

Accelerate

EVALUATION REPORT 2022/23





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What is Accelerate?

Accelerate is Open City's free, pioneering, built environment education programme for young people from disadvantaged and underrepresented backgrounds.

Open City has dedicated the last 30 years to making London's architecture more open, accessible and equitable. Founded in 2012, Accelerate is central to that mission.

The programme supports young people aged 16-18 to explore careers in architecture, landscape, planning, engineering and related fields, equipping them with the skills, portfolios, networks and confidence to make informed progression choices.

Now 11 years in, Accelerate has offered a platform to more than 500 young Londoners from historically marginalised backgrounds to create, express and develop their ideas as they consider their futures.



Why Accelerate?

Challenges surrounding diversity and inclusion in the UK built environment sector are serious and well documented. In London, only 24% of architects, planners, and built environment professionals are from ethnic minority backgrounds, compared to 46% of the city's population (ONS 2021).

These professions influence everything from housing design to transport planning yet rarely benefit from London's true diversity of voices. The situation is somewhat better at UK universities, but architecture, construction and planning are still far less diverse than subjects like law and medicine (HESA 2019). Architecture is viewed as one of the most elite occupations (CIPIC 2021) with only 25% of professionals from working class backgrounds (compared to 38% across all industries). Conversations with our own alumni indicate that lack of precedents, knowledge and support reinforce the sector's elite status.

Open City recognises the need to address this situation at the educational and socio-economic root, supporting the next generation of urban changemakers. Accelerate does precisely that. Since 2012 we have helped around 500 young people from disadvantaged and underrepresented backgrounds gain conditional offers to study architecture and related subjects at university. Our plans for the future of Accelerate now focus on creating a continuous thread of support and inspiration from Key Stage 2 to university level and beyond.



How Does it Work?

Each year's cohort of students follows a set programme of 10 skills development workshops, focusing on observation, design, mapping, planning and critical thinking. Workshops are planned and delivered by a group of Accelerate course leaders who work in collaboration with practising artists, architects and guest speakers from the industry.

Workshops are supported by university students to provide participants with a good insight into studying architecture and related subjects. Alongside the skills development workshops, students take part in a one-to-one mentoring programme with built environment professionals, offering insights into real life practice.

Students also benefit from university application workshops with guidance on how to write successful UCAS personal statements, how to compose exceptional portfolios, and how to prepare for interviews. Students are exposed to a variety of career pathways and a public summer exhibition marks the programme's finale and celebrates every student's achievements.



Aims of The Programme

- Provide mentoring opportunities and access routes to higher education for economically, socially or culturally disadvantaged young Londoners and encourage more young people to explore professions in the built environment.
- Build skills, knowledge and confidence in young people to help them embark confidently on any career that they choose.
- Help shift the demographics of the built environment sector to be more representative of the population it serves by recruiting a much wider range of young people into relevant professions.
- Empower young people to have a greater sense of voice in the future of London's built environment.
- Provide better careers advice at college and secondary school level, allowing young people to make more informed career choices.
- Create networks of support between young people and industry organisations and individuals
- To continue to support Accelerate graduates through their education and chosen career paths.

“

My name, Paramveer Singh, is one that feels welcomed when attending Accelerate workshops. Being part of such a cohort that exudes both diversity and variety especially in such a culturally limited field, made me feel inspired. From this, I have become confident in both my technical and experimental abilities.

Particularly, the Open City Accelerate programme has allowed me to push the boundaries when it comes to creativity. From rushed sketches to messy plasticine castings, I have discovered a new level of thinking outside of the box. I would say the emphasis on brisk yet grafting collaging has been a skill I am now able to utilise in both my current and future projects. Alongside this, I would say being able to explore varied structures, buildings and sites like the Design District and Phoenix Gardens has been a factor I value the most. Being plunged into spending my Saturdays visiting these places is an experience initially I thought I would dislike but surprisingly has been quite thrilling and highly educational. These valuable experiences have most definitely aided me in taking the next step forward in my architectural journey as I continue to grow as an aspiring architect.

”

Paramveer Singh from Surrey, Accelerate 2023 participant

“

Accelerate mentoring is a rewarding experience allowing the development of a design-lead process whilst giving students vital exposure to the built environment industry, prior to their studies.

”

Joe Walker, Architect at Carmody Groarke, Accelerate 2023 mentor

Course Content

Course Theme:

Each year we try to create new course material and exercises in order to keep our content exciting and relevant. This year we will aim to explore several new venues and investigate some new topics which we believe are key to understanding the built environment.

Layers: The city is an evolving organism that carries the traces of time, history, community and culture in a collection of layers, each one overlaying and informing the next. Individual layers contribute to the character of the collective, culminating in a rich and detailed experience of the built environment.

Underneath the facades of the buildings we see around us today lies a story, something that has a beginning with an end yet to be told.

This year we invited our biggest cohort ever (almost 100 students) to join us on an exploration of London over the course of 10 workshops. We asked them to work with us to peel back some of these layers in order to understand how a multitude of things come together everyday to work in unison, forming our collective experience of the city.

Course Topics:

Each workshop covers a key topic of the built environment we believe to be important in gaining a good understanding of the issues and concerns within the sector. This year's topics included:

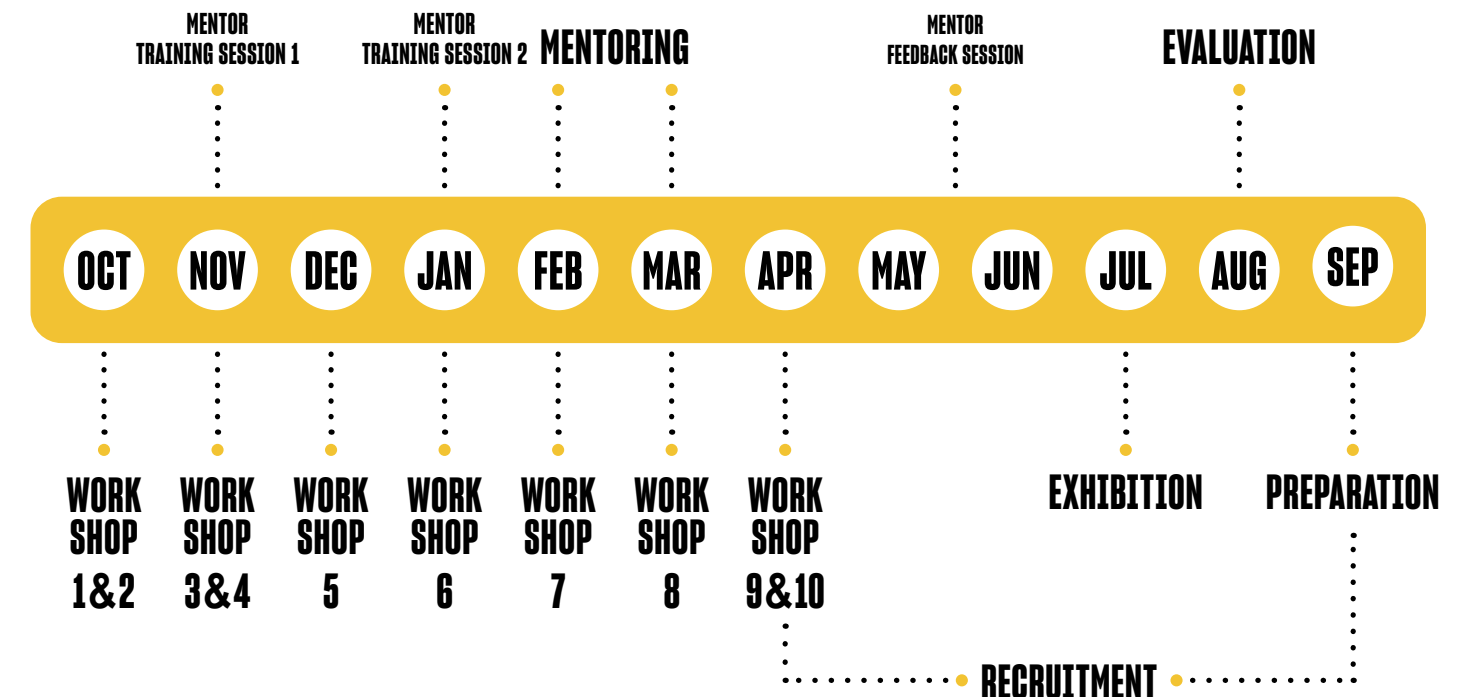
- Homes & Communities
- Sustainability
- Public/Private Space
- Placemaking
- Designers and Iconic Projects
- Transport and infrastructure

“ The programme builds up your portfolio through in-depth workshops with the materials all provided and without restriction, it makes getting into architecture very much accessible. ”

James Alfonso from Newham, Accelerate 2023 participant

Course Summary

2022-23 Course Timeline



Workshops

We ran 30 workshops with three separate classes this year. Each class charted a course through the city to explore different themes, meet different people and learn new things with the course theme and topics as a narrative backdrop.

Workshop 1: Course Introduction - Saturday 8th October

Based at our host university campuses, we met each other for the first time, discussed what the course entails and broke the ice with a few collective activities

Workshop 2: Stewardship and Sustainability - Saturday 29th October

We looked at climate friendly building strategies, landscape design and sustainable construction processes, understanding our responsibilities as both building designers and building users.

Workshop 3: Homes and Communities - Saturday 19th November

We investigated local communities and asked questions about what makes a home and a neighbourhood by speaking to local residents, carefully surveying the social and architectural elements of a community.

Workshop 4: Placemaking - Saturday 10th December

In this session, we looked at how a place is made, what provisions are needed in order for somewhere to gain an identity and how this can be developed into a building strategy by looking at live case studies of developments around the city, new and old.

Workshop 5: Public and Private Space - Saturday 7th January

We asked questions about territories and the delineation of spaces both public and private. We explored our access and visibility to these spaces and how each was treated, socially and mentally, and the subsequent impact on the character of an area?

Workshop 6: Designers and Iconic Projects - Saturday 28th January

In this session, we looked at some of the more eye catching projects London has to offer, we asked what makes a building iconic and who are the designers proposing them?

Workshop 7: Futures and Manifesto Writing - Saturday 4th March

A workshop dedicated to forming a position based on the social, economic and political state of architecture and the built environment. Students responded with their own demands for the future they want to see.

Workshop 8: Exhibition preparation - Saturday 18th March

Each student spent the day organising their work, learning how to curate and compose the pieces they have made during the course for the Summer exhibition.

Workshop 9&10: Design & Construct Challenge - Monday 3rd and Tuesday 4th April

In a final two-day workshop all three cohorts came together to join forces and build structures at a 1:1 scale as part of a team.

Workshop Highlights



Summer Exhibition 2022/23

The end of year exhibition was a fantastic celebration of the hard work our students have dedicated to the course throughout the year.

Each student curated their own work and had their own space in which to exhibit it for friends and family to see. It was an opportunity to meet the other students on the course from other campuses and across London; to network with people in the industry and take a step back and reflect on the various experiences the programme has provided. This year the Accelerate exhibition was the largest ever - with almost 100 students from across London participating. We were generously hosted in the new ground floor exhibition space at Morris+Company, and were joined by our students, teachers, parents and supporters for an evening of celebration.



Lessons Learned This Year

Increased Resources

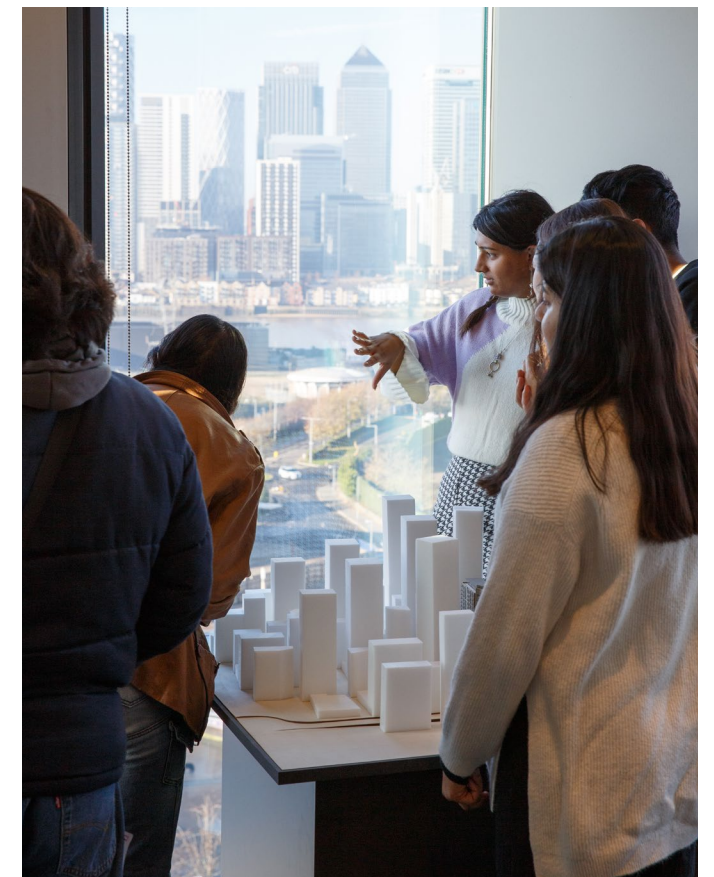
With more students and mentors on board, logistics and organisation inevitably become more complicated. In the coming year we will need to be especially conscious of this and organise resources effectively in order to maintain the quality we aspire to.

Broader Scope of Services

Whilst we were incredibly privileged to have so many architect practices on board, we are keen to develop a broader range of practitioners and thus exposure to other parts of the sector. In the next year we will include a more diverse scope of professions to introduce to our students to provide a more holistic idea of the fields available to them.

Expanding Alternative Career Pathways

A large proportion of our students are eager to pursue non traditional career pathways into the built environment sector. Currently the number of Level 6 (Part 1 equivalent) and Level 7 (Part 2) apprenticeships are limited across the country. Accelerate will invest in trying to expand these initiatives to better cater for our students and those in similar positions.



“It feels like the right programme if you want to support and have an impact on young people's futures, especially the ones who, under normal circumstances, might have been put off from certain paths, and might not have these opportunities otherwise.”

Athina Stylianidi, Architect at Jestico+Whiles, Accelerate 2023 mentor

Highlights and Key Achievements from 2022/23

Three Classes

Accelerate's student cohort continued to grow in size to accommodate almost 100 students compared to 60 last year and 30 each year before that. For the first time Kingston University joined the University of the Arts and University College London in supporting the programme and each provided a base of operations for a class of 30 students.

Accelerate Debates

A second series of Accelerate Debates. This is a spirited, quarterly themed debate, where a panel of guests including architects, community activists, local government planners, academics and others are invited to discuss topics pertinent to the education and practice of the built environment. The debates channel the excitement of grappling with big issues, offering students a taster of key concepts/discourses. This year we were able to expand on the series and included several Accelerate Alumni as part of the panel as well as in the audience.

More Mentors

The expansion of the course allowed us to recruit more guest facilitators and mentors who bring the wealth of their experience, knowledge, pedagogy and advice to the programme. Mentor participation is a two-way relationship. Mentors gain insight into the challenges facing young aspiring architects, designers, planners etc from underrepresented backgrounds. This expanded pool of mentors is helping the programme to widen its reach and influence on London's built environment culture and those operating within it.

Broader range of Workshops and site visits

This year on-site workshops included trips to Brixton Village, The Design District, East India Dock Basin, the English National Ballet Centre, The Barbican, Dalston Curve Garden and a two-day Design & Construct workshop at the HAC church in Hackney. Thanks to our new partnership with Kingston University we were also able to introduce our students to Kew Gardens and the Stirling Prize winning Kingston Town House.

Accelerate Studios

This is another new initiative designed to introduce younger cohorts of students in years 10 and 11 to architecture and professions in the built environment. We have done this with a series of workshops held at the Architectural Association School of Architecture. We also organised creative career sessions in 20 secondary schools across South and East London as well as delivering day-long sessions at the Sir John Soane Museum and coordinating site visits and speakers for secondary school teachers. In the 2022/23 academic year, we reached 750 secondary school students and are keen to expand this next year to ensure that news of the sixth-form Accelerate programme reaches an even wider audience.

Accelerate Alumni

In its second year the Accelerate Alumni Network expanded it's support to graduates with more job offers, work experience and a popular competition to celebrate the impact of the programme. Another Alumni Reunion saw more members in attendance than ever before. These initiatives have allowed us to grow our community of graduates through support, and we hope to continue to expand this part of the programme in the forthcoming year.

This Year's Participants



BASED AT UNIVERSITY OF COLLEGE LONDON

Adiba Anjum Hossain
Frozan Bigzad
Hannan Bouda Harris
Ibrahim Alamin
Inaya Qureshi
Isa Samad
SafwanTazwar
Silvia Rana
Yasemen Ayhan
Yi Xuan Zhao
Ikram Hussein
Abdul Goraya
Paramveer Singh
Anjali Muhilazhagan
Beatrice Akranglyte
Nikola Karczmarek
Zainab Zainul Murshid
Hilda Morteazazadeh
Hasan Syed
Ema Yeasmeen
Pereowei Tobolayefa
Yamen Al Res
Joshua Rodriguera
Abhar Hussain
James MatthewAlfonso
KhataphetKongyou
Pavan Yadlapati
Fartun Ali
Maliha Ibrahim
Jayden Greenaway



BASED AT UNIVERSITY OF THE ARTS LONDON

Tia Richards
Adam Znagui
Ahmad Hussain
Mohammad Hamza Hussain
Tejasvi Sagani
Zanib Naveed
Omar Ikar
Estevao Fernandes
Rene Llowarch
Yesha Panchal
Megan Lam
Samantha Sallery
Safia Cruz Corrodus
Suela Saraci
Nia-Marie Owusu-Allen
Maria Matbor
Ronika Ahuwja
Yoyinsola Baruwa
MaxineLaubscher
Dipti Thadani
Sharon Benson
Saabir Mumin
Daisy Johnson
Aisha Oyedeji
Tishane Legister
Lawrence Parry
Audrey Ricero Salvacion
Sultan El Sakhawy
Sean Uwanoghoro
Priya Dasgupta
Kamarley McLaughlin



BASED AT KINGSTON UNIVERSITY

Fatima Binda
Maya TheepanIhsan
Rusul Ramdhan
Rebekah Otamere Joseph
Kayla Patel
Alice Shevket
Promise Fayose
Kyra Kima
Bartosz Cywinski
Ireoluwatiwa Balogun
Ezrah Price Robinson
Jokanda Alkassem
Austin Marfoldi
Ermir Bela
Sakhawat EL Maamry
Archie Owens
Alfonzo Mancera
Nikola Pankow
Oluwatobi Morenikeji
Anuraga Kodeswaran
Angelica Peinke
Thuy Tien Dinh Thi
Irmak Aksoy
Sara De Vicente
Victoria Kumi
Sahana Muralikumar
Gabriella Manchola
Lydia Fernando
Kacper Garbowski
Peace Sower
Blessing Bakare-Taiwo

“ I really recommend accelerate as it allows you to make new friends that have similar interests to you as well as learning new art skills that you can use in your portfolio and have helpful adults who can guide you through each part of your journey. ”

Gabriella Manchola from Sutton, Accelerate 2023 participant

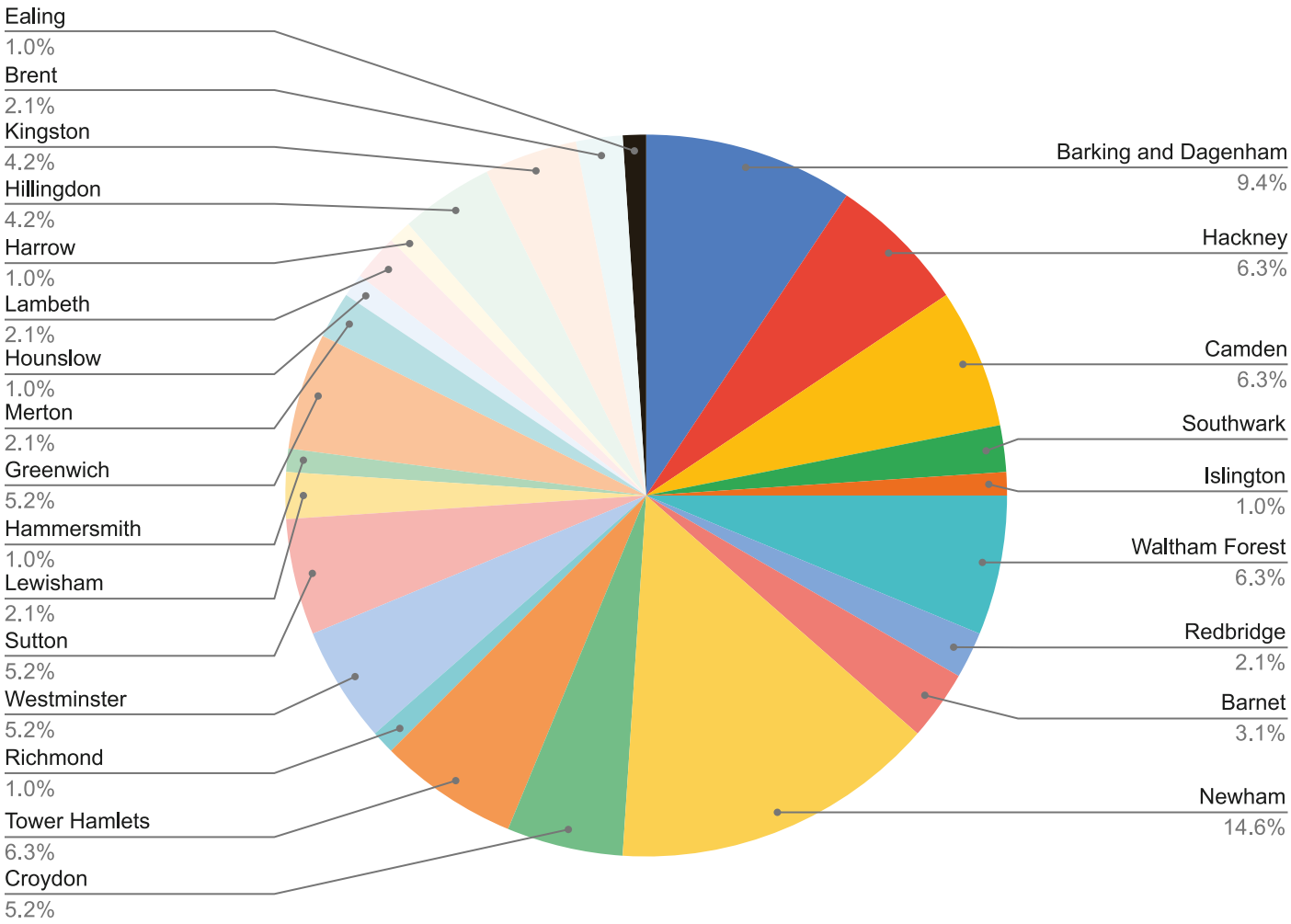
Students

98 students from 25 boroughs

Each year we aim to spread our reach for the recruitment of students as far as possible across London. This year our students came from the following Boroughs:

Barking and Dagenham	9	Barnet	3	Lewisham	2	Hillingdon	4
Hackney	6	Newham	14	Hammersmith	1	Kingston	4
Camden	6	Croydon	5	Greenwich	5	Brent	2
Southwark	2	Tower Hamlets	6	Merton	2	Ealing	1
Islington	1	Richmond	1	Hounslow	1		
Waltham Forest	6	Westminster	5	Lambeth	2		
Redbridge	2	Sutton	5	Harrow	1		

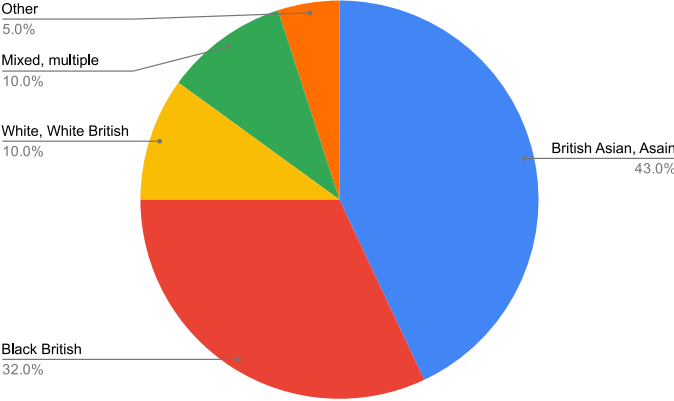
Locations



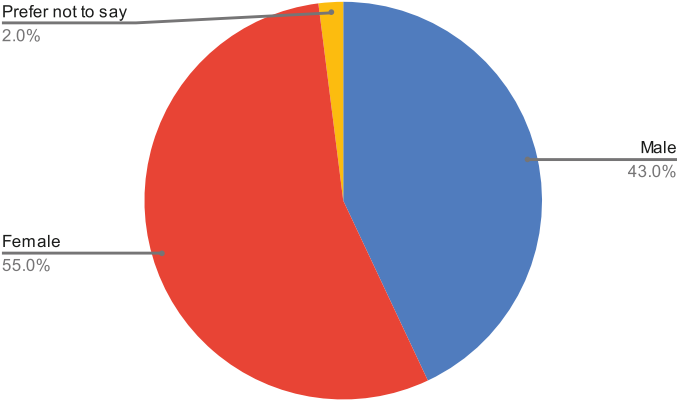
“ The Accelerate course gave me the opportunity to explore and learn about my city. I feel prepared for the academic path I want to take from this experience. ”

Yesha Panchal from Brent, Accelerate 2023 participant

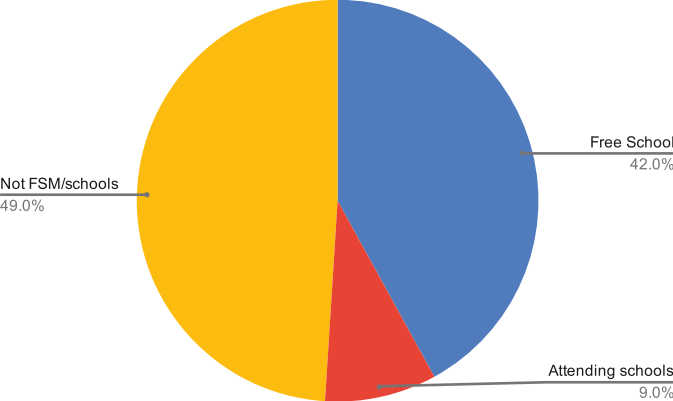
Ethnicity



Gender



Free School Meals



Accelerate 2022/23 enabled three cohorts of sixth-form students (98 in total) to develop the skills required for entry into architecture related courses at university level.

In 2022-23:

- 90% of our students were from ethnic minority background
- 39% of our students were eligible for Free School Meals
- 43% of our students were first in their family to go to University
- 14% of our students lived in social housing
- 100% of our students attend non fee paying schools

Retention

6 students left the programme and 92 students completed the course, our highest retention rate to date.

Student Survey (45 out of 92 replied)

- Do you feel you have a better understanding of how the city is constructed? 96% said yes 4% said no
- Do you feel you are getting insight into working in the built environment sector? 98% said yes 2% said no
- Do you feel you have a better understanding of how the city is constructed? 100% said yes
- Do you feel like you’ve developed new skills during the course? 96% said yes 4% said no
- Would you recommend this course to others? 98% said yes 2% said no

Mentors

At the core of Accelerate is our mentoring programme which allows students to learn directly from a wide range of professionals and their practices across the city. Each of our mentors dedicate their time and effort to creating a welcoming experience which introduces students to the type of work and environment they might encounter in the industry. Each practice is delegated a group of students for 12 hours of mentoring. This element of the course is a key highlight of Accelerate and our students benefit immensely from this experience.

This year we worked with 24 professional practices:

JESTICO+WHILES	WESTON WILLIAMSON	CARMODY GROARKE
LOM	FEILDEN CLEGG BRADLEY STUDIO	HEATHERWICK STUDIO
MACCREANOR LAVINGTON	HAWKINS BROWN	FRAME PROJECTS
MORRIS+COMPANY	GORT SCOTT	STUDIO ONB
NBBJ	AHMM	JAMIE FOBERT
SHEPPARD ROBSON	PERISCOPE	CULLINAN STUDIO
STANTON WILLIAMS	ATKINS	GRIMSHAW
MAKE	BDP	

jestico + whiles

LOM

MACCREANOR
LAVINGTON

MORRIS+COMPANY

nbbj

SHEPPARD ROBSON

STANTON
WILLIAMS

make

WW+P

FeildenCleggBradleyStudios

Hawkins\Brown

GORT SCOTT

ALLFORD
HALL
MONAGHAN
MORRIS

periscope

ATKINS

BDP.

CARMODY GROARKE

Heatherwick
studio

[-

FRAME PROJECTS

● ▽ B

Jamie Fobert
—Architects

CULLINAN
STUDIO

GRIMSHAW

Sponsors

Accelerate is funded entirely by external grants and sponsorship. The generous funding we receive from our supporters allows us to grow and develop the course so we can engage more young Londoners from under-represented backgrounds, work with exciting venues to explore urbanism around the city and test out new approaches to built environment learning.

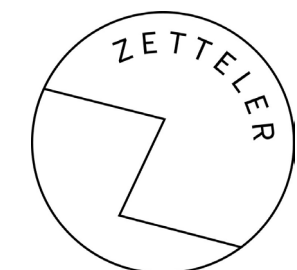
Over more than a decade Accelerate has proven to be an enormously valuable programme for many of our sponsors and we are sincerely grateful for all their support.

BRITISH LAND
UNIVERSITY COLLEGE LONDON
UNIVERSITY OF THE ARTS LONDON
KINGSTON UNIVERSITY
BE FIRST
LENLEASE

LONDON BOROUGH OF BARKING & DAGENHAM
ZETTELER
THE LANDSCAPE INSTITUTE
KNIGHT DRAGON
THE MARCHUS TRUST
THE GEOFF HERRINGTON FOUNDATION



Barking & Dagenham



Landscape
Institute
Inspiring great places



KNIGHT DRAGON

THE MARCHUS TRUST



The Accelerate Team

The course this year was brought together by a fantastic team. Some new to the programme and others who have been a part of it for several years.

Open City Team



Siraaj Mitha
Director of Accelerate



Sarah Phillips
Head of Education
and Empowerment



Siân Evey-Arli
Education Coordinator



Sahiba Chadha
Accelerate Course Advisor/
Architect at Cullinans



Phineas Harper
Chief Executive of
Open City



Luke O'Donovan
Photographer

University College London (UCL) Team



Elliot Nash
Accelerate Course Leader/
Architect at Wright &
Wright Architects



Sana Tabassum
Studying 5th year Diploma
Architecture at Greenwich
University

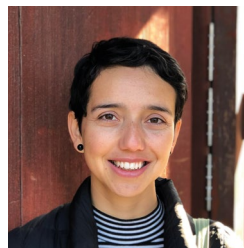


Maia Rollo
Accelerate Course Leader/
Architect at Nimtim Architects



Jeevan Chahal
Architectural Assistant
at JTP Architects

Kingston University Team



Marcela Escobar
Accelerate Course Leader/
Architectural Designer at
van Heyningen and Haward
Architects



Sean Galvin
Teaching Assistant/
Architectural Assistant Atkins

Student Assistants 2022/23

Assistants act as student mentors and ambassadors to support the course tutors and the mentees, sharing skills and advice throughout the year.

Aretha Ahunanya (Accelerate Alumni, studying 3rd year BA Architecture at The Bartlett, UCL)

Alise Andzane (studying 2nd year BA Architecture at Central Saint Martins, UAL)

Ghid Al-Saeedi (studying 3rd year BA Architecture at Kingston University)

Mavy Khalil (studying 3rd year BA Architecture at Kingston University)

Hagi Sivathanan (Accelerate Alumni, studying 3rd year BA Architectural Engineering at The Bartlett, UCL)

Hani Ali (Accelerate Alumni, studying 2nd year BA Architecture at Central Saint Martins, UAL)

“The course gives a unique opportunity to access spaces and practices across the disciplines in the built environment and provides an excellent foundation to higher education studies within a network of like minded students.”

Laura Turner, Architect at Cullinans Studio, Accelerate 2023 mentor

“Accelerate allowed me to explore the built environment in an immersive way by investigating different viewpoints that heightened my creative imagination, allowing me to apply this to my next steps in becoming an architect”

Kayla Patel from Surrey, Accelerate 2023 participant

“Accelerate is improving access to architectural professions that are in desperate need of greater diversity. Mentoring as part of this course means contributing in some way to a more equitable and diverse built environment in the future.”

Rachel Kelly, Architect at Hawkins/Brown, Accelerate 2023 mentor

Closing Statement



Another year of the programme has passed, one which took us on a journey to understand the plethora of layers that culminate to create our constantly evolving experiences of the city.

Accelerate has been supporting students now for 11 years and thanks to our university partners UCL, UAL and now Kingston University, this year the programme took on its largest cohort to date, with almost 100 students. The energy, passion, curiosity and drive we have witnessed from our students has been outstanding and has provided us with a wealth of inspiration and encouragement.

This year our classes engaged with local communities in Brixton, explored the conservatories at Kew Gardens, built their designs at 1:1 scale in a beautiful church in Hackney and went on a protest march with placards around Kings Cross. In every instance our students this year have thoroughly applied themselves, and by doing so have shown at an early stage in their career a thirst for knowledge and an eagerness to participate.

Accelerate continues to explore exciting new territory next year with the expansion of Accelerate Studios and our Alumni programme, book ending the main course. We hope this will broaden our community and allow us to increase our support to young people from under-represented backgrounds, throughout their journey.

I would like to express my gratitude to all our sponsors, mentor practices, volunteers, guests and of course our students and staff, for their energy, organisation and determination throughout the year. It is because of your dedication that Accelerate is one of the UK's leading outreach programmes and continues to provide outstanding levels of support.

Sirraaj Mitha, Director of Accelerate



Accelerate

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