

Access and participation statement

Introduction

Founded in Paris in 1895, Le Cordon Bleu is considered today the largest network of culinary and hospitality schools in the world with more than 35 institutes in 20 countries and 20,000 students of over 100 nationalities trained every year.

Le Cordon Bleu officially opened its doors as a culinary school in Paris in 1895. The first Cordon Bleu class was held in January 1896 on rue St Honoré near the Palais Royal. In 1931, former student Dione Lucas helped to open a school under the Le Cordon Bleu name in London. The London school then re-opened after the war at 31 Marylebone Lane. As the reputation grew, the London school relocated to a larger building at 114 Marylebone Lane in 1968. For over a century, Le Cordon Bleu has become a leading authority on culinary techniques, training and education. In January 2012, the school relocated to brand new premises at 15 Bloomsbury Square near the British Museum. The new school premises feature professional modern kitchens and classroom facilities offering students the latest and most innovative opportunities in culinary education.

The following statement has been prepared in response to the stated “national priorities” for Higher Education in the following areas:

- **Access:** To increase the entry rates of students from underrepresented groups to higher education;
- **Success:** To improve the non-continuation rates of students from underrepresented groups; and
- **Progression:** To improve the rates of progression of students from underrepresented groups.

It also seeks to outline Le Cordon Bleu’s ambitions and strategy in this area and explain some of the specific actions in place to support students.

Access

Le Cordon Bleu attracts a wide variety of students from different social, religious, ethnic and economic backgrounds. In assessing the suitability of a candidate, the primary focus is on the vocational aspirations of the student. Students who may have been excluded from higher education due to socioeconomic factors have equal opportunity to be accepted on the courses and are not disadvantaged by lack of academic qualifications held to date.

Le Cordon Bleu provides a vocational route into the culinary and hospitality industries which concentrates on teaching the practical skills which are desired by hospitality employers. The core provision is based in the French classical tradition, and delivered by a team of highly experienced teachers who have each had substantial experience in the hospitality industry.

Le Cordon Bleu runs a scholarship scheme which targets UK residents who would not ordinarily be able to attend Le Cordon Bleu. The scholarship covers both the course fees and accommodation for a Le Cordon Bleu diploma. On average, the full-scholarship packages are worth over £40,000.

The current scholarship offers the successful applicant a Grand Diplôme® course with internship and mentorship from key industry figures. Including accommodation, the whole package being worth more than £65,000.

The most recent scholarship awarded was in 2022, of a place on the Diploma in Wine, Gastronomy and Management with two bespoke internships following. We are currently working on a scholarship package to be offered in 2024.

The 2019 scholarship competition awarded one full scholarship for a Diplôme de Pâtisserie with Culinary Management course worth in excess of £40,000.

In 2018, the scholarship scheme awarded one full scholarship for a Grand Diplôme® course, worth over £45,000 and 15 bursaries of up to £1,500 each.

The 2017 competition awarded one full and two part-scholarships at a total value in excess of £70,000.

The majority of the student body is female (approximately 70%) which is opposite to the demographic seen in the industry and reflects a gradual change which is seeing more women entering culinary careers. Le Cordon Bleu was founded by Marthe Distel in 1895 specifically for training women in culinary arts, noted alumni have included Mary Berry, Julia Child and Prue Leith. Recent years have seen more male students coming to study at Le Cordon Bleu and enter a variety of roles in the culinary and hospitality sector.

Students who have medical conditions, or any learning difficulty which may affect their ability to successfully complete the course are assessed, and reasonable adjustment is made where practicable.

The average age of Le Cordon Bleu students is 28 (in 2023), and some have successfully completed courses well into their 60's and 70's. Many students have already completed a university degree and are choosing to continue their higher education by acquiring vocational skills related to a career ambition or a personal goal. A significant proportion of students are established professionals who intend to change career.

In January 2024:

- 15% have only completed secondary education to GSCE level or equivalent.
- 24% applied having completed "A" Levels, Baccalaureate or equivalent further education.
- 61% of students have a Level 6 qualification or higher on entry.
- 33% intend to start their career in the hospitality sector.
- 19% plan to develop their current hospitality career.
- 17% intend to change career from another sector.
- 12% aspire to set up their own business.

[Le Cordon Bleu entry survey January 2024 – 42 responses (42.4% response)]

Success

Le Cordon Bleu courses are recognised by chefs and hospitality professionals in the UK and internationally. This allows students who have attained their qualification to find employment in many locations across the world. Le Cordon Bleu Grand Diplôme®, Diplôme de Pâtisserie and Diplôme de Cuisine courses have been accepted as suitable for Career and Personal Development Loan funding in the UK. These courses have also been recognised by the Swedish Education Board for loan funding. No academic or previous work experience is required as the course is designed on the basis that all students start from first principles, with no knowledge of working in a professional kitchen.

Students receive a large amount of contact time during their courses, which allows the teaching staff to be responsive to the needs of students, this is reflected in student completion rates for higher education courses of 93% *[All level 4 courses successful completions 2023]*.

Progression

The courses offered by Le Cordon Bleu are typically shorter and more intense than many traditional higher education courses, allowing students to manage their study around short career breaks, or other activities. This allows students to graduate in less time than those on longer programmes, and as a result reduces the overall costs for the students. Additionally, options exist to take breaks during the course which allows students from diverse socioeconomic backgrounds to build a study pattern according to their economic and personal circumstances, without affecting their academic progression.

On completion, many graduates secure an entry level culinary position at a high-level establishment, and progress quickly to a role with more responsibility:

- 85% go on to work and/or study 15 months after the course
- 80% are using what they learnt during their studies in their current work
- 90% of graduates find their current work meaningful
- 85% feel their current work fits with their future plans.
- 71% feel the course has developed the knowledge and skills they think they will need for their future.
- 79% feel the teaching staff supported their learning well.

[Graduate Outcomes Survey, for students graduating 2020-21].

Le Cordon Bleu alumni continue to have successful careers in hotels, restaurants and in establishing their own businesses, some progressing to become industry leaders. Le Cordon Bleu organises a career fair once a term for students to meet prospective employers covering a diverse range of hospitality sectors, including hotels, fine dining, restaurant groups, and bakeries. The continued relevance of the courses to the hospitality sector is assessed by an Industry Advisory Group comprising current hospitality employers.

Ambitions and Strategy

Teachers are continually assessed and supported to take part in professional development courses, both for technical and teaching skills. The Institute has increased investment in professional development in, to ensure that the teaching team remains up to date with the changing demands of the industry.

The Institute started its Internship Programme in 2016, which prepares students for internships. The participation amongst the student body has steadily increased term-on-term: in March 2024 103 students were participating in the various stages of the Programme offering valuable learning experience in a commercial environment to prepare students for their careers.

In 2020, the institute started a partnership with HOSCO for connecting with alumni body which has a growing membership, currently standing at around 840.

The approach to access and participation at Le Cordon Bleu has been developed in partnership with the student body over many years. Students have been influential, through the Student Representative Group, in effecting positive changes to the learning environment, including during the design stage of the current building in Bloomsbury Square. Students continue to provide valuable feedback which helps Le Cordon Bleu continually enhance its provision for future generations.

Activities & Support for Students

Le Cordon Bleu students receive a high concentration of contact time, which may be as much as 200 hours in a three-month term. This allows the teaching team to be responsive to the needs of students. All students are able to access one-to-one tutorial sessions to discuss progress and personal goals.

Practical sessions are taught in small class sizes of up to 16 students, each with personal workstations and industry standard equipment. The practical learning environment has been designed to be student centred, whilst replicating as far as possible the working environment of professional kitchens. Learning opportunities are provided which enable students from a wide variety of backgrounds to master complex skills which are valued by employers.

The Institute provides an extensive range of learning facilities for students such as an on-site library, and online access to technical material and academic journals.

Regular demonstrations are hosted from external chefs in a wide range of specialisms, such as Japanese or Mexican Cuisine, or from producers of high quality ingredients which expose students to a great variety of culinary influences.

Students can assist in some of these demonstrations to gain experience relevant to their future careers.

The Institute has developed a student buddy scheme, whereby returning students are invited to help new students settle in during their first term. Many students may be away from home, or in the UK for the first time; those who have taken part in this scheme have reported that it has been a positive and helpful experience.

Students are supported to enable career progression into the hospitality industry, or to enhance an already established career. Above all, a level of personal discipline is instilled which prepares students for the challenges of the industry and to fulfil their ambitions.

Version: 5.0

Printed: 17/04/2024

Date approved: 12/04/2024

Next review: 12/04/2025