

# HE WIDENING & PARTICIPATION STATEMENT

<b>Audience:</b>	X-COLLEGE/STAFF
<b>Requirement:</b>	ADDITIONAL
<b>Policy Owner:</b>	Executive Director Business & Civic Partnerships
<b>Review Delegation:</b>	C&Q Committee
<b>Review Cycle:</b>	Every 2 years
<b>Last Review:</b>	June 2025
<b>Due for Review:</b>	June 2027

## **South Hampshire College Group Fair Access and Widening Participation Statement**

The South Hampshire College Group is committed to providing the means by which non-traditional learners can experience and succeed in higher education (HE). Fair access to higher education is a strategic priority for the UK government to improve the 'life chances and opportunity for all and enhance the competitiveness and productivity of the economy.' As outlined in the recently published "Get Britain Working" white paper, *"areas with higher levels of deprivation often have lower levels of educational attainment, and areas with higher unemployment rates and lower average incomes typically have a higher percentage of adults with no qualifications."* SHCG are committed to creating inclusive and accessible career pathways through our Higher Education offer that aligns carefully to regional skills priorities.

Accessible pathways to HE are provided at levels 4, 5 and 6, including higher apprenticeship programmes at level 4. To provide our curriculum, we work with a range of university partners as well as offering Pearson Higher Nationals. Our academic offer includes:

- Pearson Higher Nationals in Film and TV, Music, Art, Photography, Computing, Engineering, Civil Engineering.
- Dip HE and BA/BSc in Counselling (Middlesex and Portsmouth Universities)
- HNCs and HNDs in a range of engineering disciplines. (University of Portsmouth)
- HNC in Construction (University of Portsmouth)
- Foundation Degrees in Early Childhood, Learning Support. (University of Portsmouth)
- Cert Ed and PGCE (University of Portsmouth)

Our HE curriculum is aimed at a diverse audience with some courses providing progression routes for level 3 students looking for an alternative to university with other courses aimed at those already in employment and looking to develop knowledge to enhance their current career or provide them with the skills to launch a new one.

The South Hampshire College Group employs a range of initiatives to enhance participation rates in HE:

### **Public information**

SHCG publishes detailed pre-course information about content, costs, awards and the complaints-handling process on its website to help students make the right choice. Our admissions teams are able to provide information to applicants, including putting them in contact with course leaders when more specific conversations about course content are required. SHCG will inform applicants of any changes made to course structure or content after

an application has been received. This supports continuation, success, and a good student experience.

### **Information, Advice and Guidance**

Information about our HE offer is provided to our current students through the tutorial programme, targeted talks to classes where our HE offer provides a relevant progression opportunity and through individual progression conversations with individual students. Those who are identified as unlikely to progress to university are identified and offered one to one guidance to consider alternative routes to HE via SHCG.

SHCG regularly attends HE Fairs at schools and colleges within the region to raise awareness of our HE offer. HE is always represented at open evenings and other events.

Our employer hub is being developed to provide a single, easily accessed source of information for employers seeking higher level training opportunities for their workforce and to help us increase the take up of level 4 and 5 courses in the region.

### **Funding**

SHCG accesses all available funding to support access to HE and successful outcomes for WP students, e.g. people with disabilities, those from minority ethnic groups, service families and those who require support with mental health, who require additional investment to remove barriers to transition, continuation, and progression. SHCG provides support for those needing assistance in applying for DSA and signposts applicants to sources of funding at multiple points during the application and induction process.

### **Transition**

SHCG encourages progression into the College's HE courses from Level 3, using mature students, ambassadors, and alumni, in the workplace and the community, through collaborative outreach networks, such as NCOP and the local enterprise partnership (LEP).

### **Student Voice**

Participation in the National Student Survey (NSS) and Graduate Outcomes surveys publicly demonstrates the College's performance on student satisfaction, retention, and graduate employment to prospective applicants. SHCG also encourages participation in the internal end of year survey and conducts focus groups with each course during the year. The results from these student voice activities will be used to inform future widening participation work.

### **Curriculum**

Our curriculum aims to increase inclusion by being responsive and offering flexible study options and delivery models at sub-degree level, i.e. short-cycle courses rather than the traditional three-year degree and a variety of vocational, professional, and technical programmes and apprenticeships in response to local community and employers' needs maximising opportunities for progression into employment.

### **Teaching and Learning**

SHCG is committed to offering high quality, stimulating pedagogy, assessment, and feedback in order to foster an inclusive learning environment and elicit the best performance from students unfamiliar with the expectations of HE; a programme of interventions and learning support underpin student retention, helps students to overcome barriers and provides insight into the issues HE students are experiencing.

Emphasis is placed on workplace skills, ensuring that SHCG graduates master an academic subject and leave equipped with the employable skills and attributes to take their place in the world of work.

### **Student Retention, Attainment and Success**

All measures are employed to mitigate any chance of a poor student experience leading to withdrawal from the course. Termly progress boards are held for all HE courses to monitor student retention and attainment to ensure that action can be taken promptly where required to target students in need of additional support.

### **Employer Involvement**

The government is concerned with social justice, social mobility and encouraging enterprises to address the skills shortages in the labour market and the supply of higher skills; SHCG's HE programmes are devised in conjunction with Solent LSIP strategic themes –

- transition into employment, development of world-class skills, raising business investment in skills,
- responsive skills and employment system. SHCG acknowledges the value of employers as careers advisers for prospective applicants;
- employer involvement in curriculum, assessment and programme design ensures technical and professional HE qualifications are relevant, and course content is current to the occupation or sector to facilitate progression into high-value jobs and longer-term employment.

SHCG has established Industry Advisory Boards in all sectors and these are to provide a mechanism for regular consultation with employers to ensure our curriculum offer remains orientated to addressing the skills employers need.

### **Evaluation and Assessment**

Providing HE locally for L4 and L5 programmes raise aspirations and remove barriers to progression, narrowing the skills and attainment gaps and promoting positive routes into HE.

Learning is personalised to maximise retention rates, attainment, and progression. Each student acquires the knowledge, skills, and attributes valued by employers, thereby enriching their personal and professional lives and are supported to achieve a suitable qualification and progress into work.

SHCG constantly reflects on how its strategies and activities impact successful student outcomes and examines the reasons for this to better target resources and funding for future cohorts.