



# South Gloucestershire & Stroud College

## Strategy 2021/22–2025/26

### 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 is a 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. The former nuclear laboratories at Berkeley are being developed over the medium term into the Gloucestershire Science and Technology Park, and this venue will host additional SGS provision

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

SGS College will be completing its first decade since formation in 2022, and as such will undertake review of this milestone and set the direction of travel for the next 10 years.

The idea of our Plan is for it 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 remain to be challenging ones for the College. The effect of 'Brexit' and the post-pandemic economic impact, and will undoubtedly bring changes which are not yet known; and how it will impact on the skills policy over the medium term is uncertain.

Growth is expected in the north of Bristol, whereas in Stroud school leaver numbers are expected to plateau. This juxtaposition will provide challenges of a lack of capacity in Filton and WISE, with Stroud remaining under-utilised if the activity is not diversified.

Our Estates Strategy, coupled with our Sustainability and Digital Plans, will make an increasing priority as these challenges so we can meet the expectations of the demand in each community we serve and in line with student demand and our obligations to wider society.

We are committed to improving access to education in the communities we serve, including developing a presence at Berkeley and supporting post-14 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 also 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 as 'Good' 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  
Group Chief Executive Officer and Executive 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 and a further development at Berkeley opened in September 2017
- We employ over 900 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 West of England Combined Authority, Education and Skills Funding Agency, GFirst and West of England LEP, South Gloucestershire Council, Stroud District Council and schools across the region
- We have 4600 full-time 16-18 learners in further education and 400 Higher Education Students and 1800 apprentices.
- We have over 5000 post 19 learners and engage with over 1000 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 £40m in the last five years, to time and on budget
- Our financial health is 'Good'
- The £7m Brunel Building is was completed in Spring 2021, increasing capacity by 400 FTE students
- 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
- A Digital Plan supports our curriculum and the College is committed to a am improving sustainable approach to all we do.

## Planning context

### The environment for education

#### During this planning period we anticipate:

- An increase in 16-year olds leaving compulsory education in Gloucestershire and (especially) the WoE until the mid-2020's.
- The over-supply of post-16 providers may reduce in the medium term due to a reduction in apprenticeships and a focus on college provision for T Levels and the expectation that Colleges will become 'anchor institutions' in the communities we serve whilst they collaborate collectively together to serve the needs of the region
- Increased post-16 capacity in the north Bristol fringe is essential. Short/medium term, the College will look to grow via the Brunel Building and explore the continuation of high quality blended learning for classroom-based elements of a programme (perhaps 1/3 : 2/3 split in favour of face-to-face after C-19) and a short term leased facility for construction growth
- Continued flat-lining of funding per FTE students
- WECA/ LEP's will hold more central funding (specifically via devolution) for Skills and Capital for colleges to bid for, especially for Adult re-skilling, as the National Skills Fund is devolved.
- HE numbers will continue to rise. The University Centre opened at WISE in September, 2021
- Significant change in working practices and the need to develop our staff, as flexibility of delivery will be expected by employers and employees will now expect greater remote working as a resulting legacy of the pandemic.
- Collaboration between other FE providers nationally will become more supported as a result of the FE Reform White Paper.
- 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 post-Brexit and pandemic economic conditions, this will require a greater focus on on-line/blended learning and the associated quality of this delivery
- 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 LEP Strategic Economic Plan.
- Brexit' will create uncertainty for a number of years to come.
- Productive working relationships with local Councils (Gloucestershire County Council, South Gloucestershire LA and WECA), 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 reduce in line with economic downturn, unless supported by the Government.
- Employers will work more closely with the College, viewing the College as a strategic partner, which is part of the independent commission's stance for 'The College of the Future'
- Growth in LDD student numbers as the Local Authorities 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 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
- High reputation for the Apprenticeships we deliver
- 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
- 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
- Growing positive relationship with City of Bristol College

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

- We have a limited estate capacity, with significant maintenance and repair issues on the A38 site
- Highly competitive market place but City of Bristol College are retrenching and exiting from S. Glos and N Bristol campuses which is putting strain on A38 and WISE campuses
- Possible reduction in 19+ non-priority funding, and a focus on re-skilling adults and the 16-19 unit of funding will only marginally increase
- 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, but the SGS brand is growing
- 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
- Lack of capital funding for additional capacity in the Northern Arc of Bristol to cope with the increase in population and employment land.
- To maintain financial strength of at least 'Good', the possibility of increasing borrowing is limited.

## Strategic Priorities for 2019/20 – 2023/24

### 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. The current C-19 crisis has placed the need to provide high quality on-line/blended learning at the top on our agenda pedagogically as well as technically.

Our primary targets in support of this priority will include:

- Success rates will not be an accurate reflection of improvement, due to C-19 and Centre-Based Assessments in 2019/20, and therefore the focus will be placed on improving quality of on-line/blended learning and student well-being.
- Throughout this plan, each academic department will maintain where appropriate, a balanced portfolio which includes a range of activities from: pre-16, SEND, 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. As soon as the C-19 issues have passed, the 18/19 academic year will become the baseline.
- The quality of teaching and learning will continue to improve annually, supported by targeted staff development and coaching programmes. This will include on-line and blended learning.
- 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.
- Teachers will focus on classroom discipline and learning, and maintaining progression on-line, as appropriate.
- Continue to support the welfare and safeguarding of our student cohort.
- Sport will continue to provide outstanding education and demonstrate class leading practice at the national level.
- A limited range of Enrichment opportunities will continue to be provided around C-19 guidelines.

### Strategic Priority 2: To be visionary and innovative in providing educational opportunities by anticipating and meeting demand

The need plan for considerable growth in demand especially in the S Glos/northern Arc from 29000+ houses and plans for 10,000+ new jobs, will require a step change in the capacity to deliver FE in the area. City of Bristol are focussing on the north, central and south Bristol with SGS expected to support S. Gloucestershire's FE needs. A major property review will be taking place in the short term to plan for this growth and the impact on SGS and its estate. The College will explore a more permanent move to bring high quality blended learning into all programmes, where appropriate

HE numbers will also be expected to grow in the medium term, especially in Bristol where the College has opened a University Centre at WISE. 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 is expected to retract resulting in an increase in adult unemployment and a reduction in Apprenticeship opportunities for 16-18's however there will be scope to develop traineeships. The economy has placed pressure on both these income streams, with the demand-led adult funding capped, and the apprenticeship programme challenging due to C-19 and Brexit.

Our primary targets in support of this priority will include:

- To continue the review of the College Estate in Bristol and the proposed development required to replace the A38 site and increase capacity to respond to the growth in demand expected in South Gloucestershire. This may require the leasing of additional space for construction demand to be met.
- Being innovative in the use of resources to deliver programmes that provide opportunity for students and employers, using blended learning where appropriate to reduce pressure on our estate until new capacity is introduced.
- To foster the relationship with the Low Carbon, High Technology and the Engineering Sectors in Greater Gloucestershire.
- Improving the recruitment and retention of students with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND).
- Creating programmes which are aimed specifically at priority groups, including BME, NEET, SEND and non-traditional HE students.
- Becoming employer-focussed and demand-led in our response to the Skills Agenda, with £1m of our income being derived from Berkeley by 2022/23.
- 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 at WISE and Berkeley.
- To lead innovation in teaching and learning and to be creative in the use of new learning technologies to support blended learning.
- Through future collaborative ventures, we will extend our HE provision and may include student accommodation and off-balance sheet investment at WISE

### **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. This will become even more important in a shrinking economy. 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.
- Ensure over the medium to long term that the college estate is appropriate to the needs of the student and the level of provision offered.
- To seek to diversify activity at Stroud to maintain the viability of this campus in the long term as 16-19 demographics remain challenging.
- To remove / replace inadequate building stock over the medium term, especially the A 38 Construction facilities.
- 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:

- Develop a means to ensure the quality of online delivery and student support services
- 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 continue to position 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. C-19 has placed considerable pressure on staff and the College has responded precisely with the Government Guidance to ensure staff, students and visitors to campuses remain safe.

Our primary targets in support of this priority will include:

- To continue to support staff working from home, where their attendance on site is not essential, or where they are in a high risk category; and where their role can be completed off-site.
- 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 and maintain 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 teachers' planning. This will be extended to online learning activity.
- 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 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 and supportive of the Estates Strategy
- To implement a longer-term strategy for the SGS Group, which will include the College, its Sub-co's and the SGS Academy Trust
- To develop a policy to allow for incremental progression based on exceptional performance
- To position the College as a leading champion of sustainability and the low-carbon agenda in the College Sector.
- Develop our Digital, Low Carbon and Security Systems Curriculum across FE, HE and Apprenticeships

## **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 £19m+ 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:

- To maximise the £7m Brunel Building at WISE
- Deliver an Estate Strategy which will respond to the Group Strategic Plan.-Ensuring that all sites are maintained and improved to ensure they remain "best in class" within the sector and to meet future demand
- 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, using online / blended learning where appropriate.
- Raising average group size through investment in teaching skills, information technology, blended learning and resource utilisation information systems.
- Providing a Digital 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
- In the medium term (5-7 years) the A38 Campus will be replaced with a new 'Challenger Campus', or a bulking on existing campuses.
- To review the energy / sustainability strategy to reduce the overall carbon footprint / cost of energy and reliance on Gas by 2024/25