



CORE EXCELLENCE AT HOLY CROSS COLLEGE

The Collective

This has its roots in the Art & Design cluster and was initiated a few years ago by a group of Level 2 students with the support and guidance of the Director of Art & Design. Started with a modest loan from College funds, The Collective is now a self-sustaining, functioning business run by students, which develops their skills and creativity, channelling it into an authentic and inspiring workplace experience.

The Collective is a design studio which fulfils commissions from both within and outside the college. Examples of recent work include projects for Bury Town of Culture and the Victoria Wood Foundation. It produces a range of products such as prints and accessories and has held regular sales which have generated a profit. In the past, it has produced magazines that have added to the cultural life of the college. It plays a significant role in the branding of Holy Cross and undertakes much of its design requirements. The Collective has a key role to play in our future communication strategy and will, for example, create an Excellence website for the college that will be our main means of promoting extra-curricular/cross-curricular opportunities to staff and students. It is truly cross-curricular and directly relevant to many subjects beyond Art & Design, for example, Media/Film, English, Business Studies and Accounting, offering students the chance to apply their learning and develop employability skills. As the college's in-house design studio, it has the potential to meet all its design needs. The Collective welcomes students from across curriculum areas and is linked to Gatsby benchmarks 4 (linking curriculum learning to careers) and 6 (experiences of workplaces).

Music & Singing

There are a wide range of musical opportunities for students at Holy Cross and, led by its Director, music contributes significantly to the cultural life of the college. Musicians have many chances to develop and showcase their performance skills whilst all members of the college community are able to enjoy and learn about music through attending frequent musical events. Music-related Excellence activities include orchestra, music masterclasses and various ensembles which students do *not* have to be studying a Level 3 Music course to join. There are visits to institutions such as the Royal Northern College of Music and prior to the pandemic there were trips/tours to other countries.

The COVID-19 pandemic has seen the rise of virtual performances which are recorded so that they can be easily accessed and enjoyed multiple times. Our musicians also regularly perform in public. Examples of such events include busking at Manchester's Christmas markets, a Christmas Soloist concert and the string ensemble's rendition of *Nimrod* for Remembrance Day. Music links to the spiritual dimension of college life through performances that map to the ecclesiastical year.

The work of the Director of Music is complemented by that of the Director of Singing. Students from across the curriculum, who are interested in using their singing voices are able to become members of the Chamber choir and/or be choral scholars. There are regular public performances which are now being streamed. Our singers busked at the Christmas Markets alongside our musicians. Singing at Holy Cross encompasses a range of cultures and recently included the Africa project which culminated in a performance. It will make a significant contribution to the marking of Black History Month. It is also worth noting that singing is good for you, improves mental health, and generates a sense of community. Both musicians and singers are a vital part of key annual events such as Christmas Evening and the college Production.

Performance

All students at Holy Cross, regardless of their study programme, have the opportunity to be part of the college Production which is an important landmark of the college year. The Production brings together many disciplines including drama, music, dance and design and in giving participants an industry-level experience, helps to meet Gatsby benchmarks 4 and 6. It is of an exceptionally high standard year on year, and as such contributes enormously to the college's reputation, helping to cement its role in the wider community.

All students, again regardless of their study programme, can apply to take part in the LAMDA Performance examinations for which they prepare under the guidance of the Director of Performance. Of the 30 who recently auditioned, sixteen were successful. Aspiring performers applying to prestigious institutions such as RADA also work with the Director of Performance, receiving specialist audition advice and support.

There is in addition a Masterclass programme with industry specialists that are focused on raising aspirations. It is attended by the LAMDA group but is also open to anyone who is interested in applying for work or study in the sector. These sessions are also recorded and circulated around Drama classes.

Sport

Sport plays a key role in college life and there are numerous and varied opportunities on offer that cater for all needs, abilities and fitness levels. The Director of Sport oversees a range of elite sports with students competing (and winning) in local, regional and national events. At the same time, there are various activities to promote health and well-being such as yoga classes.

Our sporting community embraces diversity: there are sports for those with disabilities and the contribution of BAME figures to sport is being particularly highlighted for Black History Month. Furthermore, it promotes participation through supporting and acting on national initiatives such as *This Girl Can*. Those who indicate a preference at enrolment, are timetabled to play their chosen sport weekly. In addition, there are sports masterclasses and opportunities to learn about things such as Sport Psychology. In promoting sports-related careers and supporting students' aspirations in this area, the Director of Sport's work helps to meet Gatsby benchmark 4.

Social & Spiritual Activism

The Head of RE oversees the 4C group, the Equality & Diversity group, the Eco group, the Student Representative Council and the Faith Ambassadors. These are all student groups dedicated to improving life within our college community and in so doing to make a contribution to wider society. Involvement in this work offers excellent opportunities for personal development: to develop

confidence, self-awareness, social/employability skills, an understanding of the relationship between the individual and society, and insights into issues of the day.

The 4C group does a wide range of charitable work, fund-raising, campaigning and awareness-raising within both the college and the local community. The Equality & Diversity group monitor the college's inclusivity and promote and celebrate multiculturalism. They play a leading role in ensuring events such as One World Week and Black History Month receive prominence and impact upon the culture of the college.

The Student Representative Council works with staff to ensure that the student voice is heard and informs decision making in the college. In recent months they have effectively communicated the student experience of lockdown and remote learning to senior staff. This year they plan to establish a Holy Cross e-magazine. The process of electing the SRC also highlights the role and importance of democracy in running communities ensuring that important values are embedded within college life.

The Eco group has devised a strategy for making the college greener and has raised awareness among staff and students in relation to the impact of college activities upon the environment. They have raised important issues and in seeking to influence the college to make greener choices, they have also developed an understanding of the complexities involved in making such adjustments: good preparation for the negotiations and compromises of adult life.

Our Faith Ambassadors promote understanding and mutual tolerance between different faith communities. They play an important role in making our college community cohesive and celebratory of difference in belief.

High Tariff Universities/Oxbridge/Medicine, Dentistry, Veterinary Medicine Groups

These groups are overseen by the Academic Champion and meet weekly from October half-term onwards. They undertake a range of activities to prepare for successful application and transition to aspirational destinations. These include wider reading and discussion, development of precis skills, recasting information into different formats/registers, mock mini interviews, role play, Oxbridge interview preparation, open days, webinars, online lectures and trips to various events, coaching for admissions tests and learning how to write an impressive personal statement.

These groups are open to every student as the skills and cultural capital developed are of potential benefit to all. In practice students with high prior attainment are invited to join as are those with emerging high attainment as their course progresses. Students in these groups are also encouraged to do an EPQ.

Eligible students are also pointed towards Access & Participation programmes such as MAP and Sutton Trust and are supported in their applications to participate in these.

Wider College Activities

These include subject extension groups, debate club, a wide range of visiting speakers, various reading groups, Law mock trial, Law Careers Night, Alternatives to Medicine Group and many more. Last year also saw the cross-curricular Brexit event, the mock General Election and the Bury Hustings.