Engineering College of Technology

Access and Participation Statement

April 2026

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1. ECT's commitment to access and participation

1.1 Vision, core values and goals

ECT aims to be internationally recognised by 2031 as a leading provider of online engineering and technology education. We seek to attract students globally through programmes that are strongly industry-oriented and that equip graduates with the skills, experience and professional attributes needed to succeed in engineering careers.

Our commitment to widening access and participation is rooted in our core values:

- respect for the individual, equality, diversity, inclusion, social justice and ethics
- excellence and quality in all our endeavours
- scholarly integrity and excellence
- sustainability
- free intellectual enquiry
- innovation, creativity and entrepreneurial endeavour.

This commitment is embedded across the *ECT Strategic Plan UK 2024-2029*, which prioritises promoting equality, diversity, inclusion and social justice. We are focused on supporting the access, participation, success and progression of students from groups underrepresented in engineering including:

- students from Black, Asian and other minoritised ethnic backgrounds
- women in engineering
- students with disabilities
- students from socio-economically disadvantaged backgrounds

ECT recognises the need to ensure that its online learning model, policies and student support systems work to reduce barriers and enable equitable opportunities for all students to enter, participate in and succeed in higher education.

2. Inequalities in Enrolment and Attainment in Engineering

ECT recognises that there are long-standing inequalities in access to and outcomes from engineering and higher education. UK sector data consistently shows lower continuation and attainment rates for students from disadvantaged backgrounds, students from Black, Asian and other minoritised ethnic groups, students with disabilities, and women studying engineering subjects. These disparities are also reflected in national engineering participation data, which highlights the under-representation of women, lower participation from low-participation neighbourhoods and sector-wide ethnicity awarding gaps.

These inequalities shape ECT's commitment to improving access, participation, success and progression for under-represented groups in engineering. Our approach is informed by established sector data and by our own organisational context as an institution offering flexible online engineering programmes to students across the UK and internationally.

3. Strategic approach to promoting access and participation

3.1 Target groups for studies in engineering

ECT's access and participation work focuses on supporting groups that are under-represented in engineering and who may face additional barriers to entering or succeeding in higher education. Our priority groups include:

- students from Black, Asian and other minoritised ethnic groups
- students from socio-economically disadvantaged backgrounds
- women, who remain under-represented in engineering fields
- students with disabilities
- mature learners and working professionals seeking to progress or retrain while balancing employment and personal commitments
- students studying from outside the UK who may face access barriers, including those with limited access to traditional campus-based provision
- students with lower prior educational attainment who may benefit from flexible online pathways into engineering study

These groups align well with well-documented participation gaps within engineering and higher education more widely, and reflect the needs of ECT's global online learner community.

3.2 Promoting equality, fairness and non-discrimination

ECT is committed to providing an inclusive, fair and accessible learning environment for all students, regardless of background or location. Our Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy applies to our UK and international student communities and outlines our commitment to equitable access, participation and outcomes.

ECT embeds the principles of equality, fairness and social justice across its planning, decision-making and student support processes. This includes promoting accessibility in online delivery, ensuring fairness in admissions and assessment and proactively identifying and addressing barriers that may affect under-represented or disadvantaged student groups.

ECT upholds the principles of the Equality Act 2010 in relation to UK learners, and ensures that all students are treated with dignity and respect. Through our policies and procedures, including our Student Support Policy, Student Complaints and Academic Appeals processes, and other institutional frameworks, we work to prevent discrimination, harassment and victimisation, and to ensure all students have equitable opportunities to success throughout the online learning lifecycle.

3.3 Whole lifecycle and whole institution approach

ECT adopts a whole student lifecycle approach to widening access and participation. Our systems and support structures are designed to ensure that students from under-represented and disadvantaged groups can access, engage with and succeed in their studies throughout every stage of the online learning journey.

Support begins at initial enquiry, where Course Advisors provide guidance on programme choice and admissions pathways. Once enrolled, students receive structured induction and ongoing

personalised support from dedicated Learning Support Officers, tutors and lecturers, including academic skills guidance, English language support, technology assistance and signposting to wellbeing resources or specialist services where appropriate.

ECT's whole-institution approach is reflected in a comprehensive policy framework that embeds student-centred principles across admissions, learning, teaching, assessment, student support and quality assurance. These policies ensure fairness, accessibility and consistency for all students across the full study lifecycle.

4. ECT processes for promoting access and participation

ECT processes and procedures are designed to ensure that students from under-represented and disadvantaged groups can access, participate in and succeed on our Higher Education programmes. Our online delivery model, fair and inclusive admissions pathways, academic and wellbeing support systems and early-intervention processes work together to remove barriers and enable students to thrive throughout their learning journey.

4.1 Promoting Access into Higher Education Programmes

4.1.1 Introduction

ECT's fully online programmes increase access to engineering education for learners who may face barriers to traditional on-campus study, including students with disabilities, caring responsibilities, work commitments or limited geographic access. Our online delivery enables students across the UK and internationally to progress toward engineering qualifications through flexible and accessible pathways.

4.1.2 Applications

ECT's admissions processes are fair, transparent and supportive. Applicants receive clear guidance on entry requirements, suitable programme choices, alternative pathways and recognition of prior learning (RPL). Support is available for applicants with disabilities or additional needs, with reasonable adjustments discussed in line with institutional policies. RPL provides opportunities for mature learners and experienced professionals to enter programmes with credit or advanced standing where appropriate. Where applicants disclose a disability or additional support need, ECT provides early guidance and planning to enable timely implementation of reasonable adjustments and, where appropriate, the development of an Individual Learner Plan (ILP) following enrolment.

4.1.3 Admissions

Admissions decisions are made consistently and in accordance with published criteria. Successful applicants receive clear information about programme expectations, fees, key policies and their rights and responsibilities as students. Applicants who are not offered a place receive constructive feedback, information on alternative options and access to formal appeals routes where appropriate.

4.1.4 Support provided to students

Student support begins prior to enrolment and continues throughout the programme. Induction provides an introduction to academic expectations, online learning systems and available support services. Throughout their studies, students have access to academic skills development, English language support, wellbeing guidance, safeguarding support, technology assistance and

signposting to external services where needed. This support is designed to meet the diverse needs of online and international learners.

4.1.5 Scholarships for students from designated groups

ECT promotes widening access through scholarships designed to support participation in engineering education. Current scholarships include awards for women in engineering and additional academic excellence scholarships are available to recognise high-achieving new and continuing students. ECT also provides guidance to applicants on accessing external financial support options where relevant. As part of our ongoing commitment to widening participation, ECT continues to review and develop its scholarship provision to ensure it meets the needs of diverse learner groups.

4.2 Promoting Participation in ECT programmes

4.2.1 Interactive online delivery

ECT's online programmes are designed to promote active and sustained participation through interactive learning experiences. Live teaching sessions, collaborative activities, virtual laboratories and simulation tools support real-time engagement, while recorded content, digital resources and discussion spaces offer flexible opportunities for students to participate regardless of time zone or location. Our online platforms enable students to connect with peers, access learning materials, complete assessments and engage with academic staff in a supportive and inclusive digital environment.

4.2.2 Continuous monitoring of student participation

ECT monitors student participation and engagement throughout the programme to identify learners who may require additional support. Learning Support Officers and academic staff use engagement indicators within the Virtual Learning Environment to recognise early signs of reduce participation, such as missed activities, late or non-submission of assessments, or reduced interaction with learning materials. Early identification enables the prompt provision of appropriate support to help students remain engaged and progress successfully. This approach is underpinned by the *Students at Risk of Academic Failure Policy and Procedures*, which sets out ECT's structured early-intervention framework.

4.2.3 Academic and personal support to promote participation

ECT provides a wide range of academic, personal and wellbeing support to help students maintain effective participation. This includes structured support for students with disabilities, long-term health conditions and specific learning differences. Where needs are identified, ECT works with students to agree appropriate reasonable adjustments and to develop an Individual Learner Plan (ILP) which sets out tailored support arrangements for learning, teaching and assessment. These plans are reviewed regularly to ensure that support remains appropriate and effective throughout the student lifecycle.

Students also have access to academic skills development, English language assistance, disability support and reasonable adjustments, wellbeing and safeguarding support delivered initially through ECT's internal student support framework, including Learning Support Officers, and designated safeguarding processes, with referral or signposting to external specialist services where appropriate. Staff engage with students sensitively and confidentially to understand individual circumstances and offer tailored solutions that address barriers to

engagement. Students have access to clear procedures for raising concerns or dissatisfaction through ECT's Student Complaints and Academic Appeals processes.

4.3 Promoting Success and Progression

4.3.1 Introduction

ECT promotes student success and progression through a coordinated set of academic, support and monitoring processes. These include formative and summative assessment, early identification of students who may be at risk of falling behind and targeted support aligned with institutional policies. These include formative and summative assessment, early identification of students who may be at risk of falling behind and targeted support aligned with institutional policies, including the *Students at Risk of Academic Failure Policy and Procedures.*

4.3.2 Assessment and feedback

ECT's assessment and feedback practices are guided by the principles of fairness, inclusivity, clarity and academic integrity as set out in the Assessment and Feedback Policy. Students engage in a variety of formative and summative assessments that offer multiple opportunities to demonstrate achievement of learning outcomes. Assessments are designed to be valid, transparent and appropriate to the level of study, with clear criteria to support student understanding of expectations.

Feedback is a central part of the learning process. ECT provides timely, constructive and accessible feedback to help students reflect on their performance and plan for improvement. Reasonable adjustments and consideration of mitigating circumstances are available where needed, ensuring that assessment arrangements are equitable and responsive to individual needs without compromising academic standards.

4.3.3 Monitoring student progress

ECT monitors student progress throughout the programme to ensure timely support and equitable progression opportunities. Academic staff and Learning Support Officers review indicators such as engagement, assessment submission, academic performance and progression through modules. This monitoring helps identify students who may require additional support and ensures consistency in progression decisions across programmes.

4.3.4 Supporting at-risk students

ECT's approach to supporting students at risk is guided by the *Students at Risk of Academic Failure Policy and Procedures,* which provides a structured framework for early identification, escalation and support. ECT is committed to early identification and support for students who may be at risk of not progressing. Students may be identified through reduced engagement, missed assessments, declining performance or concerns raised by staff. Support is tailored to individual needs and may include academic skills development, wellbeing guidance, disability support, study skills support or referral to external services.

Interventions follow clear procedures that uphold fairness, confidentiality and proportionality. Students have access to formal routes to raise concerns or appeal decisions through established Academic Appeals and Student Complaints processes.

4.3.5 Opportunities for progression through RPL, credits and transfer between courses

ECT supports progression by offering opportunities for recognition of prior learning (RPL) and credit transfer, enabling students to enter programmes at an appropriate level or reduce the time required to complete a qualification. RPL decisions reflect academic standards and are based on evidence of equivalent learning or experience. ECT also develops articulation pathways internally and with external providers to support student mobility between programmes.

4.3.6 Opportunities for deferral, withdrawal or interruption of studies

ECT offers flexible options for students who may need to defer, interrupt or withdraw from their studies due to personal, health, professional or other circumstances. These processes are governed by the Deferral, Interruption and Withdrawal Policy, which sets out the conditions under which students may pause or discontinue their studies.

Students receive clear information about eligibility, timescales, conditions and fee implications and are encouraged to seek advice before making decisions that may affect their progression. ECT ensures that decisions are made consistently, in line with consumer protection obligations and the Equality Act 2010, and that students are supported to make informed choices about managing changes to their study plans.

5. Provision for student complaints and academic appeals

ECT provides clear and accessible processes for students to raise concerns or request a review of decisions through its Student Complaints and Academic Appeals policies. These procedures apply to all students, regardless of their location or mode of study and ensure that concerns about fairness, discrimination, procedural irregularity or the quality of services can be addressed promptly and transparently.

ECT is committed to the principles of natural justice, ensuring all parties are treated fairly, impartially and with respect. Students who submit a complaint or an academic appeal are protected from disadvantage and their enrolment is maintained while formal processes are ongoing.

The Student Complaints Policy sets out the routes for resolving non-academic concerns through informal and formal stages, followed by internal review where needed. The Academic Appeals Policy provides a structured process for students to request a review of academic decisions on permitted grounds, such as procedural error, bias or previously unavailable mitigating circumstances. Where a student is not satisfied with the outcome of ECT's internal procedures, they may take their case to the Office of the Independent Adjudicator (OIA) for external review.

These processes ensure that students have access to fair, proportionate and transparent mechanisms to raise concerns that may impact their access, participation or success.

6. Monitoring access, participation and success

ECT monitors access, participation and student success through a range of data and feedback processes designed to support continuous improvement and ensure equitable outcomes. Student engagement, retention, progression and completion data are reviewed regularly to

identify trends, highlight differential outcomes and trigger early support where needed. Monitoring also considers the fairness and consistency of assessment and progression decisions and draws feedback from students, staff and external stakeholders to evaluate the effectiveness of support, learning and teaching practices.

ECT's approach is informed by the Students at Risk of Academic Failure Policy and Procedures, ensuring that early intervention mechanisms are in place to support students who may be at risk of not progressing. Monitoring activities also take into account sector-wide evidence of attainment gaps and support ECT's commitment to improving equality of opportunity for all groups.

7. Plans to improve access and participation

ECT is committed to continuously improving access, participation and outcomes for under-represented groups within engineering education. Building on the institution's longstanding experience in delivering online engineering programmes internationally and informed by Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy, ECT will further strengthen its approach to widening participation through targeted actions and ongoing evaluation.

Key areas of planned enhancement include:

- Strengthening equality, diversity and inclusion leadership through clear institutional responsibility for monitoring and coordinating access and participation activity.
- Improving data collection and reporting to better understand participation, progression and attainment patterns across different study groups, including monitoring differential outcomes and informing early interventions.
- Enhancing outreach and recruitment be engaging with prospective learners globally, including mature learners, working professionals and students from countries with limited access to engineering education, and by developing partnerships with organisations that promote opportunities for women, people with disabilities and other under-represented groups.
- Developing scholarship provision to support participation, including existing scholarships for women in engineering and academic excellence awards, with further opportunities under consideration of ECT's ongoing policy review.
- Supporting internal progression by encouraging and supporting learners from diploma and certificate-level study to progress to degree programmes and facilitating transition from undergraduate to postgraduate study where appropriate.
- Strengthening student support mechanisms such as English language assistance, study skills development, wellbeing support and tailored interventions for students facing barriers to success, ensuring these remain responsive to the needs of diverse learner groups.
- Collaborating with sector and professional bodies to address inequalities in engineering education and improve pathways into industry for graduates from under-represented backgrounds.

ECT will review progress annually using student data, feedback and evaluation outcomes to refine and enhance its access and participation work over time.

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1.2	April 2024	Minor updates in line with improvements to other ECT policies and procedures
2	April 2026	Annual update to revise terminology, align with current ECT policies and streamline sections.