

South-Thames College

Access Agreement 2016-17

Information about the College

The College is a large general further education (FE) college and is one of the largest providers of education and training in London. Following a highly successful merger with Merton College in 2009, the College has main campuses in Wandsworth, Merton and Tooting.

The College enrolled a total 18,300 learners in 2013/14 on a mix of accredited and non- accredited programmes ranging from pre-entry to degree level. The continuing aim of the College is to deliver flexible, high-quality, learner centred and business focused education and training that responds to the cultural diversity of the community, enriches lives and contributes to economic prosperity.

The College serves some of the most deprived wards in southwest London with centres in Wandsworth, Merton and Tooting. Most of the College's students live locally. Approximately 75% of the students live in areas classified as being socially disadvantaged. 45% of HE students are female and approximately 75 % are from minority ethnic groups (2013-14 data).

The Colleges own HE provision is primarily Pearson validated HN programmes. There is a smaller amount of franchised Foundation Degree and Bachelors, and very small amount of postgraduate. Historically the majority of HE provision at the College has been delivered as part-time mode of study, in particular HNC courses delivered in part time mode but at relatively high intensity. Students studying in this mode would actually prefer to be full-time.

With the government policy to extend full-time places in HE and 'open up the market' in 2012/13, the College received a full-time allocation but limited to 45 places. This required the College to ensure that a limited range of full-time higher national courses were available in addition to the existing part-time courses. From 2015/16, there will cease to be a limit on full-time places, which will enable the College to respond accordingly to local need.

The College reserves the right to increase fees as follows:

- Below the basic fee Level in 16-17 – in line with market forces and/or inflation. (Should this result in courses going over the basic fee threshold OFFA will be consulted)
- Above the basic fee level in 16-17 – as permitted by Government

College Mission

In July 2014, the College updated its mission statement to emphasise a core remit to provide vocational education and training to support progression to employment and further learning. The 'Strategic Plan 2014-17'¹ sets out the mission statement, which is:

'Leading excellence in learning for jobs and careers'. This is supported by the vision statement, 'At South Thames College, we aim to be the leading college for career- focused education and training. Our goal is to motivate and challenge learners to achieve excellence and to progress within a supportive and inclusive learning environment. Our curriculum is shaped continually by the best industry relationships and we are a professional team who lead an innovative and outstanding student experience. We are a publicly valued stakeholder and a leading contributor to the local and London community.'

The College is underpinned by 3 simple core values:

- *Learning*
- *Excellence*
- *Teamwork*

The Strategic Plan also sets out 5 strategic priorities:

- *An Outstanding Student Experience*
- *An industry-led ethos of learning and teaching*
- *At the forefront of jobs and careers in London*
- *A talented staff of leading professionals*
- *A financially sustainable future*

Fees

The College undertakes to publish clear and accessible information on the level of fees and financial support offered. This will be done primarily through the College website and prospectus (which will clearly state which year published fees apply to). The College further undertakes to provide timely and accurate fee information to UCAS and the SLC.

The large majority of HE courses offered will have fees below the basic level. All students on FT Pearson HNs will be charged between £4250 and £4950 PA. Students on FD courses are franchised numbers and therefore fall outside the scope of this agreement (but are currently charged £4950). Students on the new BSc Live Sound and Studio Engineering will be charged £9000 PA.

Fees for part-time students will not be higher than £4,500 PA.

Access, Progression and Student Success

The College aims to spend £24,00 (£14,500 OFFA countable) in 2016-17 rising to £30,00 (£25,000 OFFA countable) in 2018-19 on access measures.

The breakdown of this is as follows.

- Progression: total OFFA Countable spend to be £6,500 in 16-17 rising to £7,500 in 19-20.
- Student Success: Total OFFA Countable spend to be £6,500 in 16-17 rising to £7,500 in 19-20.
- Access: total OFFA Countable spend to be £8,000 in 16-17 rising to £10,000 in 19-20.
- Financial Support: total OFFA countable spend to be £6,000

This expenditure will be focused on four main areas:

1. Improving non-continuation rates for both FT and PT students (Progression)
2. Developing collaborative partnerships in order to widen access (Access)
3. Developing new flexible distance learning provision specifically to appeal to mature and non-standard entrants. (Access)
4. Funding £6,000 of for student hardship payments of £500 each to students eligible for Government grant payments (residual household income up to £42,620 in 14-15). These payments will be available annually.

In terms of progression, continuation rates for both FT and PT students were 68% and 54% respectively in 2013-14. A new student ILP and tracking system which has been very effective in increasing retention and achievement at FE level will be initially trialled in 14-15 and subsequently rolled out to all HE provision in future years. Allied to this will be additional tutorial sessions where students can work with staff to set and review individualised targets.

For outreach the College has a good network of local School partners which helps facilitate progression to HE, but will further strengthen this through active membership of Aim Higher South London. In particular the College will initially participate in and subsequently host the HE in FE event offered to all member schools and colleges for year 12 students. Additional income will allow for both the membership costs, and the staff resource required to participate in the range of events offered by AHSL.

Following changes to the Access to Learning fund and the generally difficult funding climate it has become harder to offer hardship funds to HE students. The additional income generated from some higher fees will allow the college to offer a number of lower amount (max £500) hardship payments to students eligible for a maintenance grant.

The College has many mature students studying on courses up to and including Level 3, many of these returning to education or up-skilling in order to improve their life chances. Currently the College also has relatively high numbers of students classed as part-time. However most of these would actually prefer to be studying full-time, and with changes to student number control in 15-16 we expect part-time numbers to decline sharply. In order to counteract this, the College will develop and market a totally distance learning HNC targeted at mature students and non-standards entrants.

Targets and Milestones

The College is committed to getting the best value from its spend, and set itself the following targets:

- To improve the non-continuation rates for part-time HE by 12%; and full-time by 12% over a 5 year period
- To recruit a total of 40 non-traditional/mature students per year by 2017-18 to a distance learning HNC in Business Management.
- To roll out the ProMonitor student ILP/student tracking system to HE students by 2015-16
- To continue to be active members of Aim Higher South London.

Equality and Diversity

The College has developed this Access Agreement to meet the legislative context of the Equality Act 2010. The Equality and Diversity Board terms of reference reflect the social, moral and legal responsibilities of Equality Act 2010. The Act underpins the College's inclusive ethos and operational delivery to ensure that no one is directly or indirectly discriminated against because of their protected characteristic.

South Thames College is committed to ensuring equality in all that it does. The College celebrates and values the diversity brought to its workforce by individuals, and believes that the College will benefit from attracting and retaining staff and learners from a variety of backgrounds. The College expects all staff, volunteers and those contracted to provide services to share this commitment.

The College has developed its equality and diversity policy to enable the achievement of its aim of promoting Equalities and Diversity and achieving the strategic objective of 'vigorously promoting equality and diversity and challenging discriminatory practice in all aspects of the College's work.'

The College's higher education provision is delivered out of the Wandsworth campus. In the borough of Wandsworth the BAME percentage of the

population is 25% (London Ave 40%, *2011 census*). The College's HE provision is by comparison 75% BAME.

UCAS and HESA data clearly shows that women are more likely to enter HE than men. At South Thames College the HE student cohort is 55% male, compared to circa 44% reported in 2012-13 HESA data. Approximately 75% of the students live in areas classified as being socially disadvantaged

The College actively promotes equality throughout its sphere of operation. The Equality and Diversity Boards reviews achievement data annually in relation to achievement gaps, implementing actions as appropriate.

Monitoring and evaluation

Ultimately the College's Corporation will monitor strategic progress towards meeting targets set in this Access Agreement, Whilst the Senior Management Team (SLT) will oversee the operational monitoring and evaluation of the Access Agreement. Data will be produced by College Information Services, and an annual evaluative report prepared by the Vice Principal Quality & Curriculum for consideration initially by SLT, and subsequently by Corporation. If progress towards meeting targets is not satisfactory, appropriate actions will be taken. In all cases monitoring will be evidence based and consider progress against specific targets, and also against the general progress being made within the sector.

Student Consultation

This Access Agreement has been shared with the HE student forum, which is the College's primary consultative mechanism for HE matters. The Agreement has been partially amended in light of feedback received.

Table 7 - Targets and milestones

Institution name: South Thames College

Institution UKPRN: 10005997

Table 7a - Statistical targets and milestones relating to your applicants, entrants or student body

Reference number	Please select target type from the drop-down menu	Description (500 characters maximum)	Is this a collaborative target?	Baseline year	Baseline data	Yearly milestones (numeric where possible, however you may use text)					Commentary on your milestones/targets or textual description where numerical description is not appropriate (500 characters maximum)
						2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	
T16a_01	Other statistic - Completion/Non continuation (please give details in the next column)	Increase continuation rate for FT students from 68% to 70%	No	2013-14	68%	72	74	76	78	80	Access Agreement submitted in April 2015 for academic year 16-17 for 1 course only which had not been advertised previously. Therefore no progress to report at this stage.
T16a_02	Other statistic - Completion/Non continuation (please give details in the next column)	Increase continuation rate for PT students from 54% to 66%	No	2013-14	54%	58	60	62	64	66	Access Agreement submitted in April 2015 for academic year 16-17 for 1 course only which had not been advertised previously. Therefore no progress to report at this stage.
T16a_04	Other statistic - Mature (please give details in the next column)	Recruit mature students to PT distance programme	no	2013-14	0	10	15	20	25	30	Access Agreement submitted in April 2015 for academic year 16-17 for 1 course only which had not been advertised previously. Therefore no progress to report at this stage.
T16a_05	Other statistic - Part-time (please give details in the next column)	Recruit low income students to PT distance programme	no	2013-14	0	10	15	20	25	30	Access Agreement submitted in April 2015 for academic year 16-17 for 1 course only which had not been advertised previously. Therefore no progress to report at this stage.

Notes

Alongside applicant and entrant targets, we encourage you to provide targets around outreach and student success work (including collaborative work where appropriate) or other initiatives to illustrate your progress towards increasing access, student success and progression. These should be measurable outcomes-based targets and should focus on the number of beneficiaries reached by a particular activity/programme or the number of schools worked with, and what the outcomes were, rather than simply recording the nature/number of activities.

Table 7b - Other milestones and targets.

Reference Number	Please select target type from the drop-down menu	Description (500 characters maximum)	Is this a collaborative target?	Baseline year	Baseline data	Yearly milestones (numeric where possible, however you may use text)					Commentary on your milestones/targets or textual description where numerical description is not appropriate (500 characters maximum)
						2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	

Optional commentary on milestones.

This box is character-limited to 1000 characters; however, we are happy for you to upload additional 'supporting information' as a separate Word/pdf document.