

Higher Skills Strategy 2019-2022

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1. Introduction

Kirklees College aims to be a centre of excellence for higher level skills, offering a range of courses that focus on applied learning and providing an excellent student experience. Serving the people of Kirklees and the surrounding area, it will equip confident and skilled graduates for lifelong achievement in the global market place.

This Strategy sets out the direction, aspirations and objectives for the College, to ensure the continued delivery of outstanding quality higher education and skills provision. In addition, it sets out how the provision will have significant impact and add major value within the local community, through a positive contribution to economic and cultural growth.

The College firmly locates its higher skills provision at the core of its mission, which is simple; *'Creating Opportunity, Changing Lives'*. The mission is underpinned by the following Strategic Objectives.

- To ensure all our learners develop personally and progress successfully into further training, employment or higher education.
- To provide high quality teaching, learning and assessment which is innovative, inclusive and inspirational.
- To provide safe learning environments with industry standard resources in high quality sustainable accommodation.
- To develop a culture of inspirational and creative leadership throughout the organisation.
- To recruit, motivate and develop a highly skilled, effective and professional workforce which is representative of the communities we serve.
- To consistently achieve our business targets and maintain financial sustainability.

2. Context

2.1 National

The following national reforms, reviews and changing educational landscape impact on how we will evaluate and further shape higher skills at the College.

The Augar Review Summary

The Augar Review (2019) was commissioned by the government to research post-18 education and funding. The Review details significant changes to Further and Higher Education, apprenticeships, adult learning initial advice and guidance (IAG), which would have a profound effect on the learning landscape in Kirklees. The most significant principles include a better funded Further Education system, lowering Higher Education fees to £7500 and offering more technical sub-degree courses as well as flexible, modular lifelong learning courses.

Recommendations regarding improved data and support for small and medium enterprises (SMEs) delivering apprenticeships is significant, given the unusually high percentage of SMEs in Kirklees. The Review supports the principles of an apprenticeship system broadly aligned with industrial priorities, to ensure higher level apprenticeships are available, and that they are not simply a rebranded or less expensive form of in-work training, attracting genuinely new entrants to level 4 and above.

Significant recommendations for Higher Education and Skills include:

- **Strengthening technical education** – driving up supply and demand for technical courses for all, particularly at levels 4 and 5

- **Increasing opportunities** – through improving adult, flexible provision, particularly levels 2, 3, 4 and 5 as participation in Higher Education has increased, but the total in tertiary education has declined, with 40% of 25 year olds not progressing beyond GCSE.
- **Reforming and refunding the Further Education College network** – by reversing funding cuts, rationalising the network to avoid competition and using the Further Education network to develop higher technical skills at level 4 and 5.
- **Increasing flexibility and lifetime learning** – by offering flexible, modular lifetime learning, particularly higher technical and degree courses at levels 4 and 5.

Higher Education White Paper Summary

The UK government published this HE White Paper in 2016, entitled *Success as a Knowledge Economy: Teaching Excellence, Social Mobility and Student Choice*. The teaching excellence framework (TEF) was a key feature. Other issues addressed were widening participation; opening up the higher education market; and boosting research and innovation. Summary:

- **The Office for Students (OfS)**, now oversee market exit/entry via the new single entry route for providers.
- **The Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF)**, measures the quality of teaching at Higher Education Institute (HEIs), allowing providers access to inflationary increases in tuition fees.
- The Government state they would consider the future of technical qualifications at higher levels following **Lord Sainsbury's review**. The Government responded in the form of a 'Skills Plan', which will ensure the whole education and training system is focused on implementing its proposals.
- The White Paper has progressed into the **Higher Education Bill 2016**. The Bill is seen as an enabling Bill, which will result in significant details coming through Secondary Legislation. Of note in the Bill is the ability to Subcontract Foundation Degree Awarding Powers (FDAP).

Industrial Strategy Summary

The Government's Industrial Strategy (2017) aims at increasing growth and productivity which is significantly linked to higher level skills development across the UK. The strategy states combined authorities, and Local Enterprise Partnerships will lead the development of local strategies, and universities, colleges and other institutions will be key.

The strategy is focused around five foundations: Ideas, People, Infrastructure, Business environment and Place. The strategy incorporates four challenges set by the Government to put the UK at the forefront of future industries, ensuring that we take advantage of major global changes, improving people's lives and increasing productivity through:

- Clean energy
- Ageing society
- Artificial intelligence and data
- Future of mobility

Consumer and Markets Authority (CMA)

During 2015, the Consumer and Markets Authority (CMA) provided clarification on how consumer law applies to Higher Education. Along with the clarification, the CMA provided extensive guidance to comply. Kirklees College have developed practice in the admission of students to ensure compliance.

2.2 Regional

The LEP Local Industrial Strategy focuses on driving inclusive growth, boosting productivity and improving living standards for a post 2030 economy. The Local Industrial Strategy focuses on:

- Keeping the region and UK at the forefront of scientific research, innovation and new technologies.
- Investing in infrastructure and place to transform the places where people want to live and work, and where businesses want to invest.
- Nurturing future talent, addressing skills shortages, promoting lifelong learning, and providing the technical skills that will drive our economy.

The College recognises that it has a key role to play within the communities it serves in the achievement of national targets for HE participation. Recommendations of the Post-16 education and training area review for West Yorkshire and its impact on the subsequent positioning of the Kirklees College Higher Education offer and its working relationship with Wakefield and Calderdale colleges in particular.

The local economy was traditionally dominated by engineering, textiles, chemicals, and food and drink manufacturing. In line with Leeds City Region's Employment and Skills Plan the economy in recent years has become more diverse with a wider range of manufacturing, service industries, retail, business and Digital Industries. Manufacturing and engineering remain important to the local economy, with the Leeds City Region being identified as the UK's largest manufacturing centre. Manufacturing employs 18% of the Kirklees workforce (compared to 9% national average) and has the third largest number of people employed in the sector in the UK. The Kirklees economy has strong specialisms in manufacturing, wholesale, motor trades, retail, education and construction. Manufacturing specialisms cover textiles, furniture, machinery, chemicals, pharmaceuticals and clothes. Manufacturing (18%), Health (13%), Retail (11%) and Education (11%) are the most significant areas of employment in Kirklees.

The Leeds City Region Employment and Skills Plan aims to raise the bar on high level skills with more and better apprenticeships through building workforce skills and attracting talent. Priority sectors include infrastructure, Construction, Engineering and Manufacturing, Digital, Health and Care, Leadership and Management, including sales and marketing, finance and customer service. Emerging skills needed in the Leeds City Region have been identified as Leadership and Management in Manufacturing, Manufacturing and Engineering, Retail, Textiles, Tailoring and Apparel Software Coding and Engineering, Technical Skills in the Creative and Digital Sector Visitor Economy

2.3 Local and Internal

The College has a long history of providing high quality, affordable, vocationally related Higher Education in North and South Kirklees and seeks to address the need to provide higher level courses and qualifications for the local community and employers. It recognises the advantages to some students of studying near to home, reducing the costs of accommodation and travel, making Higher Education and Skills a viable option. In some circumstances there are domestic or cultural reasons for studying locally. Higher Education and Higher Skills within a Further Education setting supports vocational progression and access in this context.

The nature of College Higher Education is distinct from that provided by traditional Higher Education Institutions in that it raises the aspirations of those who would not normally consider higher education as part of their career path. By making such provision available to aspiring learners, Kirklees College plays an important role in contributing to the economic

development of the local community, the widening participation agenda and the achievement of national targets for HE participation. Within Kirklees, the majority of wards fall under quintile 2 areas with respect to participation in Higher Education (POLAR3 data), where quintile 1 areas have the lowest participation (most disadvantaged) to quintile 5 areas with the highest rates (most advantaged).

Provision within the Kirklees area includes one Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF) Gold University. However, our provision concentrates on higher vocational qualifications and training, therefore we are not in direct competition with the University. We need to shape the strategy and align ourselves with the University's provision and align our provision so that it complements the University offer.

The College previously delivered programmes validated by Teesside University. Following Teesside University's decision to withdraw all college contracts, we took the decision to move away from delivering Degree programmes to focus on Higher National Certificates and Diplomas. Therefore, the current HE offer is largely Higher National Certificates (HNC), Higher National Diplomas (HND) and teaching provision with a small number of legacy Foundation Degrees and Top-Up degrees franchised from Teesside University (last cohort to complete 2018/19). However, in some curriculum areas the HNC/D offer is not always market relevant and not recognised by the relevant sectors for example, Health and Social Care and Creative Industries. As a result, these courses have declined as they have not attracted student numbers. Student enrolments in HE have significantly declined 39% (from 354 to 215) over the past four years. There has been growth in the HNC in Engineering and HND in Computing.

3. The vision for Higher Skills at Kirklees College

As a result of analysis of internal and external priorities, in response to the LEP and LMI and through a robust curriculum planning process, our vision is to develop the Higher Skills offer within the College through clear progression paths from Level 3 to Levels 4 and 5. In particular in priority areas identified by the LEP, e.g. in Teaching, Engineering, Retail Management in Hair and Beauty Therapy and Hospitality, Construction Management and Business and Digital Industries. Our concentration remains on the development of locally based, vocationally and technical related provision through the emphasis on Higher Nationals, professional qualifications, higher apprenticeships and other relevant higher level skills delivery. We aim to ensure the continuous development and delivery of taught courses and apprenticeships at levels 4 and above to ensure the needs of employers in the region are met.

The College has strong numbers of apprentices registered at Level 3, but limited apprentices at levels 4 and above, and where they exist they are in different curriculum areas to those at lower levels. Apprenticeships, especially at Higher and Degree level are an expanding market meaning there is a clearly an opportunity to increase the offer of apprenticeship standards to create a progression route, especially in Construction and Engineering.

As a vehicle for the advancement of Higher Skills in the region, we will focus on producing individuals who have the skills, knowledge and expertise required to address the skills shortages and support economic growth in Kirklees and the wider Leeds City Region for the 21st Century and beyond. We will:

- provide an excellent quality, accessible, value for money and employment focussed offer
- allow our students to achieve their full potential, progress in their chosen career and increase their potential for higher earnings in response to the growing demand for higher level skills

- ensure that our employers benefit from a skilled workforce that will enable growth, generate innovation and increase their productivity

We will work with our key partners, with a focus on employers, to ensure that our curriculum provides opportunities and challenges for our students and leads to improved career outcomes and life chances. We will engage employers on all aspects of curriculum development, delivery and review. We want to offer economically relevant, high quality, flexible learning opportunities and a curriculum that will meet the needs of Kirklees adults, employers, and community.

We will support social and economic regeneration and contribute to measurable business success and community cohesion through the provision of flexible, innovative, and responsive high quality training opportunities, working in partnerships with employers, local communities, and key agencies and training providers. We will ensure that we meet the need of our student body through regular review and enhancement of our mechanisms for student engagement.

We will create a high quality learning environment which captures outstanding practice including a culture of continuous improvement, by providing inspirational, teaching and learning which is responsive to the needs, interests, and experience of our students and leads to success. The quality of learning, teaching and assessment will be enhanced through sharing of good practice both internally and across other regional and national providers.

We will commit to, and proactively support, to widen participation and increase access to lifelong learning opportunities in education and training by creating an inclusive and enabling approach and ensuring that high quality higher education is accessible to a wide range of groups that include:

- the provision of progression opportunities to existing college learners
- the targeting and engagement of learners from cold spots (areas with low higher education participation rates or non-traditional higher education learners),
- the provision of a local higher education offer for regional sixth form leavers
- up-skilling and re-skilling opportunities to individuals within the community and further afield, and
- opportunities for employees to gain and accredit higher level learning through part-time and bespoke routes including higher and degree apprenticeships.

Working in partnership with students, the College will ensure that sound information, advice and guidance supports individuals into higher education study and, following high quality learning experiences, students' progress further into employment or continued study.

The College values and has a strong track record of working in partnerships, and will continue working with industries and universities as a crucial factor in the journey to increase participation, and the development of higher level skills to support economic regeneration regionally and nationally. We will promote innovation as new flexible models of delivery are sought to meet the changing needs of both industry and individuals in a rapidly changing world.

4. Strategic enablers to achieve our vision

To achieve our vision for higher skills, the College will:

- place emphasis on the higher level vocational skills agenda, with particular focus on technical qualifications and Higher Apprenticeships, and on improving employability in Kirklees.
- Be ambitious in raising aspirations of students in the region and support the development of a highly skilled, knowledgeable workforce for the future.

The specific actions that we will take to achieve our vision are:

4.1 Work effectively with curriculum areas and partners to identify, monitor and meet growth targets in higher level skills provision by:

- Mapping our curriculum and establishing clear technical and vocational progression routes from further to higher level skills education where there are gaps
- Providing support and setting up schemes that will increase our internal progression rates
- Developing progression pathways in identified key growth sector areas, focussed on the College's areas of expertise, aligned with the College strategic objectives.
- Engaging with the Local Authority, Leeds City Region LEP, employers and other providers in the design, development, delivery and funding of short courses and programmes of study of higher level learning.
- Providing innovative opportunities for widening participation and increasing access to higher level provision
- Providing regular opportunities for existing partners to be more engaged in the processes of developing new provision
- Developing opportunities to create new links with potential HE partners for the purpose of growing higher level skills provision and higher apprenticeship

4.2 Provide a curriculum that is employment focussed through effective partnership working by:

- Strengthening and developing the curriculum that will meet the present and future employment needs through effective engagement with employers
- Working collaboratively with Sector Skills Councils, industry bodies and relevant awarding body organisations to ensure that the skills and competencies embedded within the higher skills curriculum are carefully aligned to the latest industrial practice
- Providing opportunities for learners to develop and enhance their skills by spending time in industry and participating in projects that will broaden their expertise and professionalism and make them stand out
- Bringing innovation and creativity into the delivery of the programmes, ensuring that learners have the digital, problem solving and transferrable skills to enable them to thrive and progress in the changing work environment

4.3 Provide a state of the art, industry relevant learning environment by:

- Completing the Pioneer House project and establishing it as a local and regional centre of excellence for Higher Skills
- Engaging with employers and other industry relevant stakeholders to enable meaningful partnerships and co-delivery models, so that learners have access to the latest equipment and technology all the time
- Ensuring that the resources across the college are used effectively and efficiently
- Creating opportunities for sponsorship and co-investment

4.4 Provide a high quality learning and support experience by:

- Developing a student focussed Teaching, learning and assessment Strategy to support continuous quality improvement
- Providing opportunities for students to be engaged in and be able to influence and shape all aspects of the curriculum
- Engaging students in all aspects of the learning experience including processes to support quality improvement

- Offering teaching staff opportunities for research and scholarly activity that directly relates to improvements in teaching and learning and the vocational relevance and currency of the curriculum offer.
- Setting high expectations for our students and staff, and ensuring that our staff have opportunities for research, development and sharing good practice
- Ensuring that quality and standards are continually improved and annually monitored via the production of a Quality Enhancement Strategy supported by local quality enhancement plans.

4.5 Provide high quality, flexible, value for money higher skills programmes in response to identified niche market opportunities by:

- Ensuring that up to date intelligence regarding niche market programme/ course opportunities are developed in partnership with employers and partners
- Increasing the opportunities of relevant staff to develop and strengthen relationships with local employers for the purpose of identifying niche course development
- Working with our secondary schools, ensuring that local and regional young people receive appropriate information, advice and guidance on progression and our higher skills offer
- Working collaboratively with business support teams to ensure that our processes enable an excellent customer experience, and that our learner, employer and partner satisfaction rates are consistently high.

5. Risk and Considerations

The strategy and growth plan for this type of provision relies heavily on the predicated increase in Higher Apprenticeships and the potential to identify a relevant partner to jointly deliver Degree Apprenticeships. However, the Apprenticeship Levy is very unlikely to grow, which could have a negative impact our plans.

In its operations and decisions, we will continue to be mindful of changes in government policies in relation to Further and Higher Education. In particular, implications of:

- Apprenticeship funding and strategy
- Static levels of enrolments at level 3 in the College
- Changes in regulatory framework for HEIs
- Competitors entering the HE in FE and Apprenticeship markets
- Outcomes of the Augar Review
- The emergence of T-levels

6. Monitoring impact

Through a cross college action plan and clear key performance indicators, Higher Education and Higher Skills will be monitored on a monthly basis by the Assistant Principal for Adults and HE. In addition, performance will be termly monitored at performance management meetings (PEERs) by the Vice Principal for Curriculum and Innovation And regularly reported to SLT and Governors. Data will be scrutinised and remedial actions will be taken where necessary. At the end of each academic year review meetings will be held and any required changes implemented to the curriculum plan for the following academic year.