Higher Education Learning, Teaching and Assessment Strategy 2020 – 25

Context

This document provides the detail of how the College provides a learning environment and promotes transformational learning for our students, teaching them to value themselves and nurture the skills they need for both life and work. Our aim is that they will eventually exemplify the following qualities and behaviours:

The Qualities, Behaviours and Skills of a Ruskin College Graduate

- They possess highly developed academic and professional skills appropriate to their chosen career path.
- They are academically and emotionally intelligent.
- They are confident in their personal and professional identities.
- They can act as agents for change – both for themselves and for the communities they come from.
- They develop interpersonal skills that are transferable to employment and professional practice.
- They are socially and politically engaged citizens.
- They are digitally literate.
- They are empowered to make informed decisions on career and professional development and a work life balance.

Key Aims of a Transformative Learning, Teaching and Assessment Strategy

In order to meet our present and future challenges it is vital that:

1. The College is committed to ensuring that Higher Education tutors are provided with the training, resources, time for scholarly activities and development to enable them to facilitate the learning, progression and achievement of student aspirations.
2. The pedagogy of the College is focused upon a transformational learning, teaching and assessment model that addresses the issues of social inequality, which impacts on the majority of the students that choose Ruskin.
3. The College makes a demonstrable commitment to the development and resourcing of our HE programmes. It is key that our programmes of study continue to excite students, provide a range of learning opportunities, and foster the skills of independence and autonomy. In this way we can provide students with the opportunity to play a role in a vibrant academic community.
4. The College is committed to investing in a Higher Education tutor's 'community of practice, which promotes an ethos of shared practice/values and encourages and fosters research and community engagement.
5. The College continues to strive for excellence in teaching, learning and assessment through a culture of continuous improvement in academic standards and quality.
6. The College develops learning and resourcing models that provide and inform excellence for students, staff and the College.
7. The College programmes develop broader skills of employability and particularly digital skills.
8. The College responds to the needs, opportunities and related challenges that arise in the creation of a transformational teaching and learning environment. This will include embracing and embedding developments relating to issues such as mental health, environmental and social sustainability and political changes affecting the wider community and society.

Strategic Goals to achieve excellence in learning, teaching and assessment

The key aims of Ruskin College academic community are articulated as 8 strategic goals outlined below:

Strategic Goal 1: value, celebrate and recognise student progression, achievement and success

The College commits:

1. To place the student at the centre of our quality processes and delivering the '7 Ways to Have your Say'.
2. To engage students in the mechanisms, processes and procedures developed by the College to enhance their learning opportunities.
3. To increasing and sustain student attendance and participation in groups, quality boards, committees and forums across the College and at all levels of management.
4. To continually evaluate and assess the effectiveness of the mechanisms used to capture the thoughts of students in improving the teaching and learning processes through QAA processes and mechanisms.
5. To use student feedback to inform staff development needs and our appraisal systems.
6. To consider graduation events as events for the individual graduate's family and friends as well as an opportunity to invite key people and agencies from the students' journeys. This will act to celebrate their achievement and demonstrate their collective potential to make a difference in the wider community.

Strategic Goal 2: Enhance the teaching skills of tutors through:

1. The attainment of Advance HE UK Fellowship.
2. Alignment and ongoing development of teaching, learning and assessment through tutor involvement in programme review, validation, monitoring and evaluation.
3. Attainment of a level 5 teaching qualification [GL1] within a year of appointment.
4. All staff to be observed as per the College's HE observation policy.
5. Encouraging and supporting scholarly activity and subject-based, pedagogic and in- community activism.
6. Commitment to the development of multi-modal study pathways, including in this blended learning.
7. Professional engagement and recognition of the relevant professional bodies and regulators.

Strategic Goal 3: Embed the activity of transformative learning into our academic and College community

The College will:

1. Ensure that each member of staff knows the contribution and difference they make to the teaching and learning experience from catering, student services, building services, reception etc. This connection needs to be made strong.
2. A distinctive Higher Education element within all cross-college processes, procedures, policies and staff development activities.
3. Promoting and sustaining an academic community throughout the College.
4. All staff engaged in HE have the opportunity to acquire Advance HE Fellowship awards.
5. Recognise and encourage the importance of student focused / person centred approaches to student learning and engagement.

Strategic Goal 4: Fostering a Distinctive Pedagogy through:

1. Developing an HE 'community of practice' through staff development activities and the HE Teaching & Learning Working Group.
2. Hosting and organising events and conferences, which enhance understanding and integration of pedagogic approaches specific to our programmes.
3. Developmental critique and sharing of practice through peer observation using internal and external observers. A range of appropriate and stimulating learning activities, weekly tutorials, additional learning support for students and the development of fieldwork opportunities and community links.
4. Encouragement of cross-curriculum developments such as mental health, digital literacy and environmental and social sustainability.
5. Academic engagement in activities that directly enhance the experience of the student body.

Strategic Goal 5: Challenge and Assessment

The College aims:

1. To ensure prompt, supportive and targeted feedback on students' work and a diagnosis of strengths and areas for development.
2. To use both summative and formative assessments in support of student learning and the development of academic and employability skills.
3. To create assessment designs that challenge and embed learning, and which encourage and develop students' voices. Use these as tools to locate strengths and needs and responses for development in student understanding and achievement.
4. To create innovative and appropriate assessment strategies, which develop subject confidence and the qualities, behaviours and skills of a Ruskin graduate.
5. To ensure that assessment modes and methods are linked to intended learning outcomes and which allow students to demonstrate achievement through a variety of assessment methods with explicit criteria against which the demonstration of learning outcomes will be assessed.

Strategic Goal 6: Supporting and empowering change makers

The aims of the College are:

1. To ensure that students are safe and learning during fieldwork practice.
2. To ensure that placement agencies and students are able to connect practice to learning outcomes and professional practice requirements in respective programmes.
3. To offer in-house training for fieldwork agencies that are supporting students with the practical and academic fieldwork requirements.
4. To continue to support graduates through conferences, events and training.
5. To aid those seeking to make a difference on issues that impact individuals, communities and practice by providing advice on networks and advocacy groups.
6. To integrate proven and tested at models such as ACE's (Adverse Childhood Experiences) and to understand the support that students need and the support that the College needs to offer.

Strategic Goal 7: Promote equality and diversity across the College community

The College is committed to:

1. Embedding a 'blended learning model' that is founded upon allowing students to access learning outside of the institutional walls. This requires the further development of the virtual learning environment including Moodle and Google Classroom.
2. Ensuring that teaching and learning takes into account the needs of a diverse student body and works pro-actively to address students' needs. This includes making reasonable adjustments, (where feasible), to provide learner support and a welcoming environment for a very diverse student body in terms of race, religion, gender, sexuality, class, disability, age.
3. Ensuring that difference is not a barrier to academic achievement.
4. Promoting the values of the College within both the staff and student body and ensuring that any behaviour / conduct that contravenes these values at an individual or institutional level is addressed and that systems are in place to do so.

Summary

The students that choose to study Higher Education at Ruskin College bring powerful life experiences with them that both inform and enhance the courses that they study. On completion of their studies, the combination of academic reflection and life experience lead many to return to their communities and to bring about change in the areas that they come from. It is, therefore, important to develop pedagogic approaches that embed a transformative learning, teaching and assessment model. This model enables students to achieve their full potential and to move on to become role models, mentors and 'change makers' in their communities It is also vital that the students' learning experience enables them to recognise and to address the social inequalities that they witness on a daily basis, both in their own communities and in the wider society.