



Gloucestershire College

Strategic Plan

2022-2026





Contents

1.0 Foreword	3
2.0 Our Mission: Learning That Works	4
3.0 Strategic Goals	5
4.0 Strategic Goal 1: Skills and Purpose	6
5.0 Strategic Goal 2: Strategic Position, Recruitment and Reputation	8
6.0 Strategic Goal 3: Learner Experience, Progress and Achievements	10
7.0 Strategic Goal 4: People and Culture	11
8.0 Strategic Goal 5: Finance, Resource and Facilities	12
9.0 Strategic Goal 6: Social Value – College Community Plan	13
10.0 Our Values	14
11.0 Our Partners	15
12.0 Our Campuses	15



1.0 Foreword



Gloucestershire College's (GC) strategic plan has been developed against the backdrop of seismic events: Brexit, COVID, the war in Ukraine and the resulting energy crisis, political uncertainty, and also structural changes in the labour market creating acute shortages in all sectors of the economy.

Our ambitions and plans for the period ahead reflect this landscape, as well as recognising a greater element of uncertainty exists currently than has been experienced for several generations. Our plans will therefore need to be agile and adapt to changing circumstances.

There are many significant challenges facing us over the plan period, including:

- Polarised attainment across the county, and poor social mobility in Gloucestershire, as highlighted by the Social Mobility Commission.
- Our obligations under the recent Skills Act, including demonstrating how we meet the skills needs of different stakeholder groups.
- The very significant curriculum changes being introduced, such as the transition to T Levels and Higher Technical Qualifications, which may further disadvantage many of our learners.
- Continued demographic change, which will bring economic pressures and challenge staff recruitment and retention.
- Societal changes, including the mental health and wellbeing of learners and our local community, which has been exacerbated by COVID, the very real dangers to our learners presented by County Lines and associated gang activity, as well as rape culture and the trivialisation of sexual abuse, as highlighted by 'Everyone's Invited'.
- Diversity and inequality in society as highlighted by movements such as Black Lives Matter.
- Rapid technological changes: we need to combat increased threats from cyber attacks, as well as harness the benefits of emerging technologies such as robotics and AI to improve how we work and learn.
- The threats arising from climate change and the drive towards net zero.

There can be no doubt that we face the added difficulty of addressing these issues in the context of the very challenging financial situation for the Further Education (FE) sector and indeed the UK. However, we are determined to play a significant role in recovering from the long-lasting impact of lost months of education during the pandemic, especially in less advantaged communities. Never has the role of FE been more important to our community.

"We are determined to play a significant role in recovering from the long-lasting impact of lost months of education during the pandemic."

Matthew Burgess, Principal and CEO



2.0 Our Mission: Learning That Works



Our mission is to deliver learning that works. To achieve this, we:

1 Provide learners with the opportunities, experiences and skills to move into their intended career destinations

2 Promote social mobility

3 Enable employers to access the skills needed for Gloucestershire to be prosperous for all

2.1 Provide learners with the opportunities, experiences and skills to move into their intended career destinations

We offer a broad range of provision, encompassing full-time courses for 16 to 18-year-olds, adult programmes and a significant apprenticeship provision, as well as other workplace learning. The offer is inclusive and responds to all types of learners, such as those with learning difficulties or disabilities, or unemployed, for example.

The principal focus of our provision is to provide technical education and training, considering local skills strategies and needs, as well as those identified by local and regional skills strategies.



2.2 Promote social mobility

We exist to give all learners the skills to be successful in their future lives and careers, with a focus on developing them practically, professionally, and technically. Whilst we have an offer for all learners, social mobility is a key ambition, so we particularly work with learners who:

- have been less academically successful at school
- are from disadvantaged backgrounds
- may have not achieved grade 4 in English and maths at GCSE
- have special educational needs

We do not deliver A Levels directly but work in partnership with Dene Magna school to provide an A Level offer as part of a longer-term ambition to raise aspirations and attainment in the Forest of Dean.

Amongst adults, we have a wide-ranging offer that supports them back into work or enables them to progress in their careers. This extends to work in prisons, supporting offenders into careers and reducing re-offending.



2.3 Enable employers to access the skills needed for Gloucestershire to be prosperous for all

We work with local employers so that they can access required skills through:

- a successful AoC Beacon Award-recognised apprenticeship provision
- developing our learners' professional and technical skills to prepare them for the local and national workforce
- supporting the training and upskilling of the current workforce
- working with agencies such as GFirst LEP, Business West and the Gloucestershire Skills Advisory Panel to identify and address local skills needs

We have embraced many key government initiatives to raise skills levels and respond to the pandemic such as Kickstart and Skills Bootcamps in areas including digital and HGV. Our Institute of Technology (IoT) offer, focusing on cyber and engineering, opened in 2021. We have worked with partners to position our Cheltenham Campus as a key training hub within the proposed cyber business park in Cheltenham. Our Cyber Degree Apprenticeship, delivered in partnership with UWE, is the first in England to be endorsed by the Government's National Cyber Security Centre.





3.0 Strategic Goals



In order to realise our mission, six over-arching strategic goals have been set for this plan period.

Skills and Purpose:

We will work with key partners, using our links with community and employer groups to enrich the curriculum and meet skills needs, enabling and facilitating economic development and prosperity across our community.

Strategic Position, Recruitment and Reputation:

We will position the College to take advantage of opportunities to grow in our areas of expertise, and remain a vibrant, confident organisation rooted in our community, with a reputation for outstanding delivery.

Learner Experience, Progress and Achievements:

Teaching, learning and the learner experience will continue to be central to everything we do. We will provide a safe, stimulating and challenging learning environment rooted in outstanding teaching and learning, with a curriculum offer that enables learners to achieve and promotes social mobility. We will enrich the learner experience with a range of opportunities that support progression towards career goals and create a vibrant student life.

People and Culture:

We will develop as an employer of choice that attracts and retains talented, motivated individuals. We want staff to be engaged in work that brings them purpose, feel valued and continue to develop their talents throughout their time with us.

Finance, Resources and Facilities:

We will ensure that our financial position continues to be robust, enabling us to continue to invest in staff and physical resources to deliver an outstanding student experience.

Social Value:

We will continue to be driven by social purpose, aligning our activities to the UN SDG goals. We aspire to be recognised as a leader on social value issues such as climate change, and for our learners to leave with a strong sense of social value.





4.0 Strategic Goal 1: Skills and Purpose



4.1 Context

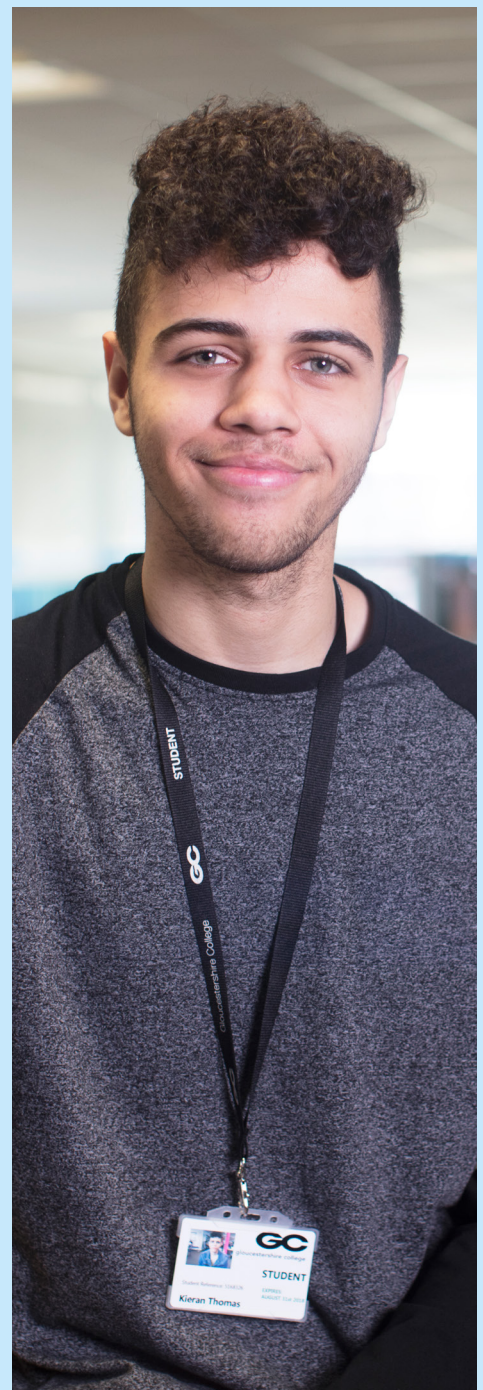
Our mission is to provide learners and employers with the skills needed for successful futures. We now have a new statutory obligation to assess how well we meet skills needs, work with local partners in developing a Local Skills Improvement Plan (LSIP), and play our part in meeting those skills needs.

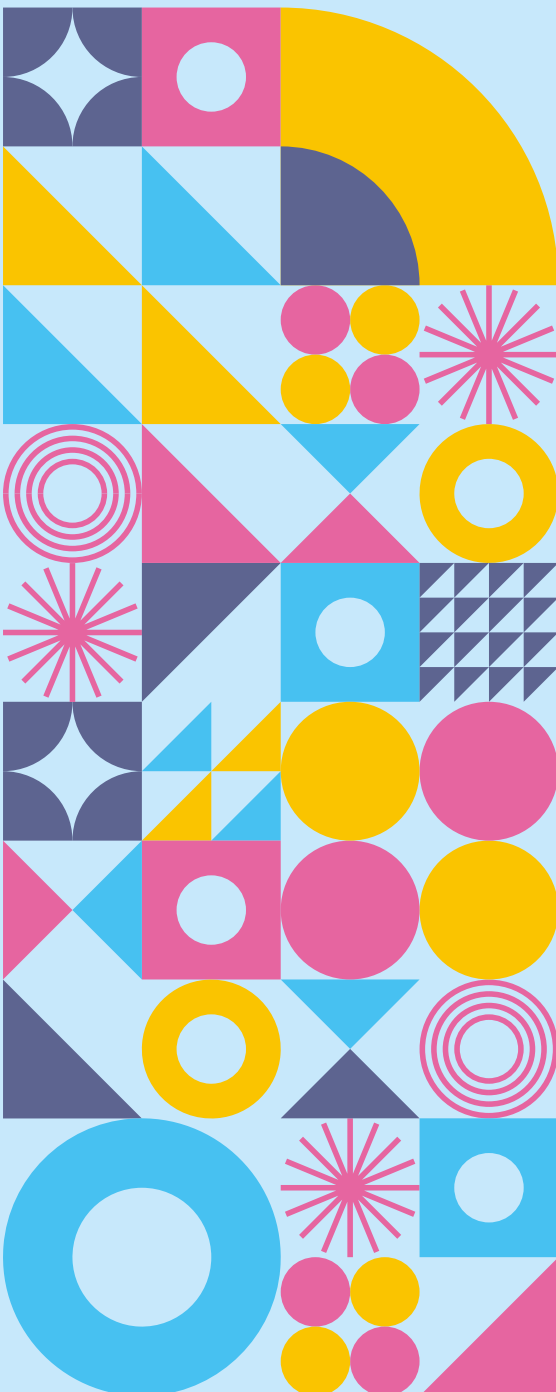
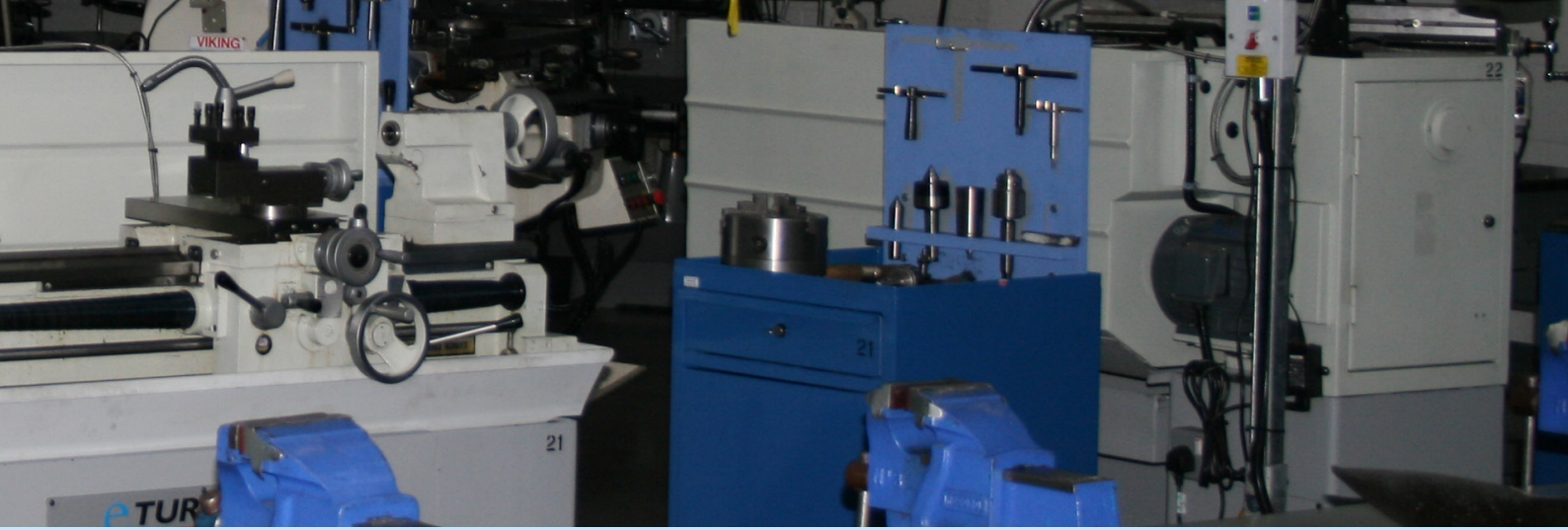
From 2023 we will need to produce an annual statement of how we meet skills needs. We mapped our offer against the Gloucestershire Skills Strategy to identify areas of strength and for development. Examples from this review of how we have contributed towards meeting skills needs include the following:

Market	
Employers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Launched a range of new apprenticeship programmes in key economic sectors. Contributed as a key partner in realising the cyber vision for Cheltenham, with significant investment in cyber training facilities through the Government's IoT initiative, the development of new degree and degree apprenticeship programmes with the University of the West of England, and the launch of innovation space for cyber and tech businesses funded by GFirst LEP. Developed new programmes in areas of high need, such as HGV driver training.
Civic	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Contributed towards development of the county Skills Strategy, through membership of the Skills Advisory Panel. Worked with Cheltenham Borough Council on the development of a proposed 'green' construction training centre at Cheltenham Campus.
Education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Launched a new 'P Level' provision in conjunction with Gloucestershire County Council, aimed at learners with severe learning difficulties. Worked in partnership with Dene Magna School to provide A Levels in the Forest of Dean, as part of wider strategy to raise attainment in that area. Jointly developed programmes through the IoT and with university partners to meet needs in key sectors.
Community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Developed programmes such as rail engineering in prison settings, in conjunction with employer sponsors, which offer meaningful career opportunities, reduce re-offending and provide employers with scarce skills. Worked with the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) on Sector-based Work Academy Programmes (SWAPs), providing bespoke training in conjunction with employers and jobs for learners.

We are well-positioned to continue to make a meaningful contribution based on our network of links and significant membership in the West of England IoT (WEIoT).

Ofsted reviewed our approach to meeting skills needs as part of our October 2022 inspection and assessed that we make a reasonable contribution, with strong strategic links leading to a good understanding of skills needs and the development of many new programmes. Further work was identified in fully embedding this in all curriculum areas.





4.2 To achieve our goals, we will:

- Meet the new statutory accountability requirements arising from the Skills Act.
- Be an active partner in contributing towards the development and delivery of the new Local Skills improvement Plan (LSIP) led by Business West; as well as working with other key partners to identify and meet skills, such as GFirst LEP, IoTs and Local Authorities.
- Identify needs through a range of sources, from Labour Market Information (LMI) to the work of our business consultants and offer appropriate provision to meet these.
- Continue to support provision with Dene Magna to address attainment issues in the Forest of Dean.
- Respond to emerging government initiatives such as Skills Bootcamps.
- Work with employer groups to involve them more in the design and delivery of programmes.
- Continue to develop our offer in key sectors, such as construction, digital and healthcare.
- Develop and progress our strategy on green skills, with a view to launching a coherent suite of programmes over the plan period.

Key to delivering this strategy will be the ability to recruit and retain appropriate staff, which is becoming increasingly challenging.

4.3 Success Indicators

- KPIs arising from the LSIP process.
- Ofsted judgements on meeting skills needs.
- Meeting our annual accountability agreement with the Department for Education.
- External reviews assessing levels of employer engagement in the curriculum and the employability skills of our learners, such as Ofsted.



5.0 Strategic Goal 2: Strategic Position, Recruitment and Reputation



5.1 Context

Each of our core markets present different challenges and opportunities over the plan period, and we need to position the College for these. Our key markets are described below:

16-18

Over the last three years, income from our 16-18 work has grown by £1.2m (12%). Growth has been lower than expected given the demographic increases reflecting the impact of 'grade inflation' at GCSE, meaning more students nationally stayed at school to follow A Level programmes. It will take until 2025 for the effects of grade inflation to work through. We will see some demographic growth emerging in Cheltenham and Gloucester, but numbers plateau at best in the Forest of Dean. We have seen a shift in learners towards higher levels. Our strategic focus is the delivery of 16-18 technical and professional skills.

Adult

Whilst nationally adult provision has been declining, the income from our adult work has grown by £1.2m during the last three years (23%). We have been successful in meeting AEB targets but continue to seek to use a greater proportion in-county as part of meeting local skills needs. We have also secured contracts in devolved regions such as Manchester and London; and for programmes such as Skills Bootcamps in HGV.

The proposed continuation of devolution nationally, which is expected to impact Gloucestershire from circa 2025, has the potential to significantly impact the funding available and what it can be used for.

Employers

Against the national trend, we have continued to experience growth in our employer work during the COVID period. During the last three years, income has grown by £2m, (43%). We have seen growth particularly in the construction, engineering and digital sectors. Given current labour market issues, there is very strong demand in all sectors, but it is strongest in areas where our staff recruitment is most challenging. This brings risks which could impact on learners' quality of experience and hence our reputation. We therefore face difficulties in being able to respond rapidly to all employer requirements.

We have, however, developed wider services to employers, seeking to better position our Cheltenham Campus. Our FE Choices feedback is good but there are pockets, such as in technology, where staffing gaps have impacted on experience, and where we are focusing improvements in customer service and communications.



Higher Education (HE)

In line with the sector, our full-time HE numbers have declined since the removal of the student number cap. Income has in fact grown by 12% over the last three years (£183k) but this masks the structural issues within the sector. We primarily enrol from our own Level 3 cohort or previous students; it is challenging to compete with the offer of a 'university' experience. We have been successful in expanding computing learner numbers where we have a large Level 3 cohort through improved learner experience, links to the Cyber Park and developing excellent relationships with UWE.

High Needs

Income from high needs provision has grown by 12% over the last two years, and growth is projected to continue. We have developed good relationships with Local Authorities (LAs) around Special Educational Needs (SEN) provision, which has supported growth. From 2019/20 to 21/22, high needs learners increased from 267 to 300. We have developed a Severe, Profound and Multiple Learning Difficulties (SPMLD) offer to meet Local Authority needs (P Levels) at Gloucester and Forest of Dean campuses and have added groups to our Harbour House provision. We now need to spend time embedding this offer.



5.2 To achieve our goals, we will:

16-18

- a. Prepare for the expected increase in student numbers from the rising cohorts within schools.
- b. Prepare for the expansion of T Levels and changes to mainstream curriculum.
- c. Continue to promote our FE offer in the Forest of Dean, including working with Dene Magna School to promote an A Level offer there.
- d. Work with Marling School on the vocational offer for the new secondary school proposed for Gloucester.

Adult

- a. Position ourselves for funding changes to adult education in Gloucestershire, arising from the devolution process.
- b. Continue to focus on meeting the demand for adult retraining and upskilling, including Skills Bootcamps, the National Skills Fund and emerging Government priorities.
- c. Extend programmes such as Rail Engineering, HGV and prison work, through bids for continued and new devolution contracts e.g. West Midlands, WECCA.
- d. Expand our online learning offer to enable more flexible options e.g. AAT, maths and English.

Employers

- a. Develop provision and capacity in priority skills areas e.g. construction, Electric Vehicle (EV), green skills.
- b. Further grow work in apprenticeships, meeting demand from employers.
- c. Position GC as leader in cyber, aligned to Golden Valley Cyber Park developments through continued links with UWE and employer networks, including development of the Cheltenham coworking hub.
- d. Continue to improve levels of customer experience.
- e. Work through opportunities and skills needs as they emerge from the LSIP.

Higher Education

- a. Provide opportunities for higher level study through:
 - i. Embracing the new Higher Technical Qualifications (HTQs).
 - ii. Developing new areas using our cyber model approach, looking at construction, healthcare and engineering.
 - iii. Develop partnerships to attract groups with low participation in HE e.g. underrepresented groups in large urban conurbations.

High Needs

- a. Consolidate and embed our P Level and Quayside offerings.
- b. Work in partnership with the new SEN school in Henley Bank.

5.3 Success Indicators:

- Recruitment and income by market segment.
- Market share.





6.0 Strategic Goal 3: Learner Experience, Progress and Achievements

6.1 Context

Our curriculum offer and progress of our learners is affected by factors including:

- The significant polarisation of attainment in the county and the impact of social disadvantage.
- COVID, which has had many impacts, including learning loss and widening of disadvantaged gaps across society.
- More students are presenting with mental health issues.
- A number of safeguarding issues are becoming more prominent nationally, from Everyone's Invited to Gangs and Knife Crime. These issues are equally present in Gloucestershire.
- The changing qualifications landscape, such as the introduction of T Levels and Higher Technical Qualifications. There are major qualification reforms planned, which will lead to wholesale changes to the landscape, especially from 2025/26.

Our latest Ofsted inspection in 2022 judged our provision as 'Good', with various areas of strength and some areas for focus, including developing maths and English amongst all learners; more fully meeting the ambitions of the Enhanced Inspection Framework in construction and engineering; continuing to support the most disadvantaged learners; and developing a suitably ambitious curriculum for high needs learners on foundation programmes.

The ability to offer an outstanding learning experience is increasingly impacted by staff recruitment and retention issues.

6.2 To achieve our goals, we will:

Curriculum and experience

- Further link curriculum design and delivery to skills needs, developing an ambitious curriculum for all learners where we develop the wider 'soft' skills they require for their next steps.
- Develop a wide and expansive curriculum to include access to enrichment activities, both within curriculum and cross-college, for all learners (particularly disadvantaged learners) to help develop cultural capital.
- Adapt to changing qualifications, ensuring that we have appropriate provision and progression routes.
- Implement the College Community Plan to provide cohesiveness to college activities for staff and students.
- Further develop use of destination data and improve destinations into apprenticeships in key areas by personalising learning programmes to support relevant progression.
- Continue to develop outstanding careers and IAG provision, providing appropriate advice and signposting that is accessible to all learners.
- Continue to ensure that all learners feel safe, focusing on Fundamental British Values, Everyone's Invited, the dangers of gang culture, radicalisation and other dangers.
- Expand work experience opportunities for all 16-18 learners, so they develop the skills needed to be successful in their next steps.

Quality of provision

1. Focus strategies on raising attendance and engagement across the curriculum.
2. Ensure provision and Teaching, Learning and Assessment is consistently good or outstanding.
3. Improve attendance, engagement and progress in maths and English.
4. Address pockets where student progress (retention, achievement etc.) is too low, or where improvements have plateaued, ensuring improvements are sustained.
5. Continue to reduce disadvantage attainment gaps.
6. Develop a suitably ambitious curriculum for high needs learners on foundation programmes.
7. Deliver an impactful personal development programme to all adults and apprentices.

6.3 Success Indicators

- Success rates
- Destinations
- OFSTED judgements
- Student feedback
- Disadvantage progression indicators



7.0 Strategic Goal 4: People and Culture

7.1 Context

Our staff are critical to meeting our strategic aims, so the development of people and culture across the organisation is a core theme of the plan. There are several challenges to address:

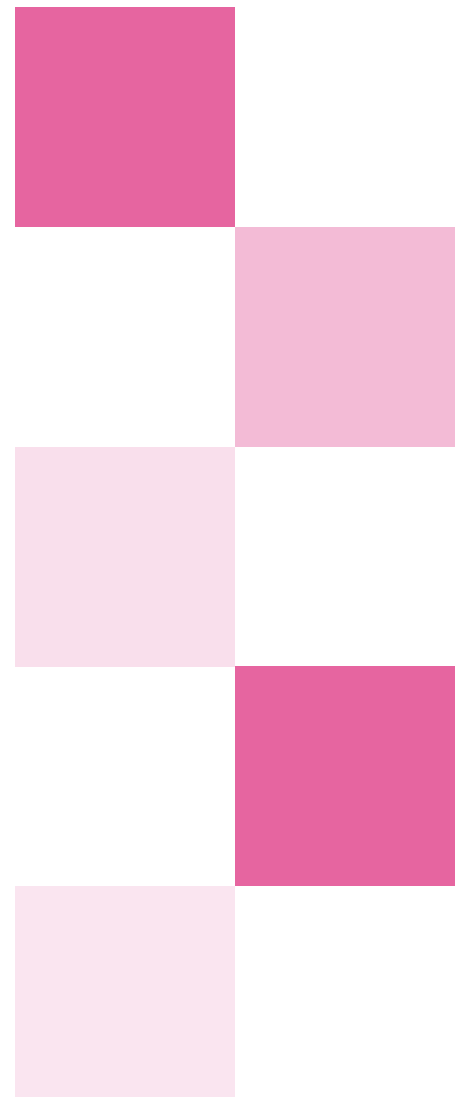
- Across the FE sector, real terms pay has fallen significantly. Whilst the College has been able to award greater than average sector pay rises in recent years, cost of living pressures mean that, as well as impacting on recruitment and morale, staff are increasingly returning to industry.
- Staff gaps have resulted in challenging workloads for the remaining staff in certain areas. This inevitably impacts on staff morale and retention, and also our ability to meet demand in key areas.
- There are trends across the UK workforce that we are also embracing. Following COVID, we have seen changes in people's ambitions for work, with a greater desire for autonomy and purpose. Promoting wellbeing is increasingly recognised as essential both as a responsible employer but also to secure high performance levels.
- Whilst overall the College performs well, there is a need to further develop leadership and management and engage and develop our staff to meet the known and emerging challenges facing us.

7.2 To achieve our goals, we will:

1. Develop resourcing strategies that enable us to widen our talent pool and recruit suitable staff, more effectively matching demand to maintain the quality of provision during growth.
2. Ensure effective leadership exists at all levels, including developing clarity and alignment of purpose, ensuring that we communicate and implement change effectively.
3. Further develop engagement across the College by enhancing on-boarding processes, providing transparency around pay scales, reward and progression processes; as well as putting in place business strategies that prioritise staff pay.
4. Continue to develop diversity within the staff population.
5. Systematically identify and address gaps in both performance but also values, behaviours, and cultural fit with organisational ambitions.
6. Promote wellbeing, productivity, and purpose by addressing staff recruitment and consequently workload issues; trial different working patterns that enhance productivity, and support autonomy, wellbeing and staff retention.
7. Ensure the effectiveness of communications, especially interdepartmental, and how we communicate change.
8. Develop work practice that promotes agility and innovation.

7.3 Success Indicators

- Staff turnover
- Feedback from staff surveys
- Ability to meet growth ambition and skills needs





8.0 Strategic Goal 5: Finance, Resource and Facilities

8.1 Context

The financial outlook for the FE sector is extremely uncertain and challenging. The sector has seen no real rate increases over the last decade, so in cash terms funding is no greater than in 2010. Nationally, the Adult Education Budget is around half of what it was then. Recruitment is being impacted by inflationary pressures on spending and this, together with escalating energy bills, supply challenges and projected cuts in public spending, suggest we face a turbulent period ahead.

We enter the period in a robust asset and liquidity position, but our operating position is much tighter. Whilst we can fund one-off capital investment and improvements, sustained cost increases are challenging. Our offer at Gloucester is vibrant but the activities in the Forest of Dean and Cheltenham are subsidised from other activities – especially off-site work and property income.

Our estate is in excellent condition, but facilities need to be adapted and expanded to meet the changing needs of the curriculum and demographic growth in 16-18. Through our GC Zero project, the estate has been updated to meet our net zero commitment – and afford some protection within the energy markets. To meet the demand for green skills, we need to expand the facilities available and are working with Cheltenham Borough Council on a bid to do this.

IT facilities are plentiful but difficult to maintain to the standard we would like or to protect against cyber attacks, which is a priority over the plan period.

Our financial priorities include:

- Sustaining breadth of offer, including maintaining a broad provision at both Cheltenham and the Forest of Dean.
- Continuing to improve Teaching, Learning and Assessment.
- Investing in strategic priorities such as construction and green skills.
- Securing pay levels which enable us to recruit and retain high calibre staff .

Meeting our ambitions will necessitate continuing to find additional profitable activities of net £500k p.a. as a minimum.

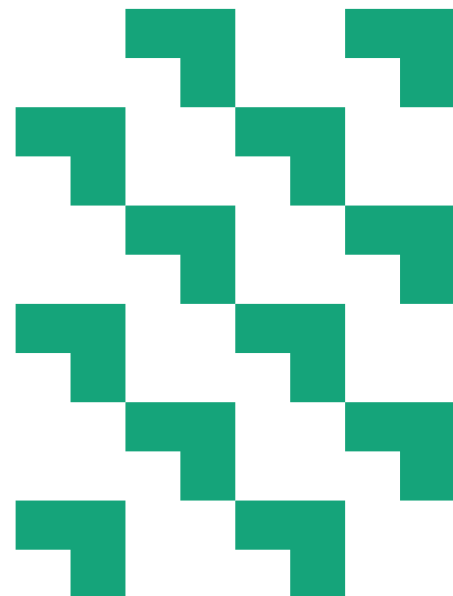
8.2 To achieve our goals, we will:

1. Continue to develop long-term plans for each campus that reduce financial subsidy and meet local needs.
2. Raise income primarily through organic growth and partnerships, but consider acquisition of providers where the right strategic fit exists.
3. Develop new additional income streams to reduce reliance on off-site and property income.
4. Maintain a clear and realistic plan of growth and efficiencies that enable us to continue to subsidise core educational activities.
5. Protect our energy supplies from both physical interruption and costs spikes.
6. Continue to develop and expand the estate to meet growing demand forecast from skills shortages and demographic projections. Develop 'turn-key' bids for capital expansions to maximise available funding opportunities.

7. Continue to develop resilience and security of our digital infrastructure, including contingency planning future scenarios.

8.3 Success Indicators

- Robust financial planning mechanisms as assessed by audit reviews
- Achieve targets set out in the financial strategy including:
 - Financial ratios
 - Capital investment programmes
 - Financial health scores
 - Making pay awards at least in line with sector recommendations
- Categorisation of estate condition
- Achievement of cyber security accreditations, and resilience against any attacks





9.0 Strategic Goal 6: Social Value: College Community Plan

9.1 Context

Our mission is rooted in social purpose. As an anchor institution within Gloucestershire we are now ready to take that role further and wider, beyond our core mission of providing education and training.

We have begun the journey by making a high-profile statement on climate change and delivering a pioneering scheme within the sector. We now need to go further to develop learners with a strong sense of social value, but also play our part in supporting and developing our community in times of social and economic challenge. We have signed up to the UN Sustainable Development Goals and will use this framework to enhance social value and assess our impact.

9.1 To achieve our goals, we will:

1. Continue our journey towards net zero, acting as a pioneer in the FE sector, cutting our emissions by at least 80% over the plan period.
2. Through the College Community Plan, provide a framework for driving a range of social value activities e.g. food banks.
3. Promote volunteer days for staff and students to engage in social action projects.
4. Review procurement processes to build social value into award criteria.
5. Continue to make progress on diversity issues as set out in our EDI Strategy.
6. Develop a framework to measure and track the impact of our social value activities, producing an annual celebration report.

9.3 Success Indicators

- Reduction in carbon footprint
- Distance travelled on social value impact





Be Respectful

- To be respectful of self, others, property and environment when at college or representing the college.
- To care for one another, our surroundings and the community.
- To be inclusive of others and everyone; listening, respecting and showing consideration for people's qualities, differences, beliefs and views.
- To create a sense of trust, safety and wellbeing.
- To be non-judgemental and polite. Be friendly, welcoming, supportive and inclusive.
- To demonstrate respect through all forms of communication.



Be Responsible

- To take ownership of our behaviours, attitude and personal development.
- To be responsible and accountable for our own actions and the impact that we have on the College, and wider community.
- To be mindful of the wellbeing of others.
- To consider the way in which we communicate with others, making sure our communications reflect the College Values.

Be Ambitious

- To become the best possible version of ourselves.
- To demonstrate and commit to continuously improving learning and succeeding for yourself, for others and the college.
- To show positive aspirations and determination in our plans and actions.
- To be supportive of everyone and encourage their positive ambitions.
- To provide opportunities for everyone to improve and succeed.
- To be ambitious and aspirational for our learners and one another and celebrate successes.



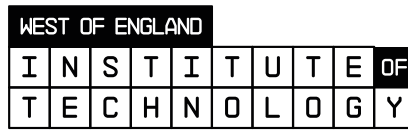
Be Collaborative

- To work as part of a team or teams, to support each other to contribute to the success of self, others and the GC community.
- To contribute, listen, communicate and work with each other to develop and grow together.
- To work together with purpose to have a positive impact on the College and be responsive to change.
- To be inclusive, encouraging and supportive when working as a team.
- To use effective communication when working together.
- To be a team player, by being reflective, creative and sharing ideas that support improvements.

11.0 Our Partners



We are proud to work with the following partners:



12.0 Our Campuses



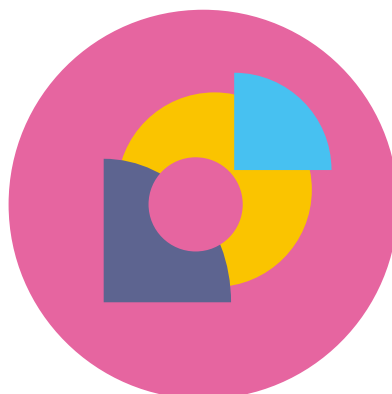
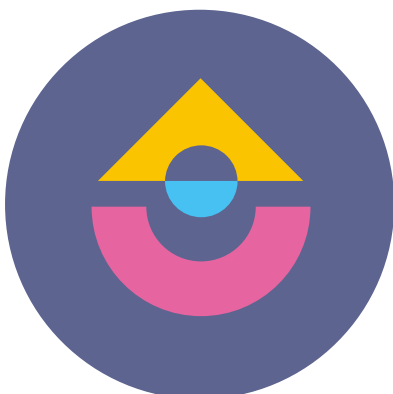
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