



SOUTH DEVON COLLEGE HIGHER EDUCATION STRATEGY 2019-2024



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Introduction and context

South Devon College (SDC) Higher Education Strategy 2019-2025, sets out the direction, aspirations and objectives for the College, to ensure the continued delivery of top quality higher education provision. It also sets out how this provision will have significant impact and add major value within the South Devon community, through a positive contribution to economic and cultural growth.

South Devon College has been delivering higher education provision since 1947 and as of 2019, SDC delivers:-

- Higher National Certificates
- Certificates of Higher Education
- Diploma in Education and Training
- Foundation Degrees
- Bachelor's Degrees
- Professional Higher Level Qualifications

The College was quick to embrace Higher and Degree Apprenticeships, with over 150 students currently studying on 7 separate Standards.

The high quality of South Devon College's higher education provision is evidenced through a range of external indicators, not least the 18 month scrutiny undertaken by the Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) for Higher Education leading to the achievement of Foundation Degree Awarding Powers. This followed the QAA Review of Higher Education utilising the Higher Education Review (HER) method which resulted in two Commendations and more recently the Teaching Excellence Framework Gold outcome. Consequently South Devon College is a key player delivering and developing higher education within the further education sector and at the cutting edge of innovation within this area.

1. Ethos and Vision

South Devon College Mission statement - 'inspiring our community through learning for all'
South Devon College Higher Education Vision statement - 'South Devon College is passionate about providing excellent quality, accessible and employment focussed Higher Education'. The College's higher education provision is distinctly branded as University Centre South Devon, UCSD.

The College mission is delivered through its commitment to providing leading quality, higher education opportunities within the community. An inclusive and enabling approach ensures that top quality higher education is accessible to a wide range of groups that include: the

provision of progression opportunities to existing college learners, the targeting and engagement of learners from cold spots (areas with low higher education participation rates or non-traditional higher education learners), the provision of a local higher education offer for regional sixth form leavers, up-skilling and re-skilling opportunities to individuals within the community and further afield, and opportunities for employees to gain and accredit higher level learning through part-time and bespoke routes including Higher and Degree Apprenticeships. The College aims to widen participation in higher education and has defined specific areas of focus within the Access and Participation plan.

Working in partnership with students, the College ensures that sound information, advice and guidance that is compliant with Competition and Markets Authority guidance, supports individuals into higher education study. Once enrolled, students receive high quality learning experiences which lead to further progress into employment or continued study. The College commits to spending over 30% of its high fees income on targeted success, access, progression and financial measures, in addition to other targeted funding such as the Student Premium funding. The new Office for Student Condition for Access and Participation Plans have been implemented for 19/20 with revised targets and a new evaluation method.

The overarching vision for higher education at South Devon College is to follow a defined trajectory leading to 'University College' status in 2025. This highly ambitious target is supported by the Local Authority, Torbay Development Agency and a wide range of stakeholders including community organisations. The strategic direction and growth of the College's higher education provision is directly related to aspirations of the local community. Collectively there is a belief that education can play a tangible transformative role to improving life chances and social mobility whilst increasing the quality and quantity of economic output within the area.

A strong focus on teaching, learning and scholarship underpin the delivery of top quality higher education. The importance of scholarly activity and research are reflected through the Colleges Teaching, Learning and Scholarship Policy, and associated Research and Scholarship Activity Procedure. These policies and procedures articulate the College's aims and ambitions to continue to further develop and grow as an established community of research and practice.

The Higher Education Vision for the College is set out visually below:

HIGHER EDUCATION VISION



2018

- TEF Gold
- TES Award
- 700 higher education students
- Foundation Degree awarding powers



2019

- Foundation Degree Awarding Powers gained
- Opening of Hi Tech & Digital Centre
- OFS registration



2020

- First College Degrees (UCSD)
- NMC approval
- RSA recognised



2022

- Taught Degree Awarding Powers (FT6)
- Accommodation for 120 students, increasing local and national markets



2025

- 'University' status
- 1000 students

KEY FACTS

50% Increase in 7 years
(on average 50 extra students per year)

- Growth strategy in the following areas:
- Hi-Tech, Digital and Creative
 - Health and Wellbeing
 - Sciences and Social Sciences
 - Construction and Civil Engineering
 - Management and Professional
 - Marine and Yacht Operations
 - Sport and Adventure

Growth and Inclusion
High quality accommodation allowing more flexibility, increasing local participation and potential for national and international students

- Key employer partners
- Torbay NHS Trust and Livewell
 - Torbay Hi Tech Forum
 - ABB
 - Fujitsu
 - Pro Direct
 - Heatree Activity Centre
 - Paignton Zoo
 - UNESCO Geopark



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2. Partnerships

The College places high value on partnership working and collaborates with a range of stakeholders that include current students and staff, along with; employers, practitioners, professional organisations, other education institutions, local authorities and groups in the wider community. Collaborative working is crucial in the journey to develop new curriculum initiatives and increase participation levels whilst improving the success and outcomes of students and enhancing the local area and economy.

The College's higher education provision is targeted to develop higher level skills to support economic regeneration regionally and nationally. Innovation is valued and promoted as new flexible models of delivery are sought to meet the changing needs of both industry and individuals in a rapidly changing world. This includes the development of Higher and Degree Apprenticeship delivery, where the College has taken a regional lead.

The College places high value on its work with employers and through extensive employer engagement, the curriculum is developed to meet the needs of industry both locally and nationally. The College remains open to market opportunities including the challenges presented when working with small and medium employers. In parallel to the College's Higher Education Vision, we have developed an Apprenticeship Strategy, which includes a focus on the drive and development of Higher and Degree apprenticeships. As a result, the College has seen significant increases in HA/DA activity over recent years; proactively supporting the government's intention to grow higher skills and higher apprenticeships.

3. Facilities

The curriculum is delivered in specialist accommodation including a purpose built University Centre; Hi-Tech and Digital Centre and a Centre for Health and Care Professions. The College reviews provision and resources regularly and strategically plans forward developments through its Accommodation Strategy. The College will continue to invest in the estate and facilities to ensure that the learning and wider student experience is of high quality.

The College recognises that a perceived barrier for recruitment is an absence of student accommodation. The College has undertaken an initial feasibility study and is now proceeding to plan for a 100+ bed accommodation building. This work includes establishing the most suitable location for this new facility. The provision of high quality student accommodation is also seen as an asset that will support the increase in HE student recruitment numbers.

4. External Influences and Educational Reform

The Technical and Further Education Act 2017 sets out the legislative framework for the reform of the English technical education system as proposed in the 2015 Governments Post 16 Skills Plan. Beyond the introduction of higher and degree apprenticeships, technical education will continue to evolve to include T Levels; two year, level 3 qualifications in 25 pathways from 2021. T Levels will be delivered through a combination of college based education with a significant industrial placement with employers firmly at the heart of the agenda. Reform strongly promotes the progression from T Levels onto higher study and for each of the 25 pathways.

The Department for Education is currently undertaking a formal review of education at levels 4 and 5, this is to ensure that the English education system responds effectively to Brexit. Consequently the further development of the Colleges Higher Education portfolio will respond and align to T Levels and level 4 and 5 reforms where relevant.

The Post 18 Education and Funding Review was published in May 2019. The review made sweeping recommendations encompassing both Further and Higher Education, with a rebalancing of funding towards the FE sector. The College recognises many of the advantages that are recommended within the review and await a formal response, through policy, from government.

5. Awarding Powers

Following a three year development and scrutiny phase the College attained Foundation Degree Awarding Powers (FDAP) in March 2019. This accomplishment will ensure that the College can more effectively meet the needs of employers, students and the wider community at levels 4 and 5 within a changing higher education landscape. Going forward, and in line with the College's Higher Education Vision, the College will work towards the attainment Taught Degree Awarding Powers at Level 6 (FT6). Building on the success of FDAP, securing FT6 will ensure the College is in the best position as provider of higher education in the coming years. Since gaining Foundation Degree Awarding Powers, the College has approved 5 new degrees that respond to student need and industry demand, the development and subsequent launch of these programmes would not have been possible without FDAP.

6. Performance Indicators

In line with new expectations defined by the Office for Students, the College has revisited the key performance indicators associated with higher education provision. The following categories and targets will be afforded high priority and reported on annually.

Recruitment

- Overall student numbers to increase by a minimum of 5% annually
- Maintain and improve the participation of students from low participation neighbourhoods, student with disabilities and those from a Black, Minority or Asian Background
- Increase internal progression annually

Academic Standards and Quality

- Teaching Excellence Framework minimum gold award
- Non-continuation rates to reduce by 1% annually for 3 years

Student Satisfaction

- NSS Overall satisfaction to be in the top quartile for FECs
- NSS quality of Teaching to be in the top quartile for England
- SPQ to be in the top 10% of UoP Partners

Research and Scholarship

- Proportion of HE staff who are fellows of the HEA to increase to 25% of staff by 2020
- Proportion of staff who have, or are working towards a L7 or 8 qualification (not PGCE) increases annually
- Number of research outputs to increase annually by 50%

Student Outcomes

- Positive destination for students increases annually
- For students on L6 programmes, achieving a 'Good Degree' to be 55% by 2020/21
- Overall Higher Education income in line with college financial planning

7. Summary

South Devon College is firmly committed to the delivery and ongoing development of the best quality higher education provision. In delivering our Higher Education Vision, the College aims to work in partnership to support the economic growth, social community and aspiration agendas within the local and regional area, actively promoting and delivering on the widening participation agenda by supporting access to the highest quality learning opportunities for the local and wider community. The College has an important role to deliver in its work as an anchor institution to support economic growth and social prosperity working in strong partnership. The strategy for the next 5 years, and beyond, aims to build further on well-established high quality foundations to deliver positive impacts that are particularly relevant to rapidly changing workforce skills and education needs of the future. This strategy aims to meet and exceed the expectations of students, external stakeholders and partners.