on my way into City so I can make best use of my time.

The resources uploaded by all my module tutors - in advance - help me plan and get ahead. The resources are organised in an intuitive way that really helps my learning.

I am part of the module on-line learning community, which includes the tutor, where questions are answered that everyone can see, and I am reassured by the type of questions I see other students asking.

Where I need specialist software and equipment this has been of a really high standard and available at a time that worked for me.

There is a clear match between the reading list and the on-line resources and books in the library. The Library Services staff are also really helpful if I am not sure where to find something. The Library is always open when I need it to be.

I enjoy spending time in the university and my independent learning is supported by vibrant study space which I can easily find available. Sometimes we are asked to do group work and we book spaces to do this with the resources we need.

The organisation of my course make sense to me. My Course Officer is my key contact for everything about the organisation of my course; they know who I am and they are helpful in answering my questions and ensuring that I can find the information I need. I know who my Programme Director is and have contact with them about academic matters.

I go to Moodle for my programme guide which I refer to a lot – this is easy to read and tells me about how things are structured, my assessments, rules and regulations and other useful background. The hard copy of my handbook is really helpful for me to annotate.

I access my personalized timetable on my phone. I can see my timetable before term starts so I can plan my work and home commitments around lectures, tutorials and meetings with my personal tutor.

I understand timetabling and exam scheduling must be really complicated, but it’s great if my own timetable is not too congested and teaching doesn’t go into the evening. Having my exams timetable early helps me to plan my revision schedule and for holidays. I guess teaching will sometimes get cancelled at short notice, but I know City will always tell me straight away so I don’t have a wasted journey.

The Citystudent app, StudentHub, Campus News and Students’ Union Newsletter are really useful communications tools as information is clear and easy to understand. I receive regular communications throughout each week which may be about my programme or something else going on at City, and this keeps me well-connected without feeling overloaded. My Citystudent app is especially great in that it splits the information into what I have to know and what I might just want to browse and this really helps me focus my time and attention.
"The university is friendly and supportive and academics and the course office work really well together to support me. Aside from my module tutors, I see my Personal Tutor regularly throughout my course, and they have all the information they need to know how I am doing. I am supported to make the right personal choices on which electives to take, and I really value the effort and time from that tutors put into this both face-to-face and on-line."

"As I progress through my course there are opportunities to attend revision sessions and other workshops that are designed to help me succeed on my course."

"I know which services to contact when I need broader support and if I am unclear I know that I can ask my Course Officer or Personal Tutor where to go. Staff in the Student Centre are always welcoming and quick to advise me where to go or when I need help with something practical. I know the Students’ Union also have staff who can advise me on academic matters if I am in difficulty. It is easy to make appointments to meet 1-1 and I know students feel well-supported."

"Student wellbeing is a high profile theme within City. My Course Officer, Personal Tutor and other student services work together so that I know where to go if something should go wrong. Services collaborate to promote awareness of relevant issues and to ensure that the environment at City is safe, supportive and inclusive. There is very clear information about how services like counselling and faith can help me. My friends and I agree that having information about why other students have used this support has given us much better understanding and confidence to know how and when we might need it too."

"All staff tend to respond to me within at least 48 hours during the working week. I also feel supported by other students including the CityBuddies network. In my second or third year I know that there is the opportunity to apply for the Professional Mentoring scheme and that will provide me with even more one-to-one support, this time from a professional. I imagine joining the scheme as a mentor after I graduate and start my career so that I can support students."

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"Working at City through Unitemps or as a Student Ambassador or Tutor helps us meet new people, earn some money and develop new skills. The Student Volunteering programme has been fantastic for other students in getting involved in the local community. The Students’ Union hosts many diverse student societies which provide space to share common interests or even lead the society. City promotes schemes like the Employability Award and the Student’ Union Leadership Award that help me to demonstrate how this experience is relevant to my professional career."

"CitySport, and Sports and Leisure provide chances to team-up with other students — either through sport or spectating. At other times, I enjoy getting involved in events run by the Students’ Union. I also know my friends have gained so much through being part of CitySpark. It is also OK to have some time to myself and there is plenty of space within City to do so. Overall, the physical and social space at City is welcoming and helps me engage with other students."

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"Much of my City experience is positive, but sometimes there are things that could be improved or I want to share my ideas. What I really like about this university is the genuine interest in what students say. Even when it is not possible for something to be fixed right now, I receive really clear information about what will be done into the future — and that gives me confidence about City’s commitment to its students."

"The programme reps work well with staff on the ‘feedback cycle’ to us, and they get great support from the Students’ Union. I’m asked to complete quite a few surveys which can sometimes be a bit time-consuming, but in the end I just see it as a real commitment to wanting to know what I think and responding to that."

"I had a great time at City overall and I am really pleased that there is the opportunity to stay in touch and even to become an alumni ambassador for the university. City keeps me connected to a huge network of alumni and I am looking forward to attending some of the events planned and accessing the CareersHub as I progress in my career."

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