

Higher Education Strategy

Author	Curriculum Manager Higher Education
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Person Responsible	Assistant Principal Sport, Care and Computing
Frequency of Review*	36 months

** Document will be reviewed more frequently if legal changes or good practice require*

Review History:		
Date	Reviewed by	Reason for review
31.12.09	DCQHR	Update to comply with the HEFCE request (2009/13).
Jan 2011	Compliance & Policy Manager	Title change of Person Responsible
21.03.13	APD/HE Manager	Review within timescale agreed
21.02.14	D HE	Review as following appointment of HE Development Manager
01.04.17	AP SCC (HE)	Review and Update; appointment of Higher Education Officer

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1. The College and Higher Education in Context

- 1.1 North Kent College (“the College”) is situated on two main sites in Dartford and Gravesham, with a third specialist maritime facility on the bank of the River Thames. In collaboration with business partners, the College has employer-led facilities - The Learning Shop at Bluewater and Suscon in Dartford.
- 1.2 There is considerable economic development underway for the geographical areas served by the College, as part of the Thames Gateway. Kent Thameside has just under 6,000 businesses, the great majority of which employ four or less people, while at the other end of the range around one hundred employers employ over one hundred people each. The dominant employment sectors are distribution, hotels and catering; public administration, education and health; manufacturing; and financial services. The success of Kent Thameside will be critical to the overall success of the Thames Gateway. Bluewater, a 150,000 sq m shopping centre providing extensive retail and leisure facilities, provides over 6,000 jobs. Ebbsfleet International Station provides a high-speed European rail link and high speed commuter service to London. Crossways is the largest mixed use business and distribution park on the M25 and ProLogis is developing The Bridge – a 264 acre mixed use site with new homes, an Innovation Centre, and industrial, office and distribution space. The regeneration sites of Kent Thameside are planned to further deliver more housing and commercial sites for new jobs over the next twenty years.
- 1.3 In partnership with Dartford Borough Council, Kent Thameside Regeneration Partnership and key construction employers, the College has a bespoke SusCon training facility based at The Bridge development delivering sustainable construction.
- 1.4 There are approximately 5,000 students enrolled at the College, of whom 3,000 are full-time.
- 1.5 There were 199 full time and 16 part time Higher Education (“HE”) HEFCE-funded students at the College in 2016/17. With its higher education partner the University of Greenwich, the College has developed Foundation Degrees (“FDs”) in Sports Studies, Photography, Professional Writing and Early Years Education and BA in Photography. The College will continue to develop further higher level qualifications, in conjunction with the University of Greenwich, Pearson (Edexcel) and other partners as appropriate.
- 1.6 Non-prescribed provision at the College includes Pearson (Edexcel) Higher National Certificate and Diploma (HNC/D) in Travel and Tourism, Performing Arts, Computing & Systems Development, Creative Media and Music.

- 1.7 From September 2012, QAA superseded the Academic Infrastructure with the Quality Code. This sets out the expectations that all providers of UK Higher Education need to be aware of and meet. It consists of three sections; Part A setting and maintaining threshold academic standards; Part B assuring and enhancing academic quality; and part C information about HE provision. The QAA Higher Education Review (HER) replaced the former Review of College Higher Education (RCHE).
- 1.8 In October 2014, the Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) carried out a successful Higher Education Review (HER) of the College's HE provision. The College was found to be meeting UK expectations in all of the four judgment categories: Maintenance of academic standards, quality of student learning opportunities, quality of information about learning opportunities and enhancement of student learning opportunities. An action plan was generated from this review which is monitored by the HE Officer Manager through regular meetings with the Assistant Principal for Sport, Care, Computing and Higher Education.
- 1.9 In 2015/16 the Student Number Control ("SNC") was removed from central funding meaning that Higher Education Institutes (HEI's) are now able to recruit as many students as they like. This has created a free and competitive market.

2. Introduction and Background

- 2.1. The Governors and College as a whole are committed to delivering the overall College vision which is:

"Our College will be consistently recognised as a national leading vocational centre dedicated to delivering outstanding teaching and learning. Our courses will continue to reflect local and regional industry needs and be in fields where we have a proven track record. Our students, as a result, will be seen as the first choice by employers".
- 2.2. The HE Strategy links to and is informed by, the College's Strategic Improvement Planning processes.
- 2.3. The College ethos is to develop HE programmes which:
 - 2.3.1. are based on our delivery strengths as a Further Education College.
 - 2.3.2. have the ability to recruit locally.

Over 90% of current students are recruited from within North West Kent and South East London;
 - 2.3.3. provide a route into Higher Education that, for some, would not have been possible noting the ability for students to live and/or work and to attend a higher education programme whilst living

locally with specific targeting of non-traditional HE students using HEFEC POLAR3 data with emphasis on Quintile 1 & 2 wards within the College catchment areas;

2.3.4. are complementary to the work of local Higher Education Institutions (HEIs).

The College continues to work with the University of Greenwich to ensure the curriculum offer aligns with University programmes; and

2.3.5. allow progression for the College's own Further Education students

2.4. This Strategy will be operational over the same period as the College Strategic Plan (currently three years) and will be subject to review at the time of the development of the next College Strategic Plan.

2.5. Currently the College receives both direct and indirect funding for its Higher Education provision from the Higher Education Funding Council for England ("HEFCE"). Key HE partners are the University of Greenwich and Pearson (Edexcel). This does not preclude the formation of other links to support and develop HE provision.

2.6. North Kent College has been an Associate College of the University of Greenwich since 1991 and a Partner College from 2002.

2.7. A dedicated HE Study Area has been developed within M Block and is being used by Higher Education and Access to Higher Education students and is the base for the Higher Education Officer, enabling a single point of support for most higher education students in the College.

2.8. Current agreements with University of Greenwich enable NKC to access and be supported by the HEI Quality Assurance arrangements, policies and procedures.

3. Commitments

The College will:

3.1. develop its role in the regional economy of Kent and Medway and the surrounding London boroughs by providing a dynamic HE offer to meet local needs and priorities;

3.2. work in partnership in the development of its curriculum offer. This will include working with appropriate awarding and validating bodies to maintain, enhance and further develop the curriculum range;

3.3. review and improve its provision in terms of recruitment, retention, achievement and progression routes into HE and from relevant HE programmes to higher level study at other HEIs;

- 3.4. seek and respond to student views in the review and further development of its HE provision;
- 3.5. resource its HE provision according to the needs of its students and plan its overall strategy in order to optimise available funding. This will include supporting students to access any necessary resources to support individual learning needs and in the provision of resources specific to HE courses;
- 3.6. ensure that University of Greenwich students are encouraged to access relevant University resources as needed;
- 3.7. ensure that staff teaching on HE courses are appropriately qualified and experienced, and undertake relevant continuous personal development (“CPD”) related to their HE teaching;
- 3.8. develop future HE provision in new curriculum areas that will meet the needs of the local community and economy; and
- 3.9. provide high quality teaching spaces and other suitable accommodation for higher education students.

4. Aims and Priorities

The College will work in partnership with awarding and validating bodies such as the University of Greenwich, (Pearson) Edexcel and other agencies, organisations and institutions to:

- 4.1. meet the requirements of the Awarding Body and Academic Infrastructure in ensuring high academic standards;
- 4.2. provide an appropriate and flexible HE curriculum;
- 4.3. ensure that the HE provision delivered by the College is appropriate, and tailored to, the skills needs of the regional economy;
- 4.4. widen participation, provide equality of opportunity and improve progression opportunities to HE to support lifelong learning according to the College mission;
- 4.5. actively promote equal opportunities to address the needs and rights of all, to be treated with respect and dignity, in an environment in which a diversity of backgrounds and experiences is valued;
- 4.6. ensure that no prospective or existing student receives less favourable treatment on any grounds, including age, race, colour, nationality, ethnic origins, creed, disability, HIV status, sexual orientation, gender, marital or parental status, political belief or social or economic class;

- 4.7. maintain excellent information, advice and guidance systems to inform and guide students, employers and others about the range and nature of HE opportunities available;
- 4.8. provide part-time and flexible HE provision, including CPD, bridging and a range of short courses, specifically to raise the level of under-represented learners;
- 4.9. work with agencies and partners to achieve wider participation and improve progression to HE provision;
- 4.10. maintain a critical overview of the quality of the HE Provision by subject area, qualification and course, as required by, and in conjunction with the appropriate Awarding Body, utilising relevant quality assurance processes and systems;
- 4.11. constructively participate in external oversight of HE provision from the External Examiners or External Verifiers, the Quality Assurance Agency ("QAA"), Higher Education Funding Council for England ("HEFCE"), Ofsted and other relevant scrutineers;
- 4.12. ensure that the student voice is heard in the management and development of HE provision, and that students are appropriately supported throughout their journey, from initial enquiry to either internal and external progression;
- 4.13. enhance students' learning opportunities by embracing new learning technologies and managed learning environments;
- 4.14. invest in high quality resources and accommodation and optimise the capital and recurrent funding available for the College's resourcing of its HE provision;
- 4.15. maintain an effective staff recruitment and development programme, designed to ensure a sufficiency of staff (both curriculum and support) for the effective delivery of HE provision and associated support services; and
- 4.16. develop distinctive teaching and learning for higher education through supported experiments and staff development events including support of the Association of Colleges (AoC) Scholarship in College Higher Education Project (2015-2018).

5. Management

North Kent College will maintain formal systems to assure the appropriateness, relevance and quality of the HE provision, to include:

- 5.1. Membership of, and participation in, external partnership bodies including:

- 5.1.1. the University of Greenwich Partner College Network;
- 5.1.2. active membership of Kent Further Education Colleges network (KFE);
- 5.2. overall responsibility for the management and development of the HE curriculum at Senior Leadership Team level (Assistant Principal, Sport, Care and Computing);
- 5.3. joint responsibility of the Assistant Principal, Sport, Care and Computing and the Higher Education Officer to manage overall quality assurance systems specifically relating to HE;
- 5.4. responsibility of Assistant Principals and Curriculum Managers working with the Higher Education Officer to manage, resource and develop, in line with the overall specific plan, HE programmes and provision within their curriculum areas;
- 5.5. responsibility of Senior and Middle Managers in ensuring compliance with College policies, including Equality and Diversity;
- 5.6. the HE Forum which will meet at least termly, chaired by the Assistant Principal, Sport, Care and Computing and charged with reviewing and enhancing HE provision;
- 5.7. programme committees covering individual programmes or suites of closely related programmes, will meet regularly (at least twice per academic year) to consider the organisation, performance and appropriateness of the qualification. These will include the participation of student representatives;
- 5.8. regular student input by means of student surveys, by a 'student voice' focus group for specific topics and through the HE Student Voice chaired by the Higher Education Officer
- 5.9. a "listening culture" in its complaints procedure relating to any concerns about the quality of provision or teaching, learning or support services at the College, or at the partnership interface, that will be reviewed annually at the HE Forum;
- 5.10. annual monitoring of student progression and completion data utilising College and University data, as appropriate.
- 5.11. preparation for HEFCE / QAA Annual Provider Review ("APR") processes as appropriate;
- 5.12. Co-ordination of quality and curriculum development across the College's HE provision to ensure successful validation and revalidation as well as compliance with HEI and College quality processes, including QAA review;

- 5.13. central monitoring of all quality assurance processes using a variety of sources including External Examiners reports, Learner Voice meetings, National Student Survey (“NSS”) data, Destination of Leavers from Higher Education (“DLHE”); ILR returns and Annual Provider Review feedback;
- 5.14. Timely completion of Annual Institutional Report (AIR) for University of Greenwich encompassing the monitoring of and support for Course Reviews and External Moderation processes.

6. Assessment and Management of High-Level Risks

- 6.1. The College Management Team updates the College Risk Register and Risk Reduction Plan on a termly basis and this is presented to, and agreed by, Governors.

7. Planned Changes and Developments

7.1. Future Planning

- 7.1.1. To ensure a relevant and demand-led Higher Education provision is offered at the College with a flexible and responsive mix of full-time, part-time and apprenticeship work.
- 7.1.2. To explore and develop a wider range of Higher Education partnerships.
- 7.1.3. To ensure the College is up to date with developments in the Higher Education and related sectors, to enable curriculum planning and development to meet government, regional and College priorities
- 7.1.4. To facilitate a greater range of delivery options for existing and new provision, including distance and blended learning and part-time HEFCE funded provision.
- 7.1.5. To increase the progression of further education students at the College to our Higher Education provision.
- 7.1.6. develop specific marketing campaigns to target non-traditional HE students using HEFEC POLAR 3 (“Participation of Local Areas”) data with emphasis on Quintile 1 & 2 wards within the College catchment areas;
- 7.1.7. review of publicity materials and website ensuring that information is accurate and compliant with consumer protection law as set out by the Competition & Markets Authority;
- 7.1.8. Meet our additional responsibilities for reporting to the Higher education statistics agency, HEFCE returns, Key Information Set

("KIS") data, Higher Education Statistics Agency ("HESA"), Destination of Leavers from Higher Education (DLHE) and liaison with UCAS and the Student Finance England.

7.2. Accommodation

7.2.1. Continue to invest in study accommodation for Higher Education Students within the Higher Education Student Centre. This will enable the Higher Education students at the College to study, relax and receive support in a distinctive environment that matches their aspirations..

7.3. Review and Revalidation of existing University programmes.

7.3.1. Currently validated programmes that need to be re-validated in 2017/18

- FdA Photography

7.4. Staff Development

7.4.1. To develop action research projects on teaching Higher Education in a further education setting, to enhance the learning experience of students.

7.4.2. To support staff where possible in undertaking development activities and postgraduate training in support of scholarly activity and research; and

7.4.3. To support the Association of Colleges (AoC) Scholarship in College Higher Education Project (2015-2018).

7.5. Student Voice

7.5.1. In collaboration with the University, to recruit and train Higher Education Ambassadors from our own higher education student groups to support progression to HE provision in the College and more widely;

7.5.2. To ensure that the feedback from College student surveys, National Student Surveys ("NSS") and student voice meetings are considered within programme review and at Higher Education meetings;

7.6. Summative Review

7.6.1. To continue work on actions from the QAA Higher Education Review, in respect of published recommendations.

References

The QAA UK Quality Code for Higher Education:

<http://www.qaa.ac.uk/AssuringStandardsAndQuality/quality-code/Pages/default.aspx>

North Kent College's Higher Education Review:

<http://www.qaa.ac.uk/reviewsandreports/provider?UKPRN=10004721#.WbfSNmcktes>

Higher Education Consumer Law:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/higher-education-consumer-law-advice-for-providers>

HEFCE Quality Assurance Process (Annual Provider Review):

<http://www.hefce.ac.uk/reg/of/operaterfhe/>