



South Thames Colleges Group

8th January 2021

Dear students and families

I'm sure you share our deep disappointment at this return to lockdown, but we understand that our local hospitals are under very great pressure and we all now have to play our part in bringing infection levels down. We are ever so sorry not to have you studying with us, on-site, enjoying learning and your time with each other, but we must do what we can to help slow the spread of the Coronavirus.

First, I hope you have plenty of information about the lockdown and what's required of you from your course leaders and/or tutors. We are all asked to stay at home and keep contact with other people to the bare minimum. Please make sure you understand what's expected. As STCG students, we know that you'll do everything you can to help change the course of this pandemic.

If you are unsure what the Government restrictions are, you can see them through this link:

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/national-lockdown-stay-at-home>

We are now working hard to switch all of our teaching on-line and most of our courses are ready to keep you learning from home. Your course tutor and team have been or will be in touch to set out the detailed arrangements for you and let you know what work you will need to do and when.

It is very important that you do all you can to engage in your lessons and complete any set work. Please let your course tutor/team know if you have any difficulties doing so.

There are a number of other questions that we would like to help answer if possible, but I'm afraid we don't have full information on everything right now, so please bear with us as we work to get more and better information for you.

1) On-site exams and practical assessments

We have made the difficult decision to cancel all on-site exams and practical assessments up until February half-term. We have done this because they involved sizable numbers of students and staff travelling in and out of College and, at present, which increases the pressure on the local and national health situation at a time of great challenge, as well as increasing the risk of transmission to both students and staff to unacceptable levels.

We have been assured by the Government and awarding bodies that no-one will be disadvantaged as a result of this decision and many other Colleges have chosen to do this; for some qualifications there will be arrangements in place to assign you a grade for your qualification based on work done before the lockdown and perhaps during and after, and, in others, the exams will be delayed or

amended. In most cases we are still waiting for more details. Once we have those for your qualification we will contact you.

But it is vital that you continue to complete all other types of assessment and attend lessons as best you can.

All the tasks, assignments, tests and other activities that your teachers will be setting will support your learning and help make sure that you can progress and they may also add to your grade or qualification outcome. Please do your best to engage with your course fully and let us know if there are reasons why you can't so that we can try and support you.

2) GCSEs and Functional Skills

Many of you will be taking GCSEs or Functional Skills courses.

If you are, we expect you to continue to engage in your lessons and complete work as requested by your teachers, but let us know if you are having difficulty doing this.

We don't yet know how the process for awarding grades will work in detail, but we understand that your teachers will be asked to set a grade. We don't know what this will be based on, but advise everyone to keep up their learning and engagement through the lockdown as best they can.

If you are benefiting from the additional English and maths small group tutor support, these sessions are continuing on-line so please ensure you make the most of them. If you are 16-18, and have not yet gained your GSCE at grade 5 and feel you would benefit from additional maths and/or English small group tutor support let your teacher know and we will try and arrange that for you.

We don't yet know the arrangements for Functional Skills in detail and will share this information with you as soon as we know more.

3) Work and Industry Placements

We are not yet sure if these will be able to continue, but we haven't yet had this confirmed. We will let you know as soon as we do.

4) Safeguarding and mental health

We know very well how much support and help our staff provide to our students and we want to make sure that it is all there for you throughout this lockdown.

If you have concerns about your own or another student's welfare, please contact:

Carshalton & Merton College -ccstudent.support@stcg.ac.uk

South Thames College -advice.wandsworth@stcg.ac.uk

Kingston College – referral.team@stcg.ac.uk

We have also put in place resources for E-safety and resources to help you keep yourself well and positive and have gathered them in a wellbeing hub, available to you via Moodle.

Wellbeing Hub:<https://moodle.stcg.ac.uk/course/view.php?id=25418>

E-safety:<https://moodle.stcg.ac.uk/course/view.php?id=4635>

5) HE students

For our HE students, the situation is very similar and we are also asking you to stay at home for the time being, studying on-line. Your course tutors will be guiding you through the expectations and are available if you have any questions. Based on feedback from HE Focus groups we will be keeping HE students informed regularly and being guided by the Office for Students.

We hope very much to begin reopening our Colleges at some point over the next few months, but we will do so very carefully and safely, taking measured steps at each stage to protect everyone in our Colleges. We will keep you informed and provide you with all the learning, support and resources that we possibly can. We will be working hard to make sure you progress to your chosen goal and want you to study successfully, even if you have to do it from home.

Above all, please take great care of yourself and those around you. Make sure you stick very closely to the Government's guidance and stay at home as much as you possibly can.

With best wishes,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'P. Mayhew-Smith'.

Peter Mayhew-Smith
Group Principal and CEO