



**Richmond upon
Thames College**

**Student Engagement Strategy
2020-2023**

1. Introduction

Student engagement is recognised as an essential element of College strategy and the College recognises that students' contributions are integral to the students' and the College's success. Richmond upon Thames College believes that when its students are treated as partners 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."*

Richmond upon Thames College firmly believes that actively engaging students is key in underpinning strategic decision-making, operational management processes and informing curriculum and quality improvement planning. *This engagement needs to be authentic, meaningful and build on their knowledge, skills, experiences and aspirations* (AoC, 2019). Embracing learner views and providing them with the opportunity to have direct involvement in assessing and shaping their own learning experience will have a significant impact on developing the College's quality improvement processes and increasing student success. Furthermore, the College is clear that effectively involving students in decision-making requires more than simplistic mechanisms for collecting and responding to feedback, but requires student led activities which enable them to discuss and share their views with governors and college management, thereby impacting on the educational character and leading to continuous and sustainable improvement.

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 shaping the College's future through continuous and sustainable improvement. This engagement is central to all elements of College strategy and operations relating to quality of education: planning, delivery and evaluation of the effectiveness

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, learning through subcontracted provision, apprentices and those in the workplace.

3. Aims/Intent

All students, individually and collectively, are entitled to participate in the development of their College through inclusion, consultation and collaboration. 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 of partnership and engagement where students are motivated to give constructive feedback, where they see their feedback is respected, listened to and taken seriously, and where staff have the skills to encourage and respond positively to feedback and act on it;
- Treat students as equal partners in the shaping of their learning experience;
- Value, promote and embed student engagement and develop a culture where college processes build in opportunities for all individuals and groups of students to contribute feedback;

- Ensure inclusive student representative structures and commit sufficient resources, training and development to support them
- Encourage high participation in all student elections, consultations and surveys so the student voice is heard
- Support students to develop the skills and confidence to actively participate, through involvement in volunteering, personal development, leadership activities and Youth social action
- Promote equality, inclusion and ensure that student engagement reflects the diversity of the student cohort.
- 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 design, planning for delivery and providing feedback;
- Enhance students' skills, knowledge and confidence in relation to participation, leadership, advocacy and deliberation, through the development of informed, critical thinking and citizenship skills.
- Support students in making the connection between student engagement and values of equality, democracy, the rule of law, respect and tolerance, individual freedom, political literacy and broader social issues.
- Draw on students' feedback to personalise learning through self-assessment processes, making students the co-creators of their educational experience;
- Where appropriate, gain and consider the views and interests of other parties whose engagement may 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. Development of skills and confidence to actively participate (Implementation)

Effectively engaging students in decision making requires an on-going and constructive dialogue with students in order to increase collaboration and encourage greater involvement. For this to be achieved students need to develop the confidence and skills to take responsibility for shaping their educational development, manage their own learning needs and become active citizens within modern Britain. Students who understand how they learn best will be able to take a more active role in managing their learning.

4.1 Pre-enrolment

The College seeks to involve the views of learners in pre-16 settings as one of a number of elements in the complex curriculum design process: the curriculum offers in feeder institutions and learners' perceptions of and attitudes towards the detailed elements of these offers can provide valuable information to support the College's own curriculum design. Potential students will be encouraged to participate in a variety of opportunities prior to enrolment which will inform ongoing curriculum design, 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:

- School Liaison activities, including gathering insights and views
- 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 in modern Britain. Themes include:

- Study Skills
- Employability
- Progression
- Risky Behaviour and the impact this can have on achievement
- Understanding of values, including British values and how these contribute to life in modern Britain
- Wellbeing sessions such as academic resilience, mental health, exam stress, healthy relationships, drugs and alcohol awareness, and sexual health
- 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, social action and Fundraising activities
- Work and Training Fair
- Student Ambassador programme
- Sports clubs
- Peer support groups such as LGBTQ group
- 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)
- Young Enterprise
- National Union of Students (NUS)
- Nominated Charity (Shooting Stars Chase)

5. Student Feedback to understand perspectives in order to drive organisational development and quality improvement:

The College seeks to involve students and gain their 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, motivation and achievement.

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 assurance activities (e.g. Curriculum Performance Reviews, self-assessment reviews)
- Quality improvement activities;
- Equality, diversity and inclusion;
- Curriculum planning and 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.

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.

5.1 Course Representatives

In the first month after Induction every tutor group will be asked to elect their Course Representatives. Opportunities for student views and feedback to be elicited by the Course Representative are planned within the tutorial scheme of work and feed into the forum meetings.

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

- Curriculum Forums – attended by Course Representatives and Chaired by Curriculum Managers – 1 per term – from this Student Representatives will be nominated from the Course Representatives to attend:
- Cross College Student Forums – attended by College management, up to 2 governors, Student Representatives and Student Union – 1 per term

Forums must be minuted with clear actions and outcomes must be communicated to students throughout every stage.

Elected Course Representatives will receive a handbook, training and support to help them understand their roles.

5.2 Student Union

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

There are the following formal meetings:

- Student Union Executive meeting – attended by Student Union Executive – weekly
- College Management Team meeting – attended by President and Vice President – 3 weekly

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.

5.3 Student Governors

Two students will be elected as student governors on an annual basis from the student body. The Student Governors may include the President of the Student Union.

5.4 Student Survey and Student Listening Posts

The College gathers student feedback on specific topics related to quality of experience 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 Head of Student Services also holds student listening posts 3 times a year to monitor student satisfaction and address any emerging concerns or issues.

Analysis of learner from these surveys are used to identify areas for improvement and areas of good practice which inform the school area and whole College SAR/QIP. Student are consulted on areas where they are dissatisfied and student focus groups are held if appropriate.

5.5 Specific groups/committee's

The College will run themed strategic or focus groups to capture the learner voice, recording actions on concerns that they have raised in other platforms. The College will use this feedback to improve the quality of the learner experience and measure the impact on activities. Students will also be invited to sit on specific committee's e.g. Equality and Diversity.

5.6 Curriculum Area course evaluations

Curriculum staff will complete a range of student course evaluations to gather feedback on particular aspects of teaching and learning, curriculum, assessment and overall experience to inform self-assessment and review. They may use evaluation tools such as interviews, focus groups and surveys enabling instant feedback to the teacher.

5.7. Governor interaction with students to seek views (addition)

Up to two governors to attend each student forum meeting with standing agenda item for dialogue on key themes.

Corporation members to engage in learning walks within the college to speak to students about their experiences.

Corporation/ College to seek the views of learners on any major matter of strategy or provision that is likely to impact on the 'student experience' •

Corporation / College to ensure that all papers reviewing and making recommendations about College facilities or provision have been subject to an appropriate level of engagement with learners

5.8 Student involvement in staff appointments

Students will be involved in a variety of ways with key staff appointments. These may take place in the below form:

- Micro-teaching sessions as part of teacher recruitment process
- Focus groups with Managers

5.9 Open door policy

There is a two-way open-door policy between the Head of Student Services and the Student Union, which includes all students at the college, to allow free liaison and the rapid raising of issues of concern.

6. Benefits of Engaging Students (Impact)

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 curriculum offer that empowers students in shaping their own learning experience;
- Improved attendance and punctuality
- Improved outcomes for students, especially those who might otherwise not succeed;
- Increased confidence and self-esteem, linking to progression and employability;
- 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 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
- 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, value added 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 Head of Student Services, working with the Deputy Principal & CEO (Curriculum and Quality).

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, which will be used to inform the overall Self-Assessment Report. 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
- Quality Improvement Plan
- Equality and Diversity Action Plan
- Child and Vulnerable Adult Protection Policy
- Teaching, Learning and Assessment Policy
- Tutoring Policy

Diagram 1

