



# South Gloucestershire and Stroud College

## Strategy 2015/16–2019/20

### Our Mission

*We positively change people's lives and add value to the social and economic wellbeing of our communities. We do this by providing high quality, innovative, accessible education and training in a friendly culture of mutual respect and support.*

South Gloucestershire and Stroud (SGS) College large general further education college with campuses in South Gloucestershire and Gloucestershire, on the southern fringe of the Cotswolds, and satellite centres at the Royal West of England Academy and Bristol Zoo Gardens in central and north Bristol

SGS will continue to make a significant contribution to further education and provide a localised, responsive and broad curriculum offer from our campuses albeit across the sub-region of Gloucestershire and the West of England.

This Strategy establishes a strategic direction for SGS for the next four years. The idea of this plan is to be flexible enough for us to continue to respond imaginatively and effectively to opportunities. We have tried to make it succinct, easy to read and simple to understand. In support of this Strategy document we will produce an annual Operating Plan, which will set out detailed targets that allow us to measure progress towards the achievement of the priorities we have set ourselves in our College Strategy.

The next few years will be challenging ones for the College. The Country is in a weak recovery from a severe recession and austerity measures will continue to affect funding over the medium term. The prospects for growth in such an environment are challenging but, we believe, possible.

The College will look to maximise the skills and resources available to SGS as it spans a large geographical region and will engage effectively with both the West of England and Gloucestershire Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEP's) and other training providers in our region, to ensure SGS plays a full and active role in supporting our area's economic recovery and improve prosperity in our community.

We are committed to improving access to education in the communities we serve, including developing a presence near Dursley and supporting post-16 provision in rural communities who are reliant on a single further education college offering a breadth of provision, such as SGS. We will also develop further the opportunities for students with disabilities, ensuring they have ready access to mainstream education.

We are committed to the aim of being outstanding; the continued improvement in our success rates is absolutely fundamental. Whilst being responsive and innovative, the College must maintain its financial position against a potential retrenching of income streams due to central downward budgetary pressures. The College should therefore focus on increasing our overall efficiency and maintaining a surplus, and be open to opportunities to improve efficiencies when this improves the student or employer services that can be delivered. The College will look to maintain and update its estate within our residual budgets, but access capital support where available.

South Gloucestershire and Stroud College is in a strong position to reach "Outstanding" status during the term of this plan.

Kevin Hamblin  
Principal

## Our Strategic Priorities

- 1 To be recognised as an outstanding College
- 2 To be visionary and innovative in providing educational opportunities by anticipating and meeting demand
- 3 To enhance the quality of the experience we provide for our learners and our staff
- 4 To develop responsive partnerships with all our learners, employers, and all our stakeholders
- 5 To ensure we have the necessary resources to support our Plan
- 6 To provide an educational and training environment which is equipped for the delivery of high quality learning

## Where we are now

- We deliver on two campuses in South Gloucestershire and one campus in Stroud
- We employ over 990 staff, 85% of which provide or support teaching.
- We are an Associate Faculty of the University of Gloucestershire
- We have positive working relationships with other organisations such as the Skills Funding Agency, Education Funding Agency, GFirst and West of England LEP, South Gloucestershire Council, Stroud District Council and schools across the region
- We have 3845 full-time 16-18 learners in further education and 205 Higher Education Students (2013/14)
- We have just over 5000 post 19 learners and engage with over 2500 businesses
- We have satellite campuses at the Bristol Zoological Gardens and the Royal West of England Academy in Bristol
- We are experienced in managing capital projects, investing over £50m in the last thirteen years, to time and on budget
- We have established a national and international reputation in the development of sport through our Bristol Academy of Sport

## Our Vision

*'To be outstanding by standing out'*

## Our Mission

*'We positively change people's lives and add value to the social and economic wellbeing of our communities. We do this by providing high quality, innovative, accessible education and training in a friendly culture of mutual respect and support.'*

## Our Values

*'We provide an essential service for our communities and will act with honesty, respect, responsibility and care.'*

## Our Educational Character

- Learners are treated as individuals and can progress their journey from the age of 14
- Courses are provided at every level up to at least Level 3, so learners have a choice which is commensurate with their ability and with delivery to suit their needs
- Where ambition is fostered and progression is encouraged whether onto further courses, to Higher Education or employment
- We have a visionary and innovative way of providing appropriate, relevant and innovative learning for all those engaged in classroom-based, work-based and community learning
- Learners are prepared for employment, or further progression, with the aim of producing well rounded individuals who can fit in and contribute to society
- There is an inclusive environment for staff and learners with equality of opportunity and where diversity is respected
- Learning is fun and teaching and learning will excite and inspire
- The success of learners and staff is championed and celebrated
- Each individual is treated with integrity, respect and dignity
- A culture of openness prevails
- Continuous improvement is expected
- We are an integral part of the community, responding to and anticipating demand

## Planning context

### The environment for education

#### During this planning period we anticipate:

- A decrease in 16 year olds leaving compulsory education
- A continued over-supply of post-16 providers
- Reduced funding per student, and reduced funding overall from central Government especially for Adult Learning
- LEP's will hold more central funding for Skills and Capital for Colleges to bid for.
- HE franchised student numbers will stop with UWE, but there is an opportunity to grow direct provision with the University of Gloucestershire.
- FE 16-19 learner numbers will grow over the period of this plan, however funding per student will decline
- Significant change in working practices and the need to develop our staff, as flexibility of delivery will be expected by employers.
- Collaboration and mergers between other providers will increase but competition will also become more prevalent in some areas as learner responsive and employer responsive funding is capped
- Formal partnerships such as federations and mergers will be formed as smaller colleges struggle to maintain solvency, creating an efficiency of scale or access to specific expertise/facilities
- There will be a greater demand for flexible course structures and modes of delivery, especially via new technologies.
- As financial pressures are placed on the sector due to the economic conditions, this will allow a period of increased competition, consolidation and focus on quality and alternative non-government funded income streams
- Funding will need to be generated from a greater variety of sources and from other Government Departments such as the Department for Work and Pensions, full cost recovery and bids, such as the Strategic Economic Plan.
- Partnership working at local, regional and national levels will develop especially in support of possible nuclear power station construction along the Severn Estuary.
- Berkeley Centre has been leased by SGS and will be placed to respond to Oldbury development.
- The Country has now exited the recession.
- Productive working relationships with local schools and other training providers, to improve standards will be encouraged
- Colleges must adapt provision so that students are better prepared for employment with increased maths and English delivery
- Apprenticeships will grow in line with government policy but may be limited by shortage of jobs with employers and creativity is needed within this growing market.
- Employers will work more closely with the College, viewing the College as a strategic partner
- Growth in LDD student numbers as the county places students in the College rather than using out-of-county providers
- We should be focussed on the progress of our students (university, employment, apprentices, training) as much as the achievement of qualifications

### Strategic analysis

#### We enjoy advantages and assets upon which we will build:

- Prime locations in North Bristol/South Gloucestershire and Stroud, with proximity to major centres of population within an hour's travel to College and access to major employers
- We are developing Berkeley as a training centre and Science and Technology Park
- Attractive and student-friendly WISE, Berkeley and Stroud campuses, but less attractive building stock at our A38 Bristol Campus
- Flexible and loyal staff with proven commitment to SGS
- The popularity of a number of our programmes
- Experience of delivering work-based programmes
- The diversity of our student population, in particular across age groups, making us an established provider of lifelong learning
- Our reputation for excellent education and training for professional/employer-led courses
- An existing relationship with the University of Gloucestershire as an Associate Faculty
- Positive relationship with local media and an effective marketing team
- Active collaborative relationships with other education providers
- Located within areas which will see increased housing provision
- Excellent major communication routes to the South West, South Wales, along the M4/M5
- The extent of our contribution to the cultural, economic and social life of our local communities

#### We operate under a number of constraints, some of which are within our influence and control whilst others are not:

- Highly competitive market place but City of Bristol College are retrenching and exiting from S. Glos and N Bristol campuses
- Reduction in 19+ non-priority funding and the 16-19 unit of funding
- Possibility of increased HE-funded and university-franchised provision
- The economic environment will limit the possibility of increasing fees and full cost income streams for adult courses
- Limited public awareness of the full range of our work
- Poor public transport infrastructure in North Bristol/South Gloucestershire and southern Gloucestershire
- Limited space at the Main Filton A38 Campus for learning and teaching, student and staff accommodation and parking
- Undeveloped presence in the J14-M5 Corridor

# Strategic Priorities for 2015/16 – 2018/20

## Strategic Priority 1:

### To be recognised as an outstanding College

SGS has a distinctive role as a major provider of academic, specialist and professional education. We recognise the importance of placing our students at the centre of everything we do and for preparing them for work, their continuing careers and lifelong learning. We also recognise the need for all our work to be of the highest possible standard. Excellence will continue to be our goal.

Our primary targets in support of this priority will include:

- Success rates will improve annually to achieve the designation by the Inspectorate of “outstanding”
- Throughout this plan, each academic department will maintain where appropriate, a balanced portfolio which includes a range of activities from: pre-16, 16-19, craft, technical, professional and, in specialist areas, Foundation Degree levels or equivalent.
- Our added value scores, where available, will have most courses significantly positive, with no significant negatives.
- The quality of teaching and learning will continue to improve annually, supported by targeted staff development and coaching programmes.
- Placing more emphasis on developing the employability skills of our students, thereby giving them a competitive advantage in the progress to employment, apprenticeships or further education.
- Sport will continue to provide outstanding education and demonstrate class leading practice at the national level.
- A range of Enrichment opportunities will continue to be provided.

## Strategic Priority 2:

### To be visionary and innovative in providing educational opportunities by anticipating and meeting demand

For many years the two separate Colleges which formed SGS have been innovative in extending further education opportunities. Most recently the Stroud Campus has been rebuilt and in 2005 the WISE Campus was established, allowing us to continue to broaden the programmes we provide.

HE numbers will be expected to grow in the medium term now that we have become an Associate Faculty of the University of Gloucestershire.

The Government focus on Work-Based Learning and employer responsive activity requires the College to continue to adapt its approach to respond to the demands of business. The economy has placed pressure on both these income streams, with the demand-led adult funding being capped, and the apprenticeship programme has been challenging, however over the medium term this is expected to increase as the economy improves.

Our primary targets in support of this priority will include:

- Being innovative in the use of resources to deliver programmes that provide opportunity for students and employers.
- To foster the relationship with the Nuclear Skills Academy and the Engineering Sector in Greater Gloucestershire.
- Improving the recruitment and retention of students with disabilities.
- Creating programmes which are aimed specifically at priority groups, including BME, NEET and non-traditional HE students.
- Becoming employer-focussed and demand-led in our response to the Skills Agenda, with 25% of our income being derived from full cost recovery work or demand-led funding by 2018.
- Contribute to the enterprise agenda by fostering new businesses and providing incubation facilities for start up businesses.
- Promote sustainable development and the skills to install renewable resources.
- To lead innovation in teaching and learning and to be creative in the use of new learning technologies.
- Through future collaborative ventures, we will extend our HE provision

### **Strategic Priority 3:**

#### **To enhance the quality of the experience we provide for our learners and our staff**

The quality of the learner experience we offer remains crucial to the success of our learners. Our ability to recruit and retain students depends upon that success and their satisfaction with the experience. We intend to build on our distinctiveness in provision over the next four years, and our tradition of supporting learners in their studies. Employability of our students is a key consideration. We will continue to ensure theory and practice is combined in programmes of study as well providing enrichment and adding value overall

Our primary targets in support of this priority will include:

- Guaranteeing that the learner experience offered at each campus in our network stands out because it is individualised, professional and appropriate.
- Preparing learners for employment in a rapidly changing world through programmes where learning is a mixture of theory, practice and support.
- Implementing a revised learning and teaching strategy to improve learners' learning experience and bring greater variety of modes of course delivery and provide truly blended learning using new technologies.
- Revising staff development policy and succession planning mechanisms to ensure our flexible staff are supported, motivated and continually developed to meet the changing demands of education.
- Ensuring we meet the highest standards for the wellbeing and safeguarding of our students.
- Providing a variety of Enrichment opportunities.
- Encouraging and celebrating the success of our students and staff.
- Listening and responding to the views of our learners, staff, community and employers.
- Adding value overall through a combination of the above.

### **Strategic Priority 4:**

#### **To develop responsive partnerships with all our learners, employers, and all our stakeholders**

College-based teaching and learning have traditionally been the main activities of further education colleges. Engagement with business, public services and the community is increasingly acknowledged to be a fundamental part of our task, with the objective of transferring knowledge between partners.

Our primary targets in support of this priority will include:

- Forming and strengthening partnerships with training providers and educational institutions to meet local needs.
- Encouraging local businesses and public sector organisations to engage with the College in its vocational and professional programmes and to establish the College as the first stop for skills training in the West of England and Gloucestershire LEP areas.
- Championing the involvement of staff and students in the community, particularly opportunities for volunteering.
- Committing all our Departments to maximising opportunities for new relationships which will meet our priorities.
- Continuing to take a lead in area-wide 14-19 initiatives in the local communities supported by our various campuses; and playing an active role in the development of Local Enterprise Partnerships in the West of England and Gloucestershire.
- Tracking destination data and student satisfaction through robust data collection.
- Being responsive to the needs of groups within the locality by making college facilities available.

## **Strategic Priority 5:**

### **To ensure we have the necessary resources to support our Plan**

If we are to succeed in this Strategy, we must have the right people and resources and use them effectively. To do this well we shall need to be enterprising yet prudent. The highest priority will be to recruit, retain and motivate high calibre staff. Without them, none of this will be possible.

Our primary targets in support of this priority will include:

- Implementing and regularly reviewing our Human Resources Strategy to guide us in successful recruitment and retention, and to ensure that all staff continue to develop their skills in response to predicted College needs and personal development goals.
- Develop a strong leadership and management team.
- To develop the skills of our teaching staff so that teaching practice is the result of careful reflection, and advance planning where the learning and achievement of our students is at the heart of teacher's planning.
- To develop the budgetary awareness, personnel management and leadership skills of our managers.
- To ensure there is a supportive yet robust performance management and appraisal scheme throughout the College.
- To achieve Investors in People "Gold Standard" within the term of this plan.
- To achieve recognition as one of the best places to work in the public sector within the term of this plan.
- Wherever operationally possible, that all vacancies are considered as possible apprenticeships.
- Safeguarding our financial health at least at 'Good', with an aspiration to move to 'outstanding', . However, our aspiration for our financial health to be 'outstanding' will not be at the expense of our ability to invest in our estate.
- Investing in integrated information and communications technology to enhance teaching and learning and ensure efficient operations and management across all campuses.
- To ensure an investment strategy is developed for capital development and treasury management.

## **Strategic Priority 6:**

### **To provide an educational and training environment which is equipped for the delivery of high quality learning**

There has been significant investment in further education building stock nationally over the last decade. SGS has invested £7.9m on estates since merger and the College has an aspiration to continue to invest in its estates as capital and borrowing allows.

To provide an environment of quality which learners are entitled to expect, the learning environment at the College has to improve continually and will require regular review and investment to secure the College's future as a popular choice for students in the region.

Our primary targets in support of this priority will include:

- The delivery of the Estates Strategy agreed in 2014 .-Ensuring that all sites are maintained and improved to ensure they remain "best in class" within the sector.
- Continually exploring the possibility of partnerships to maximise the efficiency of scale across the area we serve.
- Ensuring that our learners have a learning environment which places them at the centre of the process and provides approaches appropriate to their own individual need.
- Raising average group size through investment in teaching skills, information technology, blended learning and resource utilisation information systems.
- Providing an IT Strategy which is future-proofed and an IT infrastructure which allows learners to bring their own equipment into College, securely.
- To provide an entrepreneurial working environment that encourages both creativity and innovation within the workplace in order to grow alternative income streams