**South Gloucestershire and Stroud College**

**Higher Education Access & Participation Policy 2022-23**

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| **Prepared by:** | Jo Kear and Lee Ferris |
| **Job Title/Role:** | Director of Higher Education and Head of HE Admissions, Data and Insight |
| **Ref. No.:**<br><br>**Q/P 119** | **Date of this version:** 1st September 2022<br><br>**Review date:**      1st September 2023<br>(Subject to any legislative changes)<br><br>**Upload to College website?**    Yes<br><br>**Upload to e-Campus?**         Yes |
| **Approved by:** | Senior Leadership Team |
| **Date of Approval:** | 30th August 2022 |

| MANDATORY INITIAL IMPACT SCREENING | |
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| I have read the guidance document: Completing a Policy Impact Assessment? | ✓ |
| If this policy raises equality, diversity or inclusion concerns, the Inclusion Committee has been consulted? | ✓ |
| If this policy raises environmental or sustainability issues, the Estates Team have been consulted? | ✓ |
| If this policy has been up-dated, please tick to confirm that the initial impact screening has also been reviewed: | ✓ |

| Please list each College Strategic Priority that this policy is designed to address/implement: | |
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| EQUALITY, DIVERSITY & INCLUSION IMPACT ASSESSMENT | |
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| Characteristic | This policy seeks to: |
| Age | Supports staff and learners to recognise abd challenge discrimination on the grounds of age |
| Disability | Commit to making reasonable adjustments to promote equality of access and opportunity for learners, employees and members of the public with disabilities and/or learning difficulties/disabilities. |
| Faith or Belief | Support all staff and learners seeking to observe any recognised mainstream faith or belief |
| Gender | Protect staff and learners from sexism in all forms |
| Race or Ethnicity | Commits the college to positive action to promote equality and foster good relations between members of different racial and ethnic groups |
| Orientation | Promote understanding and respect of the LGBTQQIAAP community |
| Gender reassignment | Work with individuals to ensure appropriate support at identified periods |
| Economic disadvantage | Use available resources to identify and address any issues of inequality as a result of social and economic factors. Supporting learners and staff, both academically and pastorally in order for all to be successful |
| Rural isolation | Use available resources to identify and address any issues of inequality as a result of rural isolation. Supporting learners and staff, both academically and pastorally in order to access College services and be successful. |
| Marriage | Support staff and learners to recognise and challenge discrimination on the basis of marriage |
| Pregnancy & maternity | Promote equality of opportunity through a supportive, inclusive environment |
| Carers & care leavers | Use available resources to identify and address any issues of inequality as a result of being in care or a care leaver. Supporting learners both academically and pastorally in order to be successful. |
| Vulnerable persons | Safeguarding children or vulnerable adults |

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| Please identify any sections of the policy that specifically seek to maximise opportunities to improve diversity within any of the College's stakeholder groups: | | Sections 1 - 4 | |
| Please identify any sections of the policy that specifically seek to improve equality of opportunity within any of the College's stakeholder groups: | | Sections 1 - 4 | |
| Is there any possibility that this policy could operate in a discriminatory way? | ☐    ✘ | If you have ticked yes (red), which characteristic will be most affected? Choose an item. | |
| If yes please confirm that the Policy has been sent for a full Equality & Diversity Impact Assessment, and note the date: | ☐ | Click or tap to enter a date. | |

**Note:** if the policy does not seek to increase diversity or improve equality you should go back and review it before submitting it for approval.

| MAPPING OF FUNDAMENTAL RIGHTS | |
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| Which United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), Right does this policy most protect: | Art. 2 Non-discrimination<br>Art. 17 Access to information<br>Art. 28 Right to education |
| Which Human Right (HRA) does this policy most protect: | Art. 14 Prohibition of discrimination<br>Choose an item. |

| DATA PROTECTION & PRIVACY BY DESIGN SCREENING | |
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| Tick to confirm that you have considered any data protection issues as part of the design and implementation of this policy; and, that implementing this policy will not result in the collection, storage or processing of personal data outside of official College systems: | ✓ |

| Tick to indicated that this policy has or requires a Data Privacy Impact Assessment: | ☐ |
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## ENVIRONMENTAL, SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC IMPACT ASSESSMENT

| Does this policy relate directly or indirectly to any legal, regulatory environmental or sustainability standard(s)? | Yes ☐ | No ☒ |
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| **If so, please list them:** | | |

| **Will any aspects of this policy result in:** | | |
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| Reduced miles travelled or provide / improve / promote alternatives to car based transport (e.g. public transport, walking and cycling car sharing, the use of low emission vehicles, community transport, environmentally friendly fuels and/or technologies) | **Yes** ☐ | **No** ☒ |
| Reduced waste, environmental hazards and/or toxic materials for example by reducing PVC, photocopier and printer use, air pollution, noise pollution, mining or deforestation? Or increase the amount of College waste that is recycled or composted? | **Yes** ☐ | **No** ☒ |
| Reduced water consumption? | **Yes** ☐ | **No** ☒ |
| Reduced instances of single use plastic? | **Yes** ☐ | **No** ☒ |
| Reduced use of natural resources such as raw materials and energy to promote a circular economy? | **Yes** ☐ | **No** ☒ |
| Improved resource efficiency of new or refurbished buildings (water, energy, density, use of existing buildings, designing for a longer lifespan)? | **Yes** ☐ | **No** ☒ |
| Will this policy improve green space or access to green space? | **Yes** ☐ | **No** ☒ |
| **Please list the sections of this policy which specifically target an improved environment:** | | |

| **Will any aspects of this policy result in:** | | |
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| The promotion of healthy working lives (including health and safety at work, work-life/home-life balance and family friendly practices)? | **Yes** ✓ | **No** ☐ |
| Greater employment opportunities for local people? | **Yes** ✓ | **No** ☐ |
| The promotion of ethical purchasing of goods or services for example by increasing transparency of modern slavery in our supply chain? | **Yes** ☐ | **No** ☒ |
| Greater support for the local economy through the use of local suppliers, SMEs or engagement with third sector or community groups? | **Yes** ☐ | **No** ☒ |
| The promotion of better health, increased community resilience, social cohesion, reduced social isolation or support for sustainable development? | **Yes** ✓ | **No** ☐ |
| Mitigation of the likely effects of climate change (e.g. identifying proactive and community support for vulnerable groups; contingency planning for flood/snow, heatwaves and other weather extremes)? | **Yes** ☐ | **No** ☒ |
| The promotion of better awareness of sustainability, healthy behaviours, mental wellbeing, living independently or self-management? | **Yes** ☐ | **No** ☒ |
| **Please list the sections of this policy which specifically target improved sustainability:** | | |

| What is the *estimated* carbon impact of this policy (in terms of tCO2e) | Increased (+tCO2e) ☐ | Decreased (-tCO2e) ☐ | Net Zero CO2 ☐ |
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| Mandatory initial impact screening completed by: | **Jo Kear** |
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| **Date** | **12th August 2022** |
| Initial impact screening supported by (Please list each individual) | |

# Higher Education Access & Participation Policy 2022-2023

## 1. Policy Intent

1.1. This policy is intended to support South Gloucestershire and Stroud (SGS) College's commitments to the Office for Students (OFS) in our Access and Participation Plan (APP) for higher education (HE) students. The current APP is due to be renewed for the 2023-24 academic year. The full plan is published on our website : sgs_access_and_participation_plan_2020_2025_min.pdf (sgscol.ac.uk)

## 2. Scope

2.1. The College's Access and Participation Plan sets out in detail how we will improve equality of opportunity for underrepresented groups to access, succeed in, and progress from our higher education courses.

2.2. Analysis of data has identified that there are some underrepresented groups of students who are less likely to start a higher education course at SGS and other groups who are less likely to complete their studies. Our Access and Participation Plan is focussed on supporting the following groups:

Student groups that are less likely to access higher education courses at SGS:

- Students, particularly those who identify as male, living in more deprived areas (using the Index of Multiple Deprivation which measures relative deprivation in local areas).
- Ethnic minority students.

Student groups that are less likely to complete their studies at SGS:

- Students, particularly those who identify as male, who come from areas where not many young people go on to higher education (low participation neighbourhoods).
- Students with disabilities or learning difficulties.
- Students who are over 21 years old when starting their course.

## 3. Procedures - Implementation of the Access and Participation Policy

3.1. SGS is committed to ensuring all **information** provided for both prospective and current students is accurate, accessible and clearly written for the student to understand.

3.2. **Recruitment and collaborative events** are organised and held regularly. The College offers a variety of HE open day and other events to prospective students. The Student Experience Team engage with internal SGS students, local schools and communities to promote awareness of higher education courses.

   3.2.1 The SGS Connect Partnership Scheme offers bespoke outreach activities to participating schools. SGS also works with primary

and secondary schools to help promote self-esteem and raise aspiration as well as delivering general advice and guidance about higher education pathways.

3.2.2 The College attends and hosts UCAS events to promote opportunities to year 12 and 13 students. SGS will also continue to work in partnership to deliver career events specifically aimed at year 12 and 13 pupils. These events will continue to include all subject sector areas targeted by the West of England Combined Authority (WECA) and directly involve employers.

3.2.3 The College will continue to support collaborative initiatives with its Alliance partner, the University of Gloucestershire (UoG), to promote opportunities in the local area and work towards achieving the Partnership strategic objectives.

3.2.4 The College will support two regional initiatives for the duration of the contracts (called Gloucestershire Aspiration Project formerly called Gloucestershire Reaching out Wider) and 'Future Quest'). Both are NCOP funded Widening Participation (WP) initiatives which target specific schools and wards with historically low participation rates.

3.3. SGS' **internal progression**, **pre-admission advice and guidance** and **admissions** procedures are designed to support students into appropriate higher education programmes.

3.3.1 The College offers progression and bridging activities to existing learners to promote positive destinations into HE from a wide range of subject and course types.

3.3.2 The College's HE Admissions Co-ordinator manages the application process, arranges interviews, gives preapplication advice and guidance and provides support with UCAS applications, Student Finance applications, financial support and funding queries.

3.3.3 The College offers courses with achievable and fair UCAS tariff for HE entry in order to encourage engagement from those with lower grades, mature applicants with relevant experience or applicants from non-standard entry routes.

3.3.4 The College recognises and gives Accreditation to Prior Learning (APL) and, if appropriate, Accreditation to Prior Experiential Learning (APEL).

3.3.5 The College commits to retain Tier 4 accreditation, making our study opportunities accessible for international students.

3.4 SGS provides **financial**, **study** and **skills support** for higher education students to help them successfully stay on programme and complete their studies with positive outcomes.

3.4.1 The College offers financial support to students from underrepresented groups, including bursaries, scholarships and support for students who are experiencing unexpected financial difficulties. Students are referred to the Higher Education Fee and Bursary Policy 2022-23 and Higher Education Financial Assistance Policy 2022-23 for the financial support available.

3.4.2 The SGS Total Support Guide (TSG) seeks to provide students with a wraparound support service that provides support and interventions via the Learning Mentors, cross-college Learning Support and Student Wellbeing Services, Careers Services, English and Maths Extra, counselling and finance. HE students have access to the HE Disability team who can advise and monitor specific support needs and enable students by assisting with the development of the skills necessary to independent learning.

3.4.3 Student mentoring and skills support. Through the development of Level 6 programmes, SGS will structure a peer mentoring scheme which will provide students at this level with opportunities to support their employability. Additional study skills sessions are provided, on a group and/or a one-to-one basis, by our teams in the Learning Resource Centres (LRCs) and DSA funded study skills sessions are provided by the Study Skills Practitioner.

3.4.4 SGS supports students wishing to apply for Disabled Student Allowances (DSA) via our dedicated HE Disability Adviser. Students can also apply for a one-off payment from the Hardship Fund to help with the cost of the DSA report.

3.4.5 The HE Academic Standards and Support Team oversee the Extenuating Circumstances (EC) process for all HE students. The team liaises closely with the relevant Subject Area Leads, Programme Leads, tutors and individual students to provide extra support, make reasonable adjustments and/or apply acceptable concessions in certain cases.

3.4.6 The Higher Education Team will regularly monitor attendance and inventions will be made if attendance falls below 80%. Once identified as 'at risk', students will fall subject to the HE non-engagement process. Students are referred to the HE Attendance and Engagement Policy 2022-23 for details of this process.

3.5 SGS is committed to providing a **flexible** and **accessible Higher Education curriculum** to provide choice for our students.

3.5.1 SGS will maintain a high percentage of courses that can be studied on a part-time and flexible basis. These routes enable

access to study for those who have, for example, significant external commitments.

3.5.2 SGS commits to enabling students' flexibility in their HE studies and will support students wherever possible to:

- Transfer within SGS College from one course to another;
- Transfer mode of study e.g. move from full-time to part-time;
- Transfer to SGS College from another HE provider;
- Transfer from SGS College to another HE provider.
- Temporary pause study for up to 2 years

3.5.3 SGS will continue to offer a mixture of qualifications at level 4 and above, including higher level short courses, Higher Nationals, Foundation Degrees, Level 6 'Top up' Years and Full First Degrees.

3.5.4 The College has recognised that a large majority of students have difficulty with examinations and has introduced alternative coursework-based assessments which allow for regular formative and summative assessments of varying types (e.g. presentations, written essays, group work etc.)

## 4. Policy Implementation

4.1. The College wide Higher Education Team is responsible for implementation of the Higher Education Access and Participation Policy; including:

4.1.2 Vice Principal, Performance, Standards and Effectiveness

4.1.3 Director of HE

4.1.4 Head of HE Student Experience

4.2.5 Head of HE Admissions, Data and Insight

4.2.6 HE Co-ordinator

4.2.7 HE Admissions Co-ordinator

4.2.8 HE Disability and Mental Health Support Advisor

4.2.9 HE Curriculum, Standards and Quality Team

4.2.10 HE Student Experience Team

4.2.11 HE Subject Area Leads

4.2.12 HE Programme Leads

4.2.13 Academic Tutors

Evaluation of the effectiveness of the Policy and the associated activities to support access and participation are monitored by the Access and Participation Group (APG). This group was formerly known as the Widening Participation and Retention Group (WPRG). The APG is made up of a panel of staff and students involved in HE at SGS and who meet regularly to assess the impact on students, to identify whether the targets and milestones in our published Access and Participation Plan are being met and to identify areas of good practice and to put in place interventions if necessary.

## 5. Enforcement

5.1. Students who receive financial support from SGS must be fully committed to completing their programme.  If for any reason this does not occur, then the student may be required to repay any funds paid to them

5.2. The College will terminate the award of financial support for any student who ceases to be an enrolled student of SGS, for whatever reason. Students may be required to repay any payment made within that term as a result of withdrawing.

5.3. Higher Education students are expected to engage positively with the College, its agents and employees. Students will at all times maintain regular contact with their tutors and commit to their studies through positive engagement and regular attendance. Students are referred to the Higher Education Student Code of Conduct for further information about expectations of student behaviour.

## 6. Related Policies, Procedures, Charters, Plans, Guidance and Legislation

6.1. HE Financial Assistance Policy

6.2. Higher Education Attendance & Engagement Policy

6.3. Higher Education Student Code of Conduct

6.4. SGS Inclusion Policy

6.5 HE Fee and Bursary Policy

6.6 SGS Applications, Admissions and Enrolments Policy and Procedure

## 7. Impact

7.1 The HE Access and Participation Policy is to support all our HE students to access, succeed in and progress from higher education and to improve the equality of opportunity for underrepresented groups in our HE provision.