

South Thames Colleges Group

South Thames Colleges Group Higher Education (HE) Strategy 2020 -2023

Introduction:

South Thames Colleges' Group **comprises** of four College centres:

- Carshalton College
- Kingston College
- Merton College
- South Thames College

The Group is currently rated as TEF level Bronze.

Vision:

South Thames Colleges Group will be an exceptional Further and Higher Education provider, leading our sector in London and beyond.

We will do this by excelling at what we do every day: delivering great outcomes for young people and adults of all backgrounds and abilities to make sure their life chances are improved. This will require exemplary teaching, learning and support, close partnership across the region and very well managed resources with sustainable finances.

We will make sure that people from all walks of life and all ability levels are welcome here and can thrive. We expect them all to commit to their learning, to achieve and then progress to the future of their choice. We will provide great resources, teaching and support to help them to do so.

We will act as an effective partner, working with our stakeholders across South London to help them flourish, developing their work and expanding their businesses with us alongside them. We will engage with opportunities to grow, nationally, regionally and in our local neighbourhoods.

Context of the Group's Higher Education

Higher education teaching and learning has been a consistent element of the Group's College portfolios for many years. Its current portfolio maintains collaborative partnerships with a number of university partners and Edexcel /Pearson. These arrangements encompass some seventy individual degree and sub-degree programmes and this represents a mixed HE economy.

The total volume of HE student numbers has dipped in the past three years, partly as a result of changes in the relationship with some of the Group's partner universities, and partly due to the failure to recruit students to target in a fiercely competitive market.

Internal progression from FE to HE provides many learners with the opportunity to study in a safe, comfortable, and familiar learning environment near to home. They will benefit from studying as part of smaller teaching groups having more direct contact with lecturers, in most cases a larger number of contact hours, and the support of a personal tutor as well as receiving good value for money. Students progressing onto HE Courses provide inspiration to FE learners and help raise awareness of progression opportunities in HE.

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The planning, delivery, and management of HE courses lies within each of the Colleges and their subject based Schools. The Group's deliberative committee structure includes the Higher Education Academic Board (HEAB) which has a cross Group strategic function. The Group HEAB provides the conduit to the College's Group Leadership Team (GLT) and to the Governors' Quality Learning Standards Committee for the consideration of HE learning and teaching matters [and from there to the full Board of Governors]. The Group Higher Education Operations Group (HEOG) coordinates service support such as admissions, marketing, student supports services and reports to the HEAB (see appendix one).

The College Group's Higher Education strategic aims and how these will be achieved:

1. Review all curriculum across the Group to ensure that it is responsive and engaging

- 1.1. In line with the College Group Curriculum Review (July 2019) review all current HE provision to identify gaps in provision, duplication of provision and low recruiting courses.
- 1.2. Develop a Curriculum Map that outlines progression from level 3 to HE in all curriculum areas and across the Group which provides a visual tool for progression pathways.
- 1.3. Taking into account local needs, Labour Market Intelligence and growth opportunities, propose new areas of development for HE.
- 1.4. Develop higher/degree apprenticeships where appropriate.
- 1.5. Be aware of opportunities for commercial delivery within the HE portfolio.
- 1.6. Develop specialist and niche areas of curriculum where appropriate.
- 1.7. Investigate opportunities for alternative delivery methods including blended and distance learning and accelerated programmes of study as well as exploring additional start dates other than September.

2. Improving Student Engagement across all provision

- 2.1. Implementation of a new Student Engagement Policy across the College Group.
- 2.2. Greater involvement of HE students in Student Voice opportunities.
- 2.3. Higher NSS Response rates to show an increase in student participation.
- 2.4. HE Governance to champion HE student voice.

3. To continue to develop resources and facilities to support a high quality HE student experience (HE ness)

- 3.1. Recognise what we do well in line with the USP of college-based HE: the small group sizes; the higher contact hours; the effective Personal Tutor model and the value for money.
- 3.2. Strive to protect and develop HE rooms and spaces within the Estates Strategy.
- 3.3. Develop an online student hub for all HE students.
- 3.4. Develop the awareness of, and accessibility for all HE students to support services, including Student Services and Additional Learning Support.
- 3.5. Improve our partnership with students through the HE Student Engagement Policy.

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4. To grow HE student numbers through internal progression and widening participation

- 4.1. Progression pathways to be promoted to students from level 3 with the development of a Curriculum Map (see 1.2).
- 4.2. Recognise the importance of Access to Higher Education provision and build links between that and the Group's own HE.
- 4.3. Strive towards meeting the aims set out in the Access and Participation Plan.
- 4.4. Continue memberships of AimHigher South West London and Linking London to develop progression opportunities within the Group.

5. Review all University Partnerships

- 5.1. Maintain and refresh for mutual benefit the successful partnerships with all the Group's university partners, including an exploration of how the partnerships can contribute to the College Group's growth and development even more effectively, and strategically.
- 5.2. Whilst the Group will not actively pursue extension of new partnership arrangements, opportunities will not be ignored to develop niche and specialist opportunities with other HEIs.

6. Improve student outcomes

- 6.1. Ensure that all higher education leavers have the skills and qualities to allow them to progress into appropriate employment or further study.
- 6.2. Recognise positive destinations for students and use the Graduate Outcomes data to celebrate these outcomes.
- 6.3. Promote opportunities for students already in employment to learn how to progress their careers further.

7. Increase Scholarship opportunities amongst staff who teach on HE courses

- 7.1. Develop a Scholarship Strategy.
- 7.2. Encourage staff to engage in scholarship activities.
- 7.3. Provide a platform for staff to record their scholarship.
- 7.4. Celebrate staff achievements towards scholarship at Star Awards.

8. Achieve TEF Silver award

- 8.1. Continue to offer a high-quality student experience.
- 8.2. Continue to improve TEF metrics.

9. Review the marketing strategies for all HE provision

- 9.1. Offer programmes as a package (Access + HE course) where appropriate.
- 9.2. Support programme teams in refreshing their course profiles online ensuring CMA compliancy is maintained.
- 9.3. Develop Course literature and leaflets/postcards promoting individual courses.
- 9.4. Create a Group Branding that becomes widely recognised Investigate the benefits of becoming a university centre.
- 9.5. Ensure that we know our market and use this to promote our provision.

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Responsibilities

- The Group Leadership Team and Governors are responsible for setting and ensuring the implementation of the strategy.
- The Assistant Principal – HE and Business Development is responsible for achieving the aims of the strategy.
- The Head of Higher Education and Heads of Curriculum are responsible for implementing the strategy.
- The Curriculum staff, Student Support staff and learners are all responsible for delivering the aims of the strategy.

Monitoring and Review

- The Higher Education Matrix Group will monitor progress bi-annually.

Reporting Structure for Higher Education

