

East Kent Group of Colleges:

Higher Education 5 Year (DRAFT) Strategic Plan 2017-22

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Introduction

This paper sets out the aims, objectives and enablers for the Higher Education Strategy.

The proposed merger of Canterbury College with the East Kent Colleges alongside government policy, regional development plans and stakeholder interests provide the context for this strategic plan. Whilst East Kent and Canterbury College currently have different delivery models for their higher education this strategy builds on successful QAA reviews at both institutions and the TEF Silver award for HE at Canterbury College.

Within the East Kent region there are a range of higher education providers, including three major universities located in Canterbury that recruit locally, nationally and internationally. Moreover, the traditional boundaries between providers are being eroded leading to a highly competitive educational market place.

This educational landscape also provides significant opportunities to develop innovative programmes of study that enable students to study whilst employed, and for programmes to blend academic study with vocational experiences to prepare students for employment.

The monitoring and evaluation of higher education providers has also become more complex. In addition to the Quality Assurance Agency other forms of audit have been introduced. In particular, the recent addition of the TEF has placed renewed focus on teaching and learning and the student experience.

This context drives the development of a distinctive curriculum offer with excellent student experience aligned to the expectations of industry, Institutions, professionals and employers. This approach sits comfortably with the Colleges' higher education ethos: employability, social mobility, community, regional development and regeneration.

East Kent Group: Higher Education Strategic Aims

The Group's higher education strategic aims are to:

1. Provide students with high quality educational experiences that support them to achieve professional, academic & personal ambitions, through programmes of studies that **blend academic with vocational skills** preparing students for employment, sustained careers and higher level studies
2. Establish a **Regional Educational Alliance** that links higher education with Industry, Professions, Institutions and Employers; providing students with experience of the challenges and excitement of professional work and the opportunity to develop a network of professional contacts while they study.
3. Create an educational environment that embraces equality and diversity, supports the individual student whilst fostering a community that **encourages team work and develops the skills required to meet the challenges of professional practice**.

4. Be a catalyst for change, improving the lives of local people and regional communities by developing skills, ***identifying and exploiting opportunities for enterprise***, contributing with its stakeholders to the cultural economy and regional environment.
5. Develop programmes of study with ***curricula that promotes social mobility*** and access to higher-level studies including higher-level apprenticeships.

The Group's Higher Education provision will be adaptable and flexible, willing to embrace change and respond positively. Above all it will provide opportunities to a diverse range of students to define and achieve their aspirations.

Strategic objectives build on our current practices and ambitions to:

- Foster a student centred quality driven culture
- Engage with industry, professionals, institutions and employers
- Maintain and develop partnerships with HEI's and awarding bodies
- Promote Innovative curricula, learning, teaching and assessment
- Promote enterprise and work to enhance communities within the region
- Engage in applied research alongside scholarly activity (staff and students)
- Maximise the impact of resources
- Develop and promote a distinctive HE offer
- Ensure robust governance and management

1. Foster a student centred quality driven culture

The student experience is central to the Group's Higher Education culture. Robust and systematic review of quality ensures the enhancement of our learners' experience.

To achieve this the following enablers are:

- Robust qualitative and quantitative data collection and analysis
- Student Engagement and feedback
- Annual Quality Cycle
- Annual Quality Improvement Plan
- Quality Enhancement Objectives and Action Plan
- Annual Programme Monitoring Reports
- NSS
- Regular student staff Liaison Meetings
- Module/unit feedback
- Internal student Surveys
- Staff CPD to include: QAA code, Quality Culture, Student Centred Culture, Enhancing Learning, Teaching and Assessment
- Effective governance and management

2. Maintain and develop partnerships with Higher Education Institutions and awarding Bodies

Working with a range of partner institutions including, the University of Kent and Pearson the Group seeks to extend its portfolio of programmes adding Foundation Degrees, higher Apprenticeships, top up degree level awards and in the future Masters level programmes.

To achieve this, the following enablers are required:

- Formalise higher apprenticeship partnerships with local universities
- Facilitate curriculum development linked to the needs of industry
- Work with Universities to validate new programme initiatives
- Review existing programme portfolio to ensure alignment with strategic aims

3. Engage with industry, professions, institutions and employers

To achieve the central tenets of the strategic plan strong bonds with industry, professional, institutions and employers need to be forged and maintained. These will ensure the distinctiveness and credibility of the Group's HE offer. Programmes of study with embedded employability skills and professional collaborations underpin the student experience. While applied research and scholarly activities enable staff and students to positively impact on people's lives, culture and the economy.

To achieve this, the following enablers are required:

- Appoint HE Industry Collaboration Officer to liaise with industry - identify opportunities for collaboration, support academic teams, develop applied research and scholarly opportunities
- Communicate to external stakeholders the HE strategic narrative
- Target support from existing and new stakeholders
- Work closely with local and regional bodies including: Kent County Council, Kent Chamber of Commerce, SELEP
- Identify and access funding streams including HEFCE, Regional Growth Funds and Council initiatives
- Staff CPD: Collaboration with industry (case studies, workshop)

4. Academic and vocational curriculum, learning, teaching and assessment

Going forward, emphasis is placed on higher level vocational skills integrated with theory and critical study. Programmes of studies will provide students with an understanding of enterprise supported by projects/assignments run in collaboration with external stakeholders. Programmes will also facilitate the crossover of disciplines found within professional practice. This approach encourages both individual and collaborative work, core communication skills and critical skills with independence of thought and action.

Important areas for curriculum development are:

Marketing and Retail

Enterprise and Creative Industries

Management

Animal Sciences

Digital Design and Computing

Engineering

Construction and Quantity Surveying

Tourism and customer relations

Community and Regeneration

To achieve this the following enablers are required:

- Work in partnership with stakeholders
- Staff CPD: embedding enterprise and professional skills within the curriculum
- Staff CPD: innovative approaches to collaborative learning within Higher education
- Students and Staff workshop: Applied research in collaboration with students
- Staff CPD: innovative approaches to learning, teaching and assessment
- Staff CPD: Work based Learning
- Promote a safe environment in which students and staff are willing to embrace risk

5. Promote enterprise and enhance communities within the region

The vision for higher education is to enhance the quality of peoples' lives and the communities within which they live. This involves an outward looking perspective on education that embraces the integration of academic study with vocational application in order to effect change. As a catalyst for enterprise and culture higher education aims to play a leading role in this transformative process.

The East Kent Group has established strong relations with regional culture and its economy and will continue to help support enterprise and social projects.

To achieve this, the following enablers are required:

- Embed enterprise and community projects within the curriculum
- Work with local councils and SELEP to identify opportunities to support enterprise and regeneration
- Liaise with local and regional communities to identify opportunities to effect social, economic and cultural impact
- Seek collaborative funding to drive innovative curriculum design
- Promote the Group's identity as resource for cultural and economic change
- Align scholarly activities and applied research to the needs of stakeholders and communities
- Align community outreach (NCOP) to wider community projects

6. Engage in applied research alongside scholarly activity (staff and students)

The Association of College's Scholarly Activity project recognises and promotes the role of scholarly activity within Colleges. This project is fostering a culture of scholarship that engages with theory and vocational practice. The interface between higher education, industry, institutions and employers and the potential this presents for *applied research* is exciting, enabling staff and students to engage and apply theoretical and practical work.

To achieve this the following enablers are required:

- Strengthen bonds with industry, professionals and institutions
- Staff CPD: Scholarly Activity and Applied Research
- Students and Staff workshop: Collaborative research (students, staff and stakeholders)
- Identify and nurture local and regional opportunities for social, economic and cultural impact
- Build and facilitate environment of collaborative cultures

7 Develop and Promote a distinctive HE offer

The Group's Higher Education strategic aims inform its narrative. This needs to be embedded and consistently communicated to potential students and stakeholders.

To achieve this the following enablers are required:

- Consultation with industry and stakeholders
- Student engagement and feedback
- Close liaison between marketing communications and higher education
- Publicise links between industry / professions and HE
- HE editorial team to manage regular social media communications
- HE LinkedIn page to be created
- Joint Staff and student workshop: HE Narrative and Culture
- Sub Brand identity for HE (designed by Students with staff participation)
- Identify and Work with key stakeholders

8 Maximise the impact of resources

Higher Education is supported by the Group's wide range of resources, expertise and skills. To ensure students benefit fully from these a review of the HE provision will take place in order to maximise the quality of the student expertise.

A model for the delivery and management of higher education is adopted that enables staff to maintain strong links with further education, both internal and external, and to focus on the distinctive characteristics and opportunities within a higher education culture.

To achieve this, the following enablers are required:

- Review the Group's higher education portfolio to align with strategic aims
- Consider the location of resource bases and cognate disciplines to maximise the effectiveness of resources, the student offer and access to expertise
- Review the location of the Groups' higher education in response to local and regional enterprise opportunities and regeneration agendas
- Unify the Group's approach to the delivery of higher education to ensure its remit and quality culture is sustained