SCHOLARSHIP AND RESEARCH STRATEGY

Introduction

South Thames Colleges Group is committed to providing high-quality higher education provision to widen participation and provide an alternative learning opportunity to that of traditional university. In support of the 'University Centre' title, granted by the Department of Education in 2021, the Group maintains a commitment to scholarship engagement and activity, recognising this as a critical characteristic for staff teaching at higher levels (Levels 4+) and a key component assessment under the TEF.

Scholarship in College-Based Higher Education

It is not expected that staff will be engaged in 'ground-breaking' research, as is the expectation of university colleagues. However, it is expected that staff will keep updated in their sector and maintain their pedagogical knowledge. Through scholarly activity the aim is to create a learning community that enhances the student experience and provides opportunities for students and staff to achieve the best outcomes, in range of different research, industry-led and practice-based endeavours.

There are various definitions of scholarship and scholarly activity; it is important that we capture what it means for us as an institution:

'Activities that enhance an individual's knowledge, skills and/or pedagogy which thereby contribute to a high-quality student experience whilst enriching the abilities and performance of those involved.'

Scholarship activities might include:

1. Achievement of additional or higher qualifications;
2. Attendance at conferences/seminars;
3. Participating in research;
4. Gaining a fellowship from the Advance HE;
5. Having a book or an article published;
6. Presenting at workshops or conferences;
7. Acting as an External Examiner for another institution;
8. Membership of a professional body or external advisory group;
9. Attending and contributing to relevant events at partner universities;
10. Acting as an external assessor or external examiner for an awarding body;
11. Acting as an external panel member for a validation of a new programme;
12. Acting as a reviewer for the Quality Assurance Agency;
13. Industrial updating;
14. Involvement in Action Research Projects;
15. Relevant reading on subject area and/or pedagogy;
16. Reviewing resources and book content for external companies;
17. Trialling new technology in the classroom to enhance the student experience;

18. Disseminating information to staff and colleagues;
19. Exhibiting/presenting or performing your work;
20. Participating in formal teaching and learning observations and/or peer observations;
21. Mentoring/coaching a member of staff;
22. Arranging for external speakers to visit your students and/or staff;
23. Networking at external events;
24. Contributing to relevant consultations and policy-making;
25. Contributing to or writing a new module/programme at HE level;
26. Taking part in interview panels;
27. Knowledge Transfer Partnerships;
28. Live projects.

There are a wide range of activities here that staff are already engaging with. As a College Group delivering higher education, it is important that scholarship is recorded and celebrated. This will assist in signposting the excellent practice maintained and give our partners confidence that we are embracing scholarship in an appropriate manner to enhance the teaching and learning of our HE students.

Scholarship is not……

There are many activities that would not constitute scholarship such as mandatory training, Word and Excel training, competency-based training and First Aid training. Please refer back to the examples above if in doubt.

Implementation

In pursuit of supporting scholarship activities for **staff teaching, supporting, or managing HE**, the College Group will:

1. Recognise the achievements of staff at Star Award events and through regular newsletters (Digital Digest) and college group emails.
2. Provide opportunities for the sharing of good practice and scholarship activities across the College Group; for example, via Digital Digest and planned HE Development Days.
3. Support scholarship and research activity across the College Group.
4. Promote scholarship for all staff through our Higher Education page on STCG Online.
5. Continue to provide a HE Development Day in each academic year, utilising the expertise of external and internal speakers.

Collating information about scholarship activities undertaken by staff

Staff should be encouraged to regularly submit details of their scholarship via Cascade HR online. This can be added to the individual staff member's record, under the tab for Scholarly Activity and Study. It is not expected for staff to write long paragraphs of descriptive information rather to submit in less than one hundred words what activities they have been engaged in and how this has impacted on their teaching and learning. By submitting this information through Cascade HR, it will be collated in one place and will be easily accessible when needed.

Responsibilities

- The Group Leadership Team and Governors are responsible for setting and ensuring the implementation of the strategy.

- The Vice Principal for HE, Quality, Digital Innovation and Business Development is responsible for achieving the aims of the strategy.
- The Group Manager for HE and Quality Assurance and Heads of Curriculum are responsible for implementing the strategy.
- The Curriculum staff, Student Support staff and learners are all responsible for delivering the aims of the strategy.

Monitoring and Review

- Scholarly activity and research of staff will be discussed in yearly appraisals with their respective line managers, and recorded on Cascade HR.
- The Higher Education Operations Group (HEOG), HE Governor's Committee and the Higher Education Academic Board (HEAB) will monitor/discuss progress at least once within the academic year.