

## South Thames Colleges Group Environment and Sustainability Policy

### 1. Policy Statement

- 1.1 South Thames Colleges Group recognises that its business activities have an impact on the environment, principally with energy, water, business travel and the generation of waste. In contracting with suppliers, we have additional impacts through their service delivery, manufacturing processes and the transportation of their products purchased and consumed by the Group.
- 1.2 This Policy document sets out the Group's aims and objectives for sustainability over time. The Policy is supported by an annual Action Plan.
- 1.3 South Thames Colleges Group is committed to continual improvement of our environmental performance.

### 2. Aims of the Policy

- 2.1 To ensure that we comply with all applicable environmental legislation and other environmental requirements that we enter into on a voluntary basis.
- 2.2 To ensure that the resources and materials used by the Group are sustainable, are capable of being recycled and are used effectively with the minimum of emissions, pollution, and waste, where reasonably practicable.
- 2.3 To ensure that our suppliers utilise, where reasonably practicable, materials and processes that do not have an adverse impact on the environment, and where such an impact is unavoidable, it is minimised.
- 2.4 To raise awareness, encourage participation, train our staff, and inform our students through the curriculum to realise their potential contribution to ensure our business is environmentally responsible and to enthuse our staff and students to transfer these behaviours into life outside of the Group.
- 2.5 To ensure that we liaise with stakeholders and the local community.

|   |  |
|---|--|
| Policy Title: Environment & Sustainability Policy | Staff Member Responsible: Director of Facilities |
| Version: V7                                       | Review Date: February 2022                       |

### 3. Scope of the Policy

There are 10 areas of activity that fall within the scope of this Policy.

- 3.1 Group use of carbon. - Appendix 1.
- 3.2 Group generation of waste – Appendix 2.
- 3.3 Group use of Transport. – Appendix 3
- 3.4 Group use of Materials – Appendix 4
- 3.5 Group use of Food. – Appendix 5
- 3.6 Group use of Water. – Appendix 6
- 3.7 Group use of the Supply Chain – Appendix 7
- 3.8 Group impact on Natural and Wildlife habitats. – Appendix 8
- 3.9 Group investment in the health and happiness of its Students and Staff. – See STCG (South Thames Colleges Group) Wellbeing Strategy and Health and Safety Policy.

### 4. Who should be aware of this policy?

Our staff, our students, our visitors, our suppliers, our stakeholders, and local community.

### 5. How will we achieve this Policy?

- 5.1 We will identify resources to support this policy.
- 5.2 We will have identified a baseline for our SD, sustainable development.
- 5.3 We will monitor the environmental impact of our business activities.
- 5.4 We will prepare an SD action plan with short-, medium- and long-term targets.

### 6. How will we evaluate and review this policy?

Facilities will carry out an annual review of Environmental and Sustainability performance to ensure progress is being made against the agreed actions.

|   |  |
|---|--|
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| Version: V7                                       | Review Date: February 2022                       |

## **7. Links to other Policies and Procedures**

Group Environmental Statements (Appendices 1 –8)

Health and Safety Policy

Wellbeing Strategy and Action Plan

Financial Policy and Procedures

Facilities Policy and Operating Procedures

IT Strategy Curriculum Policies

## **8. Policy Distribution and Communication**

This policy will be published on the Intranet and STCG Online.

|   |  |
|---|--|
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| Version: V7                                       | Review Date: February 2022                       |

**Group Use of Carbon – Reduction of Energy Consumption and CO2 Emissions**

The Group will comply with and where possible exceed the requirements of Environmental Legislation and advisory codes of practice where practicable, where environmental benefit can be demonstrated and achieve the following basic strategy:

1. Reduction in Energy use
2. Energy Monitoring
3. Using Green Energy
4. Energy Efficiency – There are likely to be several low or no-cost initiatives the Group can implement to reduce its energy use before exploring higher cost options to increase energy efficiency and eventually explore renewable energy. Focusing initially on these quick wins will first reduce the Group’s Carbon footprint immediately and will build momentum for future initiatives
5. Carbon Reduction – The Group will set out a Heat Decarbonisation plan setting out how reliance on fossil fueled heating systems in its buildings can be replaced over time with low carbon initiatives such as Air Source Heat Pumps, Ground Source Heat Pumps, and connectivity to District Heat Networks. This plan will assist the Group in planning ahead to decarbonize our buildings and work towards Carbon Net Zero
6. Renewable Energy – Retrofitting Facilities where possible to utilize greener fuel and install renewable energy sources such as solar panels across the sites

**Aims:**

1. Reduce CO2 emissions from Energy Consumption in accordance with the Groups Carbon Reductions Targets
2. Use, where possible, energy from Renewable Sources rather than Fossil Fuel Sources
3. Provide specifications and briefing documents aimed at Lower CO2 Emissions for any new or refurbishment building developments or replacement of plant installations
4. Operate BMS/EMS in all its buildings which closely monitors energy use
5. Operate a Metering Strategy across the Estate which allows monitoring of energy consumption to the required detail and accuracy
6. Apply independent environmental assessment methods, for example (BREEAM) to new developments or refurbishment of the Estate

**Goals:**

1. Set a baseline for CO2 Emissions
2. Reduce CO2 Emissions progressively to meet the requirements of the Group’s Carbon Reduction Commitment and Target
3. Consider use of Green Energy from suitably certified providers

|   |  |
|---|--|
| Policy Title: Environment & Sustainability Policy | Staff Member Responsible: Director of Facilities |
| Version: V7                                       | Review Date: February 2022                       |

**Group Generation and Treatment of Waste.**

The Group is committed to reducing waste and harnessing the benefits of its Waste resources. By Reusing or recycling we are:

- Contributing to the conservation of natural resources
- Saving Energy
- Helping to Protect the Environment
- Reducing the amount of waste going for incineration or landfill

**Our Priorities** – By Law we must apply the waste hierarchy in all cases, to try and reduce the amount of waste the Group produces. The main principal of the waste hierarchy is to extract the maximum practical benefits from products and to generate the minimum amount of Waste. The Group look to apply the following:

- To ensure that we reuse rather than recycle
- To recycle rather than incinerate for energy recovery
- To recover energy rather than just burn or send to landfill
- By applying the principles of the waste hierarchy, we will ensure that we do not waste valuable resources

We will also reduce our impact on the environment by minimising the carbon emissions associated with both disposing of old products and obtaining new ones.

Advice on all College Waste Streams and disposal methods can be obtained from [helpline@stcg.ac.uk](mailto:helpline@stcg.ac.uk)

|   |  |
|---|--|
| Policy Title: Environment & Sustainability Policy | Staff Member Responsible: Director of Facilities |
| Version: V7                                       | Review Date: February 2022                       |

**Group Use of Transport**

While Transport is not part of our core activities, the Group is committed to reducing the environmental and other effects including congestion, of personal transport and deliveries.

Travel on Group business will only take place if unavoidable and will be carried out on public transport where possible. All staff and students will be encouraged to use private vehicles as little as possible, to drive responsibly, to minimize fuel consumption and to share where possible.

As a result of the Group’s excellent public transport links at all its Campuses, most Staff and Students travel to the Colleges within the Group by public transport. This is good news for the Group’s carbon footprint.

When quantifying the environmental impact of its operations, the Group must also consider the impact of travel and as such must be doing as much as we can to alleviate the impact by promoting sustainable travel of staff and students' day to day.

Vehicles purchased for Group use will be procured based on type of fuel, prioritizing opportunities for renewable energies, fuel consumption, life expectancy, target fuel economy rating.

**Cycling** – Cycling is about as sustainable a means of travel as possible. Cycle parking is available for staff and students at all our Campuses. A cycle purchase scheme is available for staff.

**Travel Information** – is provided on the Group Intranet STCG at home with travel information to get between campuses and to nearby public transport hubs. Season Ticket Loans are available for staff, details from HR. Students have access to the Student Oyster Card Scheme details available from TFL. Deliveries between Sites – The Estates Vehicle Stock is limited, but with notice can be used to transport small goods between sites by drivers who have registered as an authorized College Driver. Details can be obtained from [Helpline@stcg.ac.uk](mailto:Helpline@stcg.ac.uk)

**Electric Cars** - The group will be installing Electric Vehicle Charging Points at its Main Campuses in 22/23 subject to the availability of capital funding. Demand will be monitored, and further provision informed by demand.

**Goals:**

1. The Group will develop a travel plan in a format that may be continuously reviewed and adapted to meet current travel patterns at each of its campuses.
2. The Group will promote sustainable transport by reducing the need to travel and increasing alternative travel options.
3. The Group will seek to understand the transport requirements of its users, staff and supply chain and prepare targets to reduce the environmental influence of transport related to Group activities.

|   |  |
|---|--|
| Policy Title: Environment & Sustainability Policy | Staff Member Responsible: Director of Facilities |
| Version: V7                                       | Review Date: February 2022                       |

**Group Use of Materials**

As a responsible Institution, STCG consistently find ways to reduce the impact of our operations on the environment and society. In our teaching and learning and in the development of our Estates, we select and use materials that contribute to achieving this goal.

We set ambitious goals for delivering our building projects and the refurbishment of our Estates to high environmental standards. To do this, we assess materials in several ways:

- **responsible sourcing** - we understand that our supply chain is key to our success in sourcing and using more sustainable materials. Our sustainability policy and sustainable timber sourcing policy detail our commitments to responsible sourcing.
- **engaging our supply chain** - we regularly engage with our supply chain. We also actively encourage and support continual improvement through teaching and learning.
- **hazardous and unsustainable materials** - we are committed to finding ways to phase out hazardous materials where viable alternatives are available in commercial quantities. We have a list of restricted substances and actively support our supply chain to remove hazardous materials.
- **resource efficiency and waste minimisation** - significant opportunities exist in construction to prevent waste from occurring and to improve resource efficiency. We operate in line with the waste hierarchy and are working on several initiatives which aim to eliminate waste to landfill and promote the circular economy.

|   |  |
|---|--|
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**Group use of Food and Catering Services**

1. The South Thames Colleges Group, through our external service partners for catering services, provides food services across all campuses through retail catering outlets, hospitality and catering for conferences and events. We recognise our responsibility to offer and promote sustainable and healthy food choices to the College communities and to incorporate environmental, ethical, and social considerations into the products and services we provide.
  
2. Our customers - include Students, Employees, External Visitors and Contractors. The provision of food services is an area where we have an opportunity to influence and embed sustainability. Through our Environment and Sustainability Policy Statement, Sustainable Purchasing Statement and Environmental and Energy Management System for the Estates & Facilities Division. We are committed to developing and applying an ethical and sustainable procurement system to ensure the social and environmental impacts of purchases are appropriately considered. We therefore, work in partnership with our Contractors and Suppliers to minimise negative environmental, ethical, and social impacts and to increase positive impacts on the local, regional, and global environment, associated with the products and services they provide.
  
3. Scope - This statement applies to the Estates & Facilities Division and the Group's Catering contractors. It applies to all catering and hospitality served on Group premises, which are provided by Catering Contractors.
  
4. Our Aims - This Statement outlines the Group's intentions to minimise the negative environmental, ethical, and social impacts of its Catering operations and to promote positive environmental, ethical, and social practices. This policy provides a framework for a Sustainable Food offer. We commit ourselves to:
  - Ensure that sustainability criteria are included in tender specifications to suppliers and are considered in the award of contracts.
  - Reduce the number of foods of animal origin (meat, dairy products, and eggs) and promote consumption of more plant-based foods.
  - Choose foods of animal origin produced to high environmental and animal welfare standards, such as free-range.
  - Use fish which are demonstrably sustainable and raise awareness of alternative species.
  - Source food and other products locally and seasonally where possible to sustain the local economy and reduce environmental impacts.
  - Encourage the use of food from farming systems which minimise harm to the environment, such as organic and LEAF-Marque.
  - Use Fairtrade and fairly traded products where applicable, promote purchase/sales of Fairtrade certified and fair-trade goods and actively support Fairtrade Fortnight.
  - Use food grown on campus in catering kitchens and support community food growing projects.
  - Support students and staff in maintaining healthy lifestyles and promote health and wellbeing by educating staff and students on healthy eating.
  - Understand and address the impacts the use of palm oil and soya products have on the environment, particularly deforestation.
  - Reduce the environmental impact of our operations by increasing recycling and reducing food waste in our kitchens and outlets.
  - Reduce use of single-use plastics and plastic packaging.
  - Avoid bottled water where possible, and provide free drinking water to all staff, students, and visitors.
  - Improve the energy and water efficiency of catering operations.
  - Source and use sustainable cleaning products and technologies and adopt the most effective techniques to minimise impacts wherever possible.

|   |  |
|---|--|
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We will communicate this Statement and its outcomes to all stakeholders and review the Statement periodically to ensure that it is up to date.

|   |  |
|---|--|
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| Version: V7                                       | Review Date: February 2022                       |

**Group Use of Water**

The environmental effect of water use is becoming a central issue contributing to Climate Change. The Group will strive to reduce overall water consumption by good practice methods.

The Group will:

- Monitor water usage through meters and billing across campuses and buildings
- Monitor for leaks and deal with these quickly and efficiently
- Regularly review opportunities for reduction of mains water consumption
- Install Water efficient fittings and technologies where economic and practical to do so
- Provide briefing documents and specifications for new building developments and refurbishments aimed at low water consumption
- Encourage the use of recycled rainwater and grey water to reduce mains water consumption.
- Provide information to building occupants about water usage and its impact

**Goals**

- Consider setting progressive targets for reduction in Water Consumption
- Provide a water metering strategy across the group which allows monitoring of water consumption to the required detail and accuracy
- Apply regular comparison of building performance about water consumption
- Ensure new developments, refurbishments and upgrades are carried out to Group policies, specifications, and briefing documentation
- Where possible apply independent methods (e.g., BREEAM) to new development
- Consider schemes where use of water is generated by College sites, e.g., rainwater harvesting etc

|   |  |
|---|--|
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| Version: V7                                       | Review Date: February 2022                       |

## Group Responsibility for the Environmental and Social effects of its Supply Chain

To manage the environmental and social effects of its supply chain, the Group will:

1. Monitor its procurement processes.
2. Identify its significant Supply Contracts
3. Adopt measurement tools including KPIs with which to set targets for members of the supply chain.
4. Provide routes for communication with other members of the supply chain.

### STCG Supply Chain Policy Development:

#### Applying Environmental issues:

The Group will require its significant suppliers and contractors to identify and monitor the environmental impacts of their companies' activities.

Significant Suppliers to the Group will be required to have in place active management of their environmental effect ensuring compliance with local environmental legislation and having an active environmental policy or statement.

The Group will expect its significant suppliers and contractors to take action to improve their environmental performance.

#### Applying Social issues:

The Group shall take steps to ensure suppliers' workers are not required to work unreasonable hours and have adequate holidays and that policy is in place to prevent accidents and injuries arising from work, minimizing the causes of hazards in the working environment, and providing regular health and safety training.

The Group will only work with suppliers where the minimum age of an employee is appropriate, there is no forced or bonded labour, there is no discrimination in hiring, training, promotion, termination, or retirement based on race, caste, national origin, religion, age, disability, gender, marital status, sexual orientation, union membership or political affiliation.

|   |  |
|---|--|
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## Group Supply Chain Goals

The Group will seek to understand the supply chain of its direct staff and partners and prepare targets to improve its environmental and social influence in activities related to the Group. The process will include:

1. Understanding the supply chain of the Group, its users, and related partners for significant supply contracts.
2. Recognising the level of growth in Group activity and reviewing the Policy regularly to ensure its continued relevance.
3. Understanding the effect this has on various aspects of the environment.
4. Over time, to develop a database of the effects of the Group supply chain locally and nationally/internationally.
5. Developing an implementation plan to ensure compliance with the resulting Policy.

|   |  |
|---|--|
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| Version: V7                                       | Review Date: February 2022                       |

**Group Responsibility for Reducing Its Effect on Local Ecology and Biodiversity**

The Group will promote environmental preservation activities and implement their continual improvement to prevent environmental pollution arising from its business activities and operations.

Efforts will be made to evaluate the impact of the Group’s activities and to reduce the burden placed on the environment through energy and resource saving measures as well as reducing waste materials and toxic substances.

The effect of future development and activities will be considered in their design and management. Future development activities will take into consideration their impact on the environment. The Group will preserve the environment by adhering to laws and regulations in its operations and when necessary, setting up and following voluntary control guidelines.

Environmental education will be provided to all staff and students to raise awareness of their own personal impacts. The Group aims to provide a positive relationship with its local Communities.

The Group will:

- Protect existing natural habitats on its Campuses and by encouraging Students and staff to participate in local ecology projects
- Commission landscape design which, where practical, provides an increase in species on existing and new sites
- Encourage ecological diversity
- Provide specifications and briefing documents aimed at improving local ecology for new developments and refurbishment works.
- Continue to maintain planting and other landscaped areas both natural and built on its campuses
- Ensure the ongoing protection of ecological features on its campuses

|   |  |
|---|--|
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