

South Thames Colleges Group Strategic Plan 2021–24

GROWING GREAT FUTURES



MISSION

To achieve the ambitions of more students and partners than ever before.

VISION

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

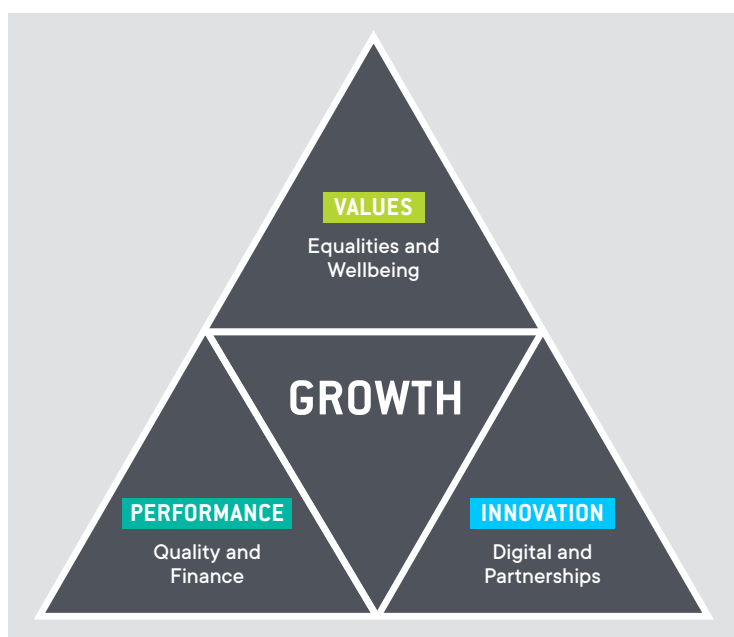
This will mean:

- Excelling in our curriculum, securing great outcomes for our students
- Growing our provision, attracting new students and developing new pathways to success
- Upholding the fundamental values of our community, especially equalities and wellbeing
- Transforming our teaching, learning and services through digital innovation
- Establishing and sustaining effective partnerships with employers and schools across the region
- Managing resources well so that we are financially robust to invest in our buildings and staff

OUR STRATEGIC PLAN

This strategic plan sets the Group on an ambitious path as it helps to lead its communities through the recovery following the pandemic and building on the substantial success enjoyed by the Group since merger. It sets out to combine its existing strengths in both curriculum quality and financial management with a bold plan to grow and innovate while remaining true to its fundamental beliefs.

The core of our strategy will be:



OUR STRATEGIC APPROACH

This strategic plan restates the core purpose of the Group and directs all of our organisational capital towards growth and development, doing so in service of our communities and making sure that our regional roots stay strong throughout the process of transformation.

We aim to grow this organisation in order to ensure that more individuals and partners benefit because of our involvement.

Many of the innovations set out here are designed to deliver our mission more widely and in new ways. This includes our ambition for comprehensive digital transformation of our curriculum and services and the bold expansion of our partnership activity, seeking more integration with more employers and schools. In setting out actively to broaden and grow this Group of Colleges, we will remain true to our fundamental values.

These values span many influences and expectations from within and beyond the Group and are captured here, updated to reflect our new priorities. At South Thames Colleges Group, we

- **Aspire** to excellent outcomes for everyone, ensuring our students succeed and progress to great futures, improving our work continuously through reflection and mutual support
- **Innovate** to develop and expand the Group, with an active focus on new ways of working, digital transformation and meaningful partnerships
- **Make equality happen**, equalising outcomes, raising diverse talent through our work and including everyone from all our communities
- **Care** about the wellbeing of our staff and students, building resilience in a challenging world, safeguarding the vulnerable and promoting happiness

To secure these values in practice, we have committed to a curriculum which will:

- Secure equal **access** for students from all backgrounds
- Ensure structured and ambitious **learning** towards successful attainment of meaningful qualifications
- Develop **capable** people, able to adapt, progress and continue to learn into the future
- Sustain a line of sight on **employment** and its requisite skills across a broad range of vocations

And we wholeheartedly embrace British Values, committing the Group to:

- Democracy
- The rule of law
- Individual liberty
- Mutual respect and tolerance of different faiths and beliefs



GROWTH

This is the main ambition of this strategic plan: to see the Group end its ten years of gradual decline and add new student numbers, develop new courses and establish new delivery models.

The leadership of this key strategic ambition will focus on enhancing mindsets and cultures within the Group in order to:

- Seek and exploit opportunity
- Extend networks, partnerships and recruitment paths
- Take an active approach to risk
- Innovate successfully and share best practice
- Deliver stretching growth targets

STRATEGIC AMBITION	LEAD	TARGETS	ORGANISATIONAL RESPONSIBILITY	REPORTING TO	RISK REGISTER?
Growth	Group Principal/ CEO	By November 2021, develop a new curriculum strategy to set how the Group is responsive to demands of key regional stakeholders, is linked to the available funding streams and delivers the targets below	Curriculum leaders	Corporation termly	Yes
Young People (16-18 year-olds) growth	Principal, Kingston College	5000 16-18 year-old eligible funded students (including High Needs Students) enrolled on programmes across the Group which respond to the relevant demands and opportunities identified in the curriculum development strategy	Vice-Principal, Kingston College and Group Lead on Young People (16-18 year-olds) provision; Vice-Principal, Carshalton College and Merton College and Group Lead on Inclusive Learning provision	Corporation termly	Yes
Adult growth	Principal, South Thames College	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • From 2021/22 utilise the full GLA funding allocation in accordance with the curriculum strategy and grow adult provision where demand and additional funding permit • Determine and deliver a strategy in relation to ESFA AEB funding • Reduce the level of sub-contracting in accordance with the Group annual sub-contracting strategy • Set a strategy in relation to key areas of adult provision such as ESOL, Access and other significant provision funded primarily by fees and/or Adult Learning Loans, delivering on these identified demands and opportunities 	Vice-Principal, South Thames College and Group Lead on Adult Provision	Corporation termly	Yes



STRATEGIC AMBITION	LEAD	TARGETS	ORGANISATIONAL RESPONSIBILITY	REPORTING TO	RISK REGISTER?
High Needs Students (HNS) growth	Principal, Carshalton College and Merton College	To set out a HNS growth and delivery plan consistent with the curriculum strategy that identifies anticipated demand over the next 3 years by College and by discreet or vocational provision	Vice-Principal, Carshalton College and Merton College and Group Lead on Inclusive Learning provision	Corporation termly	No
Higher Education (HE) growth	Principal, South Thames College	From 2021-22 grow the number of HE students in accordance with the curriculum strategy	Vice-Principal, Higher Education and Business Partnerships	Corporation termly	Yes
Apprenticeship growth	Principal, Carshalton College and Merton College	Grow apprenticeship provision to at least £3M in accordance with the curriculum strategy	Vice-Principal, Carshalton College and Merton College and Group Lead on Apprenticeship provision	Corporation termly	Yes



DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION

This is a fundamental part of the Group's plan to raise its appeal, modernise its systems and practices and ensure that staff and students are equipped with the skills and technology for the future. We have developed a Digital Transformation Framework that sets out a number of key aims and objectives which we will achieve over the life of this plan.

The leadership of this strategic ambition will focus on enquiry, changing and enhancing practice and developing new capabilities and infrastructure within the Group in order to:

- Secure effective and meaningful digital activity with each course
- Develop digital service delivery wherever relevant
- Create strong capabilities across the Group to deliver high quality digital experiences

STRATEGIC AMBITION	LEAD	TARGETS	ORGANISATIONAL RESPONSIBILITY	REPORTING TO	RISK REGISTER?
Aim - Digital Governance, Leadership and Management We will develop the culture and capabilities within governance, leadership, and management to be a digitally ambitious national leading further education college, which supports the communities we serve in a rapidly evolving digital world	Principal, Kingston College	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop, implement, and maintain an effective ILT Management structure • Ensure governors, leaders, managers, and staff are engaged and supported to develop relevant digital skills and competencies • Ensure all strategies, policies, procedures, and planning are used to effectively deliver on our digital strategy, with the appropriate resources 	Vice-Principal, Quality and ILT	QLS Termly	No
Aim - Digital Infrastructure, Systems and Resources We will provide a secure digital infrastructure that enables the use of technology to allow all stakeholders to access and achieve our digital ambitions	Deputy CEO	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We will commit to providing facilities that incorporate industry accepted standards and, as appropriate, emerging technology for curriculum and services to develop and deliver excellent teaching and service outcomes • Our digital infrastructure and systems will be robust and easily accessible on all sites and remotely • Ensure that all core systems are periodically reviewed to make sure that they continue to meet our digital needs and expectations • Develop a more effective way to streamline our processes and systems to incorporate and achieve sustainable, digital efficiencies 	Director of IT Director of IT Vice-Principal, Quality and ILT; Director of IT; and Director of MIS Director of IT and Director of MIS		

STRATEGIC AMBITION	LEAD	TARGETS	ORGANISATIONAL RESPONSIBILITY	REPORTING TO	RISK REGISTER?
<p>Aim – Communication and Collaboration</p> <p>We will further develop and promote digital communication channels to improve the effectiveness of collaboration across all our internal and key external stakeholder groups in order to become fully connected with the communities we serve.</p>	Principal, Carshalton College and Merton College	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deliver excellent digital communication channels and content for all key stakeholders that are responsive, accessible and transparent in order to maximise our reach, influence and impact. • Embrace digital collaboration channels that allow us to effectively interact with all key stakeholder groups to accomplish shared goals. • Develop information improvement cycles (automated where possible) that allow the Group to monitor the effectiveness of this work, so we remain relevant, impactful and meet our evolving key stakeholder requirements. 	Vice-Principal, Higher Education and Business Partnerships		
<p>Aim – Curriculum & Skills</p> <p>Provide sector-leading digital delivery and engagement that ensures all students benefit from skills that enhance employment and life opportunities, so they can flourish and progress in a rapidly changing digital world</p>	Principal, South Thames College	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We will develop core digital principles and standards that will be embedded into all curriculum; to drive digital inclusion and remove disadvantage for all our students. • Develop standalone digital programmes with clear progression mapping, which lead to current and future job opportunities, which also develops our green agenda • Agree a set of benchmarks by which integration of digital technology and skills development is supported, encouraged and monitored • Curriculum planning and new programme development incorporates course relevant learning-technology content, based on direction or advice from, sector leads, innovators, and employers that develop the appropriate sector digital skills • Re-evaluate and adjust the existing STCG provision to define the blended learning approaches and how the use of technology is harnessed and utilised to deliver these approaches 	Vice-Principal, South Thames College and Group Lead on Adult provision		



STRATEGIC AMBITION	LEAD	TARGETS	ORGANISATIONAL RESPONSIBILITY	REPORTING TO	RISK REGISTER?
<p>Aim - Skills Development</p> <p>Use effective digital platforms and systems that encourage innovative and high-quality digital teaching, learning and assessment pedagogies, working practices and service delivery.</p>	Principal, Kingston College	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We will enable processes to encourage experimental and innovative teaching, learning & assessment, and digital, collaborative working practices • We will support all staff to be confident and competent in the use of digital technology to support the development of their skills, knowledge, and behaviours 	Vice-Principal, Quality and ILT		
<p>Aim - Student Experience & Inclusion</p> <p>We will foster a student centred digital culture, where we create confident digital citizens, with flexible access to develop their skills in using digital technology and systems, to advance their digital competencies to maximise their progression and employment opportunities.</p>	Principal, Carshalton College and Merton College	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Define what being a digitally competent student means, what their entitlement is at each stage of the student journey (precourse, on-course, and post-course) to ensure they have a fully accessible and inclusive digital student journey • Reduce the digital divide by the evaluation of all our student's digital skills and resource requirements, during the application process, so specific support, resources, and training can be offered, to give accessibility to all college services to enhance their student journey 	Vice-Principal, Student Services		



PARTNERSHIPS

The Group already has strong networks with key partners, but now aims to enhance these significantly, working more closely with more employers and schools to deliver business solutions, a work-focused curriculum and attract more young people to study with the Group. The leadership of this strategic ambition will strengthen the Group's networks and partnerships in order to:

- Create the capacity to respond to external opportunities, through funded bids and strategic partnerships
- Increase the number of young people recruited to the Group from partner schools
- Enhance the employability curriculum further
- Create meaningful partnerships with more employers and develop provision to meet their needs
- Explore opportunities to develop new Higher Education programmes and pathways

STRATEGIC AMBITION	LEAD	TARGETS	ORGANISATIONAL RESPONSIBILITY	REPORTING TO	RISK REGISTER?
Partnerships	Principal, South Thames College	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CRM functioning effectively across the Group • Develop new strategic partnerships with schools and employers, adding to existing recruitment pathways and employer-responsive programmes • Further enhancing our work-focused curriculum to prepare students fully for employment • Establishment of employer forum 	Vice-Principal, Higher Education and Business Partnerships, and Director of Marketing and Recruitment	QLS Termly	No
Employer partnerships	Principal, South Thames College	Lead new commercial projects in response to relevant opportunities Establish new employer partnerships to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strengthen the employability curriculum • Create new partnership provision • Support local and regional businesses 	Vice-Principal, Higher Education and Business Partnerships	QLS termly	No



STRATEGIC AMBITION	LEAD	TARGETS	ORGANISATIONAL RESPONSIBILITY	REPORTING TO	RISK REGISTER?
HE Partnerships	Principal, South Thames College	Identify new opportunities to work with HE providers to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish new provision • Develop new progression pathways for students Continue to strengthen existing partnerships in order to sustain, expand and develop current provision	Vice-Principal, Higher Education and Business Partnerships	HE Committee termly	Yes
School partnerships	Principal, South Thames College	Establish new partnerships with schools in order to secure new pathways to the Group for 16-18 year-old students Strengthen existing partnerships by developing new services and relationships with schools already working with the Group Increase the number of new 16-18 year-olds applying to the Group each year	Director, Marketing and Recruitment	QLS termly	No



QUALITY

Following the pandemic, the Group's formidable quality improvement arrangements will need to be reset to ensure an effective recovery, great learning, outcomes and progression for all students and effective open accountability for our curriculum teams.

The leadership of this strategic ambition will ensure there is a strong accountability culture across the Group in order to:

- Sustain transparent and evidence-based assurance of the standards of teaching and learning
- Strengthen the existing curriculum strategy to ensure progression into work, effective support and values-based learning
- Foster a reflective professional culture, grounded in improvement and shared practice
- Identify under-performing areas and provide the support and challenge to improve them
- Celebrate and promote success for others to learn from

STRATEGIC AMBITION	LEAD	TARGETS	ORGANISATIONAL RESPONSIBILITY	REPORTING TO	RISK REGISTER?
Quality monitoring and improvement	Principal, Kingston College	Quality reporting arrangements fully reviewed and reset, ensuring a robust performance monitoring and reporting system that enables managers and Governors to be assured that key curriculum outputs are at required levels and, if not, that timely recovery action is being taken. Quality improvement processes are defined and implemented effectively and monitored regularly and include the measures below:	Vice-Principal, Quality and ILT	QLS termly	Yes
HNS	Principal, Carshalton College and Merton College	HNS QIAP implemented and delivered resulting in HNS provision being graded 'good' or better at self-assessment by December 2022	Vice-Principal, Carshalton College and Merton College and Group Lead on Inclusive Learning provision	QLS termly	Yes
Apprenticeships	Principal, Carshalton College and Merton College	Quality and compliance plan developed and delivered resulting in: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Apprenticeship achievement rates in line with or above national averages by Summer 2022 • Full compliance with Group processes and funding regulations 	Vice-Principal, Carshalton College and Merton College and Group Lead on Apprenticeship provision	QLS termly	Yes



STRATEGIC AMBITION	LEAD	TARGETS	ORGANISATIONAL RESPONSIBILITY	REPORTING TO	RISK REGISTER?
Curriculum and enrichment	Principal, Kingston College	<p>The Group adopts an updated curriculum strategy with focus on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students' understanding of the workplace and their ability to thrive there • A redefined tutorial offer designed to provide effective academic and pastoral support • Effective and explicit understanding of British Values and citizenship, including respect and tolerance • Opportunities to engage with core themes such as mental health, equalities and climate change 	College Principals and curriculum Vice-Principals	QLS termly	No
Attendance	Principal, Carshalton College and Merton College	<p>Introduction of digital attendance messaging system to ensure students and families are prompted to act on under-attendance</p> <p>Attendance levels improved, especially in English and Maths</p>	Vice-Principal, Student Services	QLS termly	No
Value-added	Principal, Kingston College	<p>Value-added QIAP implemented</p> <p>Value-added scores improved</p>	Vice-Principal, Kingston College and Group Lead on Young People (16–18 year-olds) provision	QLS termly	No



FINANCE AND RESOURCES

The Group aims to continue its successful financial performance, retaining local accountabilities for income and expenditure and raising expectations for resource management in order to invest in our staff and buildings.

The leadership of this strategic ambition will build on the Group's formidable financial performance and effective use of resources in order to:

- Sustain a culture of pride in successful resource management throughout the management community
- Secure the financial performance of the Group over the life of the strategic plan
- Create capacity for the Group to invest effectively in critical priority areas, such as buildings, IT infrastructure, teaching spaces and staff pay

STRATEGIC AMBITION	LEAD	TARGETS	ORGANISATIONAL RESPONSIBILITY	REPORTING TO	RISK REGISTER?
Financial performance and investment	Deputy CEO	Effective planning and monitoring of Group finances is maintained, financial health is 'good' or better and bank covenants are met	Director of Finance	FP&R	Yes
Rules and regulations and compliance	Deputy CEO	Compliance monitoring approaches are further developed to ensure the Group can continue to have high levels of confidence in its reporting and monitoring infrastructure	Director of MIS	Audit	Yes
Staff skills	Principal, Kingston College	Costed CPD plan developed and implemented to deliver identified skills priorities for all staff	Vice-Principal, Quality and ILT	QL&S annually	No
Pay	Deputy CEO	Pay and grading system implemented Salaries maintained at or above competitive levels	Director of HR	FP&R annually	Yes
Buildings	Deputy CEO	Phases 1 of the KHR remodelling project completed and subsequent stages delivered in line with availability of capital grant or disposal proceeds Bids for capital funding submitted as opportunities arise New Estates Strategy developed	Director of Facilities	FP&R as required	No



STRATEGIC AMBITION	LEAD	TARGETS	ORGANISATIONAL RESPONSIBILITY	REPORTING TO	RISK REGISTER?
Climate change	Deputy CEO	Achieve at least “Emerging” status in the College Roadmap Activities based on AoC’s Climate Action Roadmap for FE Colleges	Director of Facilities	FP&R	No



WELLBEING AND SAFEGUARDING

The Group is committed to leading the sector in promoting wellbeing, supporting mental health, delivering exemplary safeguarding and promoting happiness across the Group, for both staff and students.

The leadership of this strategic ambition will continue to enhance the Group's strategic approach to protecting the wellbeing of people working and studying here in order to:

- Sustain a strong and coherent approach to safeguarding and wellbeing, based on a whole-organisation culture of awareness and responsibility
- Establish strategic approaches to managing, monitoring and reporting on wellbeing and safeguarding challenges and intervening in areas where necessary
- Respond quickly to any new risks that may emerge through effective monitoring and robust regional partnerships

STRATEGIC AMBITION	LEAD	TARGETS	ORGANISATIONAL RESPONSIBILITY	REPORTING TO	RISK REGISTER?
Wellbeing and safeguarding	Principal, Carshalton College and Merton College	Strategic review and development plan for safeguarding completed and implemented	Vice-Principal, Student Services	SWE termly	Yes
Student wellbeing	Principal, Carshalton College and Merton College	Student wellbeing plan updated and implemented and includes specific improvement targets Mental Health Trailblazer continued through to long-term implementation Student incident rates remain stable or decline	Vice-Principal, Student Services	SWE termly	Yes
Staff wellbeing	Group Principal and CEO	Staff wellbeing plan is updated each year and the HSE progress targets set by the Group are achieved An advisory group is established to provide a view of priorities and effectiveness in staff wellbeing measures	Deputy CEO/Director of HR	SWE termly	Yes
Health and safety	Deputy CEO	Coronavirus safety measures remain in place and effective for as long as necessary	Director of Facilities	SWE termly	Yes



EQUALITIES

The Group will continue to strengthen inclusion and improve outcomes for people from all protected characteristics, targeting areas of concern and promoting high expectations for people from all backgrounds.

The leadership of this strategic ambition will establish widespread awareness of equalities issues across the Group, using practice-led and evidence-based approaches in order to:

- Establish data and reporting routines in order to create open accountability for and understanding of equalities issues
- Identify performance gaps and improve outcomes for disadvantaged people
- Identify and bring into the Group key campaigns to promote equal outcomes and level up between demographic cohorts
- Create capacity through training and development for individuals to effect positive and sustainable progress
- Make the Group an even fairer place to work and study

STRATEGIC AMBITION	LEAD	TARGETS	ORGANISATIONAL RESPONSIBILITY	REPORTING TO	RISK REGISTER?
Equalities	Group Principal and CEO	Measurable Equality, Diversity and Inclusion objectives are set and an action plan to deliver the objectives is reviewed and implemented annually A comprehensive ED&I action plan is adopted annually, with a clear focus on critical areas for progress An advisory group is established to provide an overview of priorities and effectiveness in equalities measures	Vice-Principal, Quality and ILT; Director of HR	SWE, termly	Yes
Student equalities	Principal, Kingston College	Student recruitment and outcomes equalities scorecard linked to the measurable objectives is introduced Improvement plan for areas of deficiency developed and implemented	Vice-Principal, Quality and ILT	SWE, termly	Yes
Staff equalities	Group Principal and CEO	A talent management scheme linked to measurable objectives is implemented Equality pay gaps identified within measurable objectives are reduced	Deputy CEO/Director of HR	SWE, termly	Yes

