



# HE Strategy

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## Prelude

This Strategy reflects on, refreshes, and supersedes the 2017-20 HE Strategy in response to evolving challenges and opportunities within the HE sector. As will become evident, we are committed to placing the student at the heart of everything we do in HE, with currency of purpose and clarity of direction, engaging fully with the wider HE community. A timeframe of four years for the HE Strategy provides sufficient opportunity to embed the prevailing HE sector norms and aligns effectively with the *Access and Participation Plan 2021/22 to 2025/26*, ensuring sufficient lead-in time for review of this Strategy and its continued alignment to the next Access and Participation Plan.

We recognise that HE continues to undergo a cultural and regulatory shift, with students being at the centre of that shift and expecting a distinctive HE identity that defines their time at the College whether it is onsite and/or online. We embrace this ongoing change, but in order for the Faculty of HE's portfolio to be progressive and create the parameters for sustainable growth and future partnerships or collaboration, we need to fully resource, reflect on, and internalise, the current HE sector's expectations.

This Strategy is designed to signpost, operationalise and deliver the Faculty of HE's mission and ambition for HE by 2025, aligning as it does so to the strategic context and direction of the College (as noted in its *Strategic Plan 2020-2025*). This will ensure active engagement of and collaboration with a range of key stakeholders on our journey.

## 4-Drivers

- Positively engaging with a changing HE landscape
- Resourcing the mission and sustaining growth
- Recalibrating the HE portfolio to increase access and participation
- Maximising student opportunities and progression

## 1-Mission

The aim of the HE strategy is to offer HE provision that is and remains at the forefront of sector expectations, meets graduate employer and sector needs, equips students to start their career and follow their ambition, leading to sustainable positive student outcomes. This is aligned to the College mission statement;

“To develop highly skilled, active citizens of all ages and abilities, leading to meaningful lives and productive careers”.  
(SEC Strategic Plan 2020-2023)

## **Driver 1:**

### **Positively engaging with a changing HE landscape**

#### *Responding to regulation*

The external regulatory environment for publicly funded HE providers continues to evolve since the introduction of the Office for Students (OfS) in 2018, being principles-based, data-led and adopting a risk-based model for monitoring and intervention, with a greater emphasis on continuous improvement, metrics and impact. This approach to regulation informs other existing, new College's and the Faculty of HE strategy documents, policies and procedures.

#### *Meeting the metrics*

The OfS has defined a range of metrics, key performance measures, benchmarks and student outcomes thresholds for publicly funded HE providers across a range of documents and data sets, including but not limited to the Condition B3 numerical baseline, the Access and Participation data set, Teaching Excellence and Student Outcomes (TEF) data set and, where relevant, HESA data sets. Most of the data sets are weighted and therefore contextualised to individual HE providers. Student outcomes inform key Faculty of HE strategic documents, including this Strategy, the *HE Employability Strategy*, *Access and Participation Plans* and the *HE Learning, Teaching and Assessment Strategy*.

## Driver 2:

### Resourcing the mission and sustaining growth

#### *Funding follows students*

In order to align to the HE sector and regulatory expectations it is necessary to ensure that funding follows students throughout their programme; this recognises students as key stakeholders, who, as fee paying individuals, expect value for money (which is also aligned to OfS expectations of HE providers). In order for resources to follow students effectively, responsibility is located as close to the student academic experience as practically possible. This should in turn have the desired impact and contribute to continuously improving student outcomes and student satisfaction.

#### *Transparency in resourcing*

Ongoing engagement with the metrics<sup>1</sup> and the proposed timeframe of programme delivery require the College to regularly review and assess its HE resourcing so as to ensure realisation of the *HE Strategy*.

The Dean of HE has responsibility for oversight, monitoring and intervention to ensure that attainment of the metrics and the available resource base are aligned to the strategic direction of the Faculty of HE and the ongoing commitments made to the OfS through the *Access and Participation Plans* and initial and ongoing conditions of registration.

In order to ensure and assure a consistently high quality student academic experience, programmes must be financially and academically viable, including sufficient student numbers. This is demonstrated by a robust business case during the proposal, approval and review stage of programmes, together with a detailed course viability model.

## Driver 3:

### Recalibrating the HE portfolio to widen access and participation

#### *(Re) calibration*

Widening access and participation on HE programmes is essential in meeting the needs of the local and wider community and is underpinned by our *Access and*

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<sup>1</sup> "Metrics" include aspects of student satisfaction and student performance.

*Participation Plans.* In order to achieve this, in part, we need to broaden the HE offer by providing vocationally-relevant foundation degrees and top-up degree opportunities that appeal to the wider student demographic, in particular to under-represented students and those from disadvantaged and deprived backgrounds.

### *Cultural capital*

The need to further strengthen our HE knowledge, capability, competency and disposition<sup>2</sup> are important for creating a more distinctive HE identity, which is expected to enhance the student journey from enrolment to employment. This is underpinned by our *HE Learning, Teaching and Assessment Strategy* and our *HE Employability Strategy*, which should contribute to improvements in a range of student outcomes.

Staff are an important component in facilitating the cultivation and development of cultural capital within the College. At present, staff development continues to be successfully directed at improving their professional practice through structured professional development or activity. To underpin and drive future growth of the HE provision, there is a need to direct additional staff development activity towards the expansion of the HE cultural capital base (part of which is likely to be facilitated through active memberships of and targeted input from [Advance HE](#)).

## **Driver 4:**

### **Maximising student opportunities and direction**

#### *From enrolment to employment*

We have a commitment to develop the higher level skills, knowledge and employability of our students in order to benefit them, their future employers and the sectors they engage with. This commitment is evident in our *Access and Participation Plans*, *HE Learning, Teaching and Assessment Strategy* and our *HE Employability Strategy*. We recognise that a substantial proportion of the employers with vacancies in the South East demand graduates, and there is a shortfall of such qualified candidates in the area. With this in mind, both our current and future HE provision will be more firmly based upon identifying and anticipating employer demand and emerging skills shortages, directly involving employers in programme development initiatives to ensure both the currency and appropriateness of that provision.

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<sup>2</sup> These four elements define our interpretation and use of cultural capital.

### *From partnership to progress*

The College recognises its stakeholders as active partners in the design and delivery of its HE provision. The key stakeholders include validating partners, students, staff and employers.

Validating partners for the Faculty of HE are selected on the basis of mutual benefit and a shared approach to valuing and advancing the student academic experience. This is demonstrated in the way the Faculty of HE is committed to seeking and learning from peer review of its key strategies and policy documents by its validating partners. By engaging with the College, validating partners gain an increased footprint in the South East Region, potentially improving widening participation and ensuring an effective pathway from FE to HE.

Student engagement and student voice are paramount in the monitoring and review of HE programmes in the context of continuous improvement of the student academic experience, student satisfaction and value for money (including perceptions of value for money).<sup>3</sup> This assists in the assurance and enhancement of students' educational experience, encouraging them to take an active role in co-creating the learning process, cultivating ownership and independent learning and constructively questioning the College's allocation of HE tuition fees to resourcing HE as part of value for money.

Staff play a pivotal role in engaging and motivating students, but in order for this to be sustained, their knowledge, experience and expertise continue to be recognised and utilised to the benefit of the College and its Faculty of HE provision. This is complemented by validating partners providing opportunities for staff to engage in innovative practice, currency of scholarship and to interact with the wider HE community, and is supplemented by membership of Advance HE (with its HE sector expertise and opportunities for specialist and contextualised input to research, evaluation and staff development). The profile of the staff in the Faculty of HE reflects the vocational tradition of the College, with many having a substantial background in industry and professional practice. The Faculty of HE, together with its validating partners, values the potential benefits accruing from a Lecturer-Practitioner approach.<sup>4</sup> These attributes serve to maintain a distinctive HE offer.

The vocational orientation of the College and its HE provision necessitates the sustained direct involvement of employers from programme initiation through to the graduate labour market. This is complemented by the *HE Employability Strategy*, including work-related learning, careers advice and resources and the increasing employer links established by our staff and students.

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<sup>3</sup> The College is committed to expanding the range of student engagement initiatives in order to capture the student voice as widely as possible, with dedicated staff and student posts to do so.

<sup>4</sup> Benefits include improved sector contacts for increasing employability in the programmes, ensuring and assuring sector relevance and currency of modules/units and informing programme updates and delivery.

## Postlude

The HE Strategy 2021-25 directly addresses each of the four drivers and our engagement with the HE sector, its demands, expectations, opportunities and trajectory through an associated implementation plan and related strategies. This is the second stage of formally aligning it with mainstream HE.<sup>5</sup>

### Higher Education Strategies: Glossary of terms

Active learning	A term for learning and teaching methods which put the student in charge of their own learning through meaningful activities. Students think about and apply what they are learning, in a deliberate contrast to passive learning where attention in lectures begins to wane every 10-20 minutes. Active learning promotes recall and deeper understanding of material as students are engaging with the content, rather than simply listening to it. Active learning can be a good way of preparing students for future employment. By integrating activities such as case studies and problem based learning scenarios into the teaching, students are able to practice skills which are essential for the workplace.
Active reflection	Looking back on an experience and considering what could have been done differently or what has been learned from it. When a student reflects on their accomplishments and the opportunities for improvement, they are better able to take on future challenges. Each learning experience becomes more meaningful and more productive.
AdvanceHE	A member-led, sector-owned charity that works with institutions and higher education bodies across the world to improve higher education for staff, students and society. Support is delivered through professional development programmes and events, Fellowships, awards, student surveys, and includes accreditation of teaching and learning, equality charters, research, and the sharing of knowledge and resources.
Cultural capital	'The essential knowledge that students need to be educated citizens, introducing them to the best that has been thought and said and helping to engender an appreciation of human creativity and achievement.' (Ofsted 2019)
Curriculum	In higher education, this refers to the process of connecting and integrating university learning and teaching into coherent and meaningful educational experiences for students, not just simply the programme of study.
Formative assessment	Activities used in a lesson in order to discover what students know while they're still in the process of learning it. This enables adaption to the teaching to ensure student's knowledge and understanding is reinforced.
HEA	The Higher Education Academy (HEA) was a British professional membership scheme promoting excellence in higher education. The HEA advocated for evidence-based teaching methods and awards fellowships as a method of professional recognition for university teachers. The HEA was responsible for the UK Professional Standards Framework for higher

	education practitioners. In 2018, the HEA merged with the Leadership Foundation and the Equality Challenge Unit to form Advance HE
HESA	The Higher Education Statistics Agency - the experts in UK higher education data, and the designated data body for England.
Human capital	An individual's capabilities, knowledge, skills and experience as well as the capacity to add to this reservoir of knowledge, skills, and experience through individual learning. Usually used to refer to the value of an employee to an organisation
Identity capital	'Identity capital is an individual's collection of personal assets. It is the repertoire of individual resources assembled over time. Some identity capital goes on a résumé, such as degrees, jobs, test scores, and clubs. Other identity capital is more personal, such as how we speak, where we are from, how we solve problems, how we look. Identity capital is how we build ourselves—bit by bit, over time.'(Jay 2013)
Learner centred	This refers to moving the focus of instruction from the teacher to the student. It aims to develop learner autonomy and independence. focuses on skills and practices that enable life-long learning and independent problem-solving
NERUPI	Network Evaluating and Researching University Participation Interventions. NERUPI is a community of practice for those seeking to reduce inequalities in higher education access, participation and progression - a partnership of over 70 higher education organisations working together to create a new approach to evaluation using the framework developed by Annette Hayton, University of Bath and Dr Andrew Bengry, Bath Spa University.
Neurodiversity	The concept that differences in brain functioning within the human population are normal and that brain functioning that is not neurotypical should not be stigmatized
OfS	Office for Students -the independent regulator of higher education in England. Helping students to get into and succeed in higher education by: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Helping students stay informed.</li> <li>2. Making sure that students get a high-quality education that prepares them for the future.</li> <li>3. Protecting students' interests.</li> </ol> <p>The OfS's other functions include the administration of the Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF) and the Register of higher education providers.</p>
Pedagogy	The theory and practice of teaching and learning , and how this process influences, and is influenced by, the social, political and psychological development of learners. Pedagogy, taken as an academic discipline, is the study of how knowledge and skills are imparted in an educational context.
Peer review	The evaluation of work by one or more people with similar competencies as the producers of the work (peers). It functions as a form of self-regulation by qualified members of a profession within the relevant field



Polar quintiles	<p>All universities are required by the Office for Students to increase the proportion of students they take from 'low participation' areas. One of the main ways they do this is to flag up on applications the '<b>Polar quintile</b>' the applicants live in. POLAR is an acronym which stands for Participation of Local Areas.</p> <p>POLAR classifies local areas into five quintiles based on the proportion of 18-year-olds who enter HE aged 18 or 19. <b>Quintile 1</b> is the fifth of areas with the lowest proportion of progression to HE.</p>
Psychological capital	The concept of Psychological Capital is strongly linked to increased mental wellbeing, and levels of satisfaction with life and work. The positive developmental state of an individual as characterized by high self-efficacy, optimism, hope and resilience.
Social capital	The links, shared values and understandings in society that enable individuals and groups to trust each other and so work together
Stakeholder	An individual or group that has an interest in any decision or activity of an organization.
Summative assessment	Summative assessments are any method of evaluation performed at the end of a module, or period of study, allowing teachers to measure a students' understanding against standardised criteria. They usually result in the student receiving a determined grade
TEF	<p>The Teaching Excellence and Student Outcomes Framework (TEF) is a national exercise, introduced by the government in England. It assesses excellence in teaching at universities and colleges, and how each higher education provider ensures excellent outcomes for their students in terms of graduate-level employment or further study. There are systems in place to help ensure that all UK colleges and universities meet national quality requirements.</p> <p>The TEF looks at what they are doing in addition to these requirements, and participating universities and colleges can achieve either gold, silver, bronze, or a provisional award (meaning that they do not yet have enough data for a full assessment).</p>
Transition pedagogy	An approach to learning and teaching that aims to support students as they enter higher education, and as they progress through their programme of study and beyond. It recognises that students have diverse needs and experiences and that these are addressed in order to ensure successful completion of a students HE journey.
UAL	University of the Arts, London.
UEA	University of East Anglia

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**Approved by:** Board of Governors South Essex College.

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<sup>5</sup> The first stage was covered by the HE Strategy 2017-20.

### HE Strategy Full Implementation Plan 2021-25

Driver	Action	Outputs and success indicators	Start time	Finish time	Responsibility	Milestones	Progress check	impact
Driver 1: Positively engaging with a changing HE landscape								
Responding to regulation and meeting the metrics	Ensure resourcing is targeted to improve the latest Condition B3 numerical baseline to above the minimum level and beyond and improve TEF metrics (when published)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Internal and externally published Condition B3 numerical and TEF indicators for SEC</li> <li>Audit of resource allocations, including via the course viability model</li> <li>Positive outcomes for next iteration(s) of TEF.</li> </ul>	01/2021	01/2025	Head of HE Strategic Quality and Outcomes (or equivalent)	Condition B3 numerical indicators for SEC. 03/22		
	Achieving the APP targets and associated milestones in a timely manner.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Annual APP data set</li> <li>Meet or exceed annual milestone targets</li> <li>Evidence of evaluation and interventions where milestones missed or likely to be missed.</li> </ul>	01/2021	01/2025	Head of HE Strategic Quality and Outcomes (or equivalent)	Annually published APP data set. 03/22		
	Apply for the latest iteration of TEF when announced.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Successfully submitted and published TEF submission, with associated award given.</li> </ul>	Circa 01/2022	Circa 01/2023	Head of HE Strategic Quality and Outcomes (or equivalent)	Currently on hold by the OfS		
	Continue data system alignment to OfS requirements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Data systems generate OfS relevant indicators and intersections for effective data analytics.</li> </ul>	01/2021	01/2025	Head of HE Strategic Quality and Outcomes (or equivalent)	Completion of HE Dashboard. 12/21		
	Meet OfS initial and ongoing conditions of registration and any related monitoring or follow-up activity.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Effective and timely internal and external liaison with or referral to key stakeholders in order to ensure and assure that these conditions are met</li> <li>Intersectionality of certain conditions fully</li> </ul>	01/2021	01/2025	Head of HE Strategic Quality and Outcomes (or equivalent)	Faculty of HE Institutional annual self-assessment. 11/21		

Driver	Action	Outputs and success indicators	Start time	Finish time	Responsibility	Milestones	Progress check	impact
		considered (e.g. in self-evaluation(s)).						
	Map (and update where relevant) the Revised UK Quality Code for Higher Education.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Live mapping document produced and shared within Faculty of HE.</li></ul>	01/2021	01/2025	Head of HE Strategic Quality and Outcomes (or equivalent)	Draft document to partners for peer review 08/22		
Driver 2: Resourcing the mission and sustaining growth								
Funding follows students	Transparent and earmarked HE budget, underpinned by a detailed annual course viability model	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>A fully accountable resource model</li><li>Effective tracking of funding allocation and spend across budget holders and through project/budget codes.</li></ul>	05/2021	01/2025	Principal Deputy Principal Dean of HE	Annually agreed course viability model 10/21		
Transparency in resourcing	Matching resourcing to risk, student numbers, a robust business case and individual student needs.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Delegated budgets, with project/budget codes</li><li>Student feedback and student voice inform allocation, monitoring and evaluation of learning resources and resources for student experience</li><li>Alignment of resourcing to APP targets and data-led.</li><li>Earmarked money guides allocation.</li></ul>	01/2021	01/2025	Dean of HE (oversight) Programme Partnership Managers Delegated HE budget holders	Annually agreed course viability model 10/21. Annual NSS return 07/21 and programme boards.(termly)		
Driver 3: Recalibrating the HE portfolio to widen access and participation								
Recalibration	Prune and grow the HE offer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>New or revised undergraduate and/or foundation degree programmes</li><li>Discontinue recruitment to unviable programmes and teach-out accordingly</li></ul>	01/2021	01/2025	Principal Dean of HE Programme Partnership Managers	Annual programme review 10/21		

Driver	Action	Outputs and success indicators	Start time	Finish time	Responsibility	Milestones	Progress check	impact
		(if students on programme).						
Cultural capital	Create, distinctive and attractive HE identity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Staff fully engaged with the HE sector (including Advance HE and widening participation)</li> <li>• Improved student success and achievement, aligning to HE sector norms</li> <li>• Clear links to other strategies (such as the <i>HE Employability Strategy</i>).</li> </ul>	01/2021	01/2025	Dean of HE Faculty of HE	Annual KPIs and NSS (07/21)		
	Dedicated HE staff development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• HEA Fellowship</li> <li>• Completed Master's Degrees</li> <li>• Full engagement with Advance HE</li> <li>• Continued professional membership for practitioners (where applicable).</li> </ul>	01/2021	01/2025	Dean of HE Programme Partnership Managers	% of HE staff with masters/ HEA Fellowship or professional membership. 09/21		
Driver 4: Maximising student opportunities and direction								
From enrolment to employment	Implement HE Employability Strategy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Positive peer review</li> <li>• Effective engagement with relevant sectors and employers</li> <li>• Student track record of employability skills.</li> </ul>	01/2021	01/2025	Dean of HE Head of Careers	Review of implementation plan 12/21.		
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increase widening participation</li> </ul>	01/2021	01/2025	Dean of HE Head of Marketing	Review of annual marketing plan 10/21		

Driver	Action	Outputs and success indicators	Start time	Finish time	Responsibility	Milestones	Progress check	impact
	Targeted investment in the student academic experience and employability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Employability embedded across the student-life-cycle.</li> </ul>	01/2021	01/2025	Dean of HE (oversight) Head of Marketing Programme Leaders	NSS 07/21, programme boards termly		
	Proactive and responsive careers advice, guidance, support and associated resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><a href="#">Abintegro</a> related resources</li> <li><a href="#">Gradintelligence</a> selected resources.</li> </ul>	01/2021	01/2025	Dean of HE Head of Careers	NSS 07/21, Graduate outcomes survey 06/21		
	Institutional (re)approval 1: UAL	Institutional reapproval gained.	12/2020	05/2021	Dean of HE (oversight) Programme Partnership Managers Head of HE Strategic Quality and Outcomes (or equivalent)			
	Programme (re)validations: UAL	Programme (re)validations gained	12/2020	05/2025				
	Institutional (re)approval: UEA	Institutional reapproval gained.	TBC	TBC				
	Programme (re)validation: UEA	Programme (re)validation gained	12/2020	05/2025				
	Pearson programme approval	Programme approvals gained	01/2021	01/2025				
	Institutional (re) approval: OU	Institutional reapproval gained	03/2021	01/2022	Vice Principal Quality and Compliance (oversight) Head of English, Maths and Education. Curriculum Head - ITE Programme Leader for ITE.			
	Programme (re)validations: OU	Programme (re)validations gained	03/2021	03/2022				
	Pearson Programme approval	Programme approvals gained	01/2021	01/2025	Vice Principal Quality and Compliance (oversight) Head of Department Curriculum Head			

