



Richmond upon
Thames College

Student Engagement Strategy

2017-2020

1. Introduction

Student engagement is recognised as an integral element of College strategy and the College recognises that student's contributions are integral to the students' and the College's success. Richmond upon Thames College believes that when its students participate in decision-making, their contributions have a direct impact on the quality of provision and will enable us to achieve our purpose *"to drive aspiration, ambition and achievement."*

Actively engaging students underpins strategic decision-making, operational management processes and informs quality improvement planning. The embedded student survey approach to seeking student views has been effective in responding to student views; furthermore, the College is clear that effectively involving students in decision-making requires more than simplistic mechanisms for collecting and responding to feedback.

This strategy aims to develop a culture of broader student engagement through the promotion and support of a range of activities which will enable students to voice their opinions and be involved in the decision-making, thereby informing and shaping the College's future.

The College's values underpin the culture of consulting and involving students in decision making.

2. Scope

The student engagement strategy supports our strategic theme to *"embed student engagement into everything we do and actively listen to student voice."* This strategy refers to students who are: either full or part time; aged 14-16, 16-18 and 19+/adult and Higher Education; based at the College's campus, apprentices and those in the workplace.

3. Aims

All students, individually and collectively, are entitled to participate in the development of their College through consultation. The College will work with students and their representative structures to create opportunities to participate in engagement processes.

The full value of student engagement requires a co-ordinated approach across the College to improving access and tackling barriers as perceived by learners, unlocking their potential to help drive improvements. In delivering this strategy the College seeks to:

- Develop a culture where students are motivated to give constructive feedback, where they see their feedback is taken seriously, and where teachers have the skills to encourage and respond positively to feedback;
- Treat students as equal partners in the shaping of their learning experience;
- Foster an inclusive culture where all individuals and groups of students have opportunities to contribute, and where the principles of equality and diversity inform all student involvement activity;
- Actively involve students and staff in the identification of activities, which they feel will provide opportunities for students to be equal partners in the shaping of their learning experience;
- Bring about improvement in the quality of teaching, learning and assessment through engaging students in development of the curriculum and providing feedback;
- Personalise learning, making students the co-creators of their learning;

- Gain and consider the views and interests of other parties who directly impact on students' success including parents, carers and employers;
- Develop more sophisticated structures and KPIs to measure the contributions and impact of student engagement;

4. Engagement of Students

Effectively engaging students in decision making requires an on-going and constructive dialogue with students in order to encourage greater involvement. For this to be achieved students need to develop the confidence and skills to understand and manage their own learning needs. Students who understand how they learn best will be able to take a more active role in managing their learning.

The College is therefore committed to ensuring a wide range of channels to consult and engage with students. These channels can be seen in diagram 1.

Students will be encouraged and supported to be actively involved in decision making in the following areas of the College's work:

- Teaching learning and assessment including the development of employability skills;
- Quality improvement activities;
- Equality, diversity and inclusion;
- Curriculum development;
- The appointment of staff;
- Estates and infrastructure;
- Marketing and communications;
- Broader aspects of College life, including enrichment and extra-curricular activities.

A broad range of channels will be designed to ensure that all students in the College community are able to participate and no group is disadvantaged. The College will also seek to ensure that no student is financially disadvantaged for their participation in student engagement activities.

4.1 Pre-enrolment

Potential students will be encouraged to participate in a variety of opportunities prior to enrolment which will inform their course choice and transition from school to College, as well as providing the opportunity for staff to reinforce college expectations. Examples of opportunities for potential students:

- Visits to schools by the School Liaison Officer
- Open events
- Taster sessions
- Subject presentations and interviews with curriculum staff
- Guidance interview and Specialist Support Interview
- Moodle site for information and advice prior to enrolling
- Early intervention interviews for students who have been identified as requiring specific support from Student Services including safeguarding and those with mental health concerns who may require a Wellbeing Assessment

4.2 Induction

Students will be inducted into College life through a comprehensive induction programme which covers topics including

- Staying Safe including E-Safety
- Prevent (prevention of radicalisation and extremism)
- British values

- Learner Voice – Course Reps and Student Union
- Moodle and Portal
- Induction to the LRC
- Monitoring processes and setting SMART targets

4.3 Tutorials

Teacher Tutors will deliver group tutorials and 1 to 1 sessions.

Group tutorials will follow a cross college scheme of work to help develop students' personal development, behaviour and welfare. The tutorial information will enable students to become more resilient and prepare themselves for life and work. Themes include:

- Study Skills
- Employability
- Progression
- Risky Behaviour and the impact this can have on achievement
- Wellbeing sessions such as mental health, exam stress, healthy relationships, drugs and alcohol awareness, and sexual health
- Monitoring procedures
- How learners can protect themselves from the risks associated with radicalisation, extremism, forms of abuse, grooming and bullying, including through the use of the internet,
- How students can raise concerns if they do not feel safe
- Learners' understanding of their rights and responsibilities as a learner and, where relevant and promotion of good and productive working relationships with their peers

Individual tutorials will provide students with an opportunity to discuss their attendance and academic progress, set SMART targets along with their tutors, raise any concerns and explore progression opportunities including:

- Target setting
- Academic monitoring
- Attendance monitoring
- Ensuring ALS support is in place
- Specific progression advice such as UCAS references/personal statements and job/apprenticeship applications
- Referrals to careers department
- Barriers to learning and progression

4.4 Enrichment

There are a number of opportunities for students to engage in enrichment activities that will enhance and support the Learner Journey including:

- HE Fair
- Volunteering and Fundraising activities
- Work and Training Fair
- Student Ambassador programme
- Sports clubs
- Student Union events
- Curriculum workshops, trips and visits outside of timetabled hours

The Enrichment Programme is a cross college strategy to engage students in activities that will enhance their experience of college, increase community cohesion and develop employability skills and allow all students to explore personal, social and ethical issues and take part in life in wider society and in Britain.

We aim to work with external organisations to form partnerships that will engage and benefit students and strengthen community cohesion and social action. These organisations include:

- National Citizen Service (NCS) and The Challenge
- National Union of Students (NUS)
- Nominated Charity (Shooting Stars Chase)

4.5 Student Representatives

In the first month after Induction every tutor group will be asked to elect their Student Reps. Course Rep meeting should take place during tutorials and feed into the Curriculum Area Forums that are chaired by the Curriculum Managers.

There are the following formal meetings that Student Reps and/or the Student Union are invited to attend:

- Curriculum Forums – attended by Student Reps and Chaired by Curriculum Managers – 1 per term
- Student Forums – attended by College management, Student Reps and Student Union – 1 per term

Clear actions and outcomes must be communicated to students throughout every stage.

Elected Student Reps receive a handbook, training and support to help them understand their roles.

4.6 Student Union

The College is a member of the National Union of Students. The Student Union Executive elections take place in April and they are in post from September till the following July.

There are the following formal meetings:

- Student Union Executive meeting – attended by Student Union Exec – weekly
- College Management Team meeting – attended by President and Vice President – 3 weekly
- Student Liaison Committee – attended by Student Governors and Corporation - 1 per term

The College and RuTC Student Union works closely with the National Union of Students (NUS) to further develop their skills, knowledge and understanding of the Learner Voice and plan their priorities and campaigns.

Student Union Executives receive training and an induction to help them understand their role and responsibilities.

5. Student Feedback

The College seeks to gain student views in a number of formal ways so that areas for improvement and student satisfaction can be monitored, actions agreed and then reviewed to help improve the student experience.

5.1 Student Survey and Student Listening Posts

The College gathers student feedback using the QDP student survey. There are three surveys throughout the year; Induction, On-programme and End of Year.

The College also participates in the Education and Skills Funding Agency and the Department for Education, FE Choices Survey, which opens between October and May every year and performance indicators are held on the national Careers Services and the apprenticeship service web page.

The Assistant Principal Student Experience also holds student listening posts 3 times a year to monitor student satisfaction and address any emerging concerns or issues.

Results from these surveys are used to identify areas for improvement and areas of good practice based on students' satisfaction or dissatisfaction. Students are consulted on areas where they are dissatisfied and student focus groups are held if appropriate. Actions to improve satisfaction and areas of concern are recorded and monitored and feedback is given to students through the 'You Said, We Did' campaigns.

5.2 Poll to Go

Curriculum staff are using Poll to Go with students to gather feedback on particular aspects of teaching and learning, enabling instant feedback to the teacher.

6. Benefits of Engaging Students

The College recognises that effective student engagement impacts positively on students, staff and the wider College.

Benefits for students:

- A more responsive, engaging, higher quality offer that empowers students in shaping their own learning experience;
- Improved outcomes for more students, especially those who might otherwise not succeed;
- Increased confidence and self-esteem;
- Development of citizenship skills which enables students to become active members of their communities and, in turn, develops core skills necessary for employment;
- Develop the confidence and skills to understand and manage their own learning needs.

For our staff:

- Valuable feedback to help improve aspects of process and practice;
- The development of new ideas to improve teaching, learning and assessment;
- Improved quality of student-teacher relationships;
- Identification of problems impeding students' progress.

For the College:

- Creates a mutually respectful, collaborative environment in which to work and study;
- Increased participation, retention, progression and achievement of students who feel more involved and are motivated to put something back into the College;
- Students who are more expert and independent, and who can help to shape learning experiences tailored to meet their needs and objectives in a way that achieves success;
- Better quality information about the students' perspectives, which can be used to drive professional and organisational development, and quality improvement;
- Vibrant Alumni association 'Made in Richmond' with effective engagement post-study.

7. Communication

We aim to communicate and engage with students, parents, guardians and carers to encourage them to contribute to the student experience, provide feedback and have an opportunity to feel part of the College community.

The College Pro Monitor system is also used for both student and parent feedback to enable access to information about progress, attendance and parent reports, it is called Portal.

7.1 students

- Student Weekly News
- Portal communication
- RuTC Twitter page
- Letters, emails and text service
- Noticeboards, plasma screens and ticker tape
- Moodle page

7.2 Parents

- Letters, emails and text service
- Parents evening
- Parents reports sent in January
- Social Media
- College Website
- Portal communication

We also use a combination of feedback from events where parents and guardians visit the College such as Open Evenings and Parent's Evenings.

8. Measuring Contributions

In assessing the impact of this strategy the College will take account of key performance indicators (attendance, punctuality, achievement, retention, pass rates and student response rates to surveys) as well as feedback from students, staff and parents. Two methods will be adopted for measuring the contributions and impact of student engagement:

Outcome measures are measures of the wider impact of student engagement to identify how it is making a difference, including:

- Developments which have been shaped or influenced by student involvement;
- Services or processes which have been improved as a result of student involvement;
- Content of self-assessment and performance improvement actions linking directly to documented students' views;
- Demonstrable evidence as to how student feedback is used to identify and spread good practice.

Process measures are measures of how successful the College is at engaging students:

- Participation and involvement: *what groups of students are taking up opportunities provided, and how many?*
- Inclusion: *are diverse groups of students taking up opportunities equally?*
- Reporting back: *is the impact of students' views and involvement being communicated to students?*
- Satisfaction with process: *are students themselves satisfied with the processes that are available to engage them?*

9. Responsibility

The responsibility for effectively engaging students lies with all staff.

The review of the student engagement strategy is the responsibility of the Assistant Principal Student Experience.

10. Quality Assurance and Reporting

An annual report evaluating the impact of the student engagement strategy will be provided to the CLT and to the Corporation. The evaluation of impact and outcomes will inform the review of the existing and development of subsequent strategies.

11. Links to Other Strategies and Policies

- College Strategic Plan
- Equality and Diversity Action Plan
- Child and Vulnerable Adult Protection Policy
- Teaching, Learning and Assessment Policy
- Tutoring Policy

Diagram 1

