



Belfast Metropolitan College

A Shared Space for over 110 years



Historical context

- The first technical college opened its doors in Belfast in 1906 as the Municipal Technical College which merged existing disparate training provision from across Belfast.
- The college was designed with the equipment required to skill trainees and employees to industry standard
- The college was open to everyone regardless of their gender, age and background
- Early into the Women's Rights movement, the college employed female staff who delivered catering, needlework and housework skills in the Womens' Work Department (housekeeping skills was required for work in stately homes – a huge source of employment for females).

Peace and War

- Staff and students fought together in WW1.
- College established a Munitions Department to manufacture ammunition. Females were recruited when the males went to war. This coincided with the suffragette movement.
- Ran reskilling courses for WW1 ex-servicemen.
- Home Rule crisis 1912 – 1914 and pre and post partition unrest resulted in Curfew Regulations. This impacted on evening class attendance.
- WWII saw the college chosen as one of the elite across the UK to undertake radio mechanics training for the RAF. The college also re-established its Munitions Department to manufacture weapons.

Resilience

- In the 1960s the college was transformed into a dance hall at the weekends uniting people from across the City.
- Throughout sectarian violence of the 70s, 80s and 90s even when buildings were damaged, students from across Northern Ireland continued to attend and were made welcome.
- New buildings were opened on interface areas across a divided City (Millfield, Springvale and laterally Girdwood) and attended by students from both communities.

Legal Framework

- Peace talks in 1998 resulted in a more stable Northern Ireland and established our Legislative Assembly.
- The Assembly was set up within a legal framework - Northern Ireland Act 1998
- Under s75 of this Act public bodies have a legal obligation to promote equality of opportunity and good relations.
- There are nine categories of difference namely:- age, gender, religious belief, political opinion, race, sexual orientation, marital status, those with or without a disability and those with or without dependents.
- We state how we comply with this legal obligation in an Equality Scheme
- We also have anti-discrimination legislation

Safe and Welcoming

- The college prides itself on providing a safe and welcoming environment to students regardless of their economic; cultural or community background; genetic makeup or family situation.
- It's the first opportunity for students from a divided education system (gender, community background, ability and disability) to meet in a shared environment.
- 98% of students say they feel welcome at Belfast Met. 97% feel safe and secure

Policies

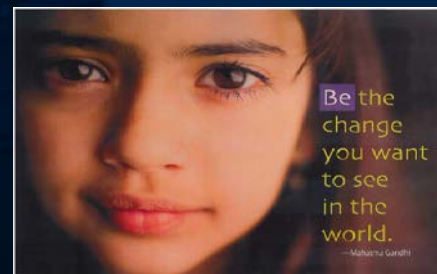
- All students sign up to a Code of Conduct.
- Inappropriate behaviours are challenged immediately on the few occasions this happens.
- We provide equality and diversity training for staff.
- Inclusive student events (Chinese New Year, St Patrick's Day etc).
- Faith Room and Wudu (wash facilities)
- unique facilities in an NI college.
- Transgender Policy and support process.
- Separate user-friendly process to enrol students whose first language is not English.



Incorporated into college life

Equality and cultural diversity is incorporated into every aspect of college life:

- Student Induction
- Student Handbook
- Student Union
- Student App
- Sharepoint Site for Students
- Information leaflets
- Posters
- College policies



Community outreach

- Northern Ireland is still divided into nationalist and unionist areas. Belfast is divided by a series of interface walls. A legacy of the conflict.
- The college works with communities to encourage young people in interface areas to attend and improve their life chances. (33.8% of our learners are from the most deprived area in NI)
- Throughout the 'Troubles' students travelled from all areas across Belfast, Northern Ireland and beyond.
- Springvale Multi Agency initiative works with statutory bodies and community groups in interface areas to increase dialogue in communities and improve life chances for people from this area.

Challenging views

- Changing perceptions through inclusive work – Breaking the Barriers video developed by young people from an interface area.



Politics

- Hosted student discussions with Members of the Legislative Assembly (MLAs) to discuss conflict related issues and challenge perceptions.
- Community Relations Week events to address sectarianism – student discussions.
- ‘Say No to Bullying’ events held annually – T shirt campaign.



International Dimension

- Records show that in 1907 students from Belgium, Romania, Japan and Russia were enrolled in the college.
- Students representing over 80 different countries are currently enrolled.
- A large number of refugees and asylum seekers are college students and enjoy the normality that attending college brings.
- Integration opportunities through student activities and curriculum events.
- Foundation International Skills Partnership in South Africa

Promoting inclusion through sport

- Belfast Met Football Academy.



Valued Reputation



**President
Barack Obama,
44th President
of the United
States.**

We will keep investing in programmes that enrich us.

Programmes like the one at Belfast Metropolitan College which teaches students from West and North Belfast the skills they need for new jobs.

Waterfront Hall, Belfast, 17 June 2013

