

# OUTCOME AGREEMENT 2020-21



# WHAT DRIVES US

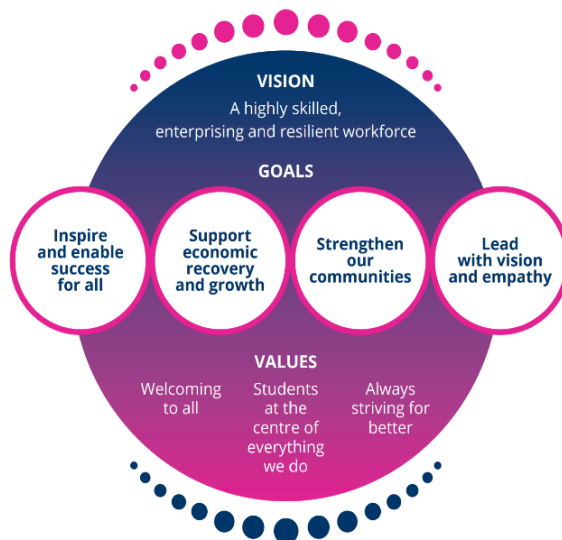
**This Outcome and Impact Agreement is effectively a contract between West Lothian College and the Scottish Funding Council (SFC) on what we plan to achieve over the three years from 2020 to 2023, with a particular focus on academic year 2020-21.**

It reflects priorities that emerged from extensive consultation with staff, the Student Association, employers, West Lothian Council and our board of governors.

## Vision and Strategic Goals

The college's vision to deliver a highly skilled, enterprising and resilient workforce is underpinned by four strategic goals and three core values that influence how we act.

Our four strategic goals align very well with the Outcomes and Impact Framework, as well as with the main themes from phase one of the SFC review of coherent provision in colleges and universities. They also map closely to the independent UK Commission on the College of the Future's people, place and productivity themes.



To inspire and enable success for all, we will:

- Provide a wide range of qualifications at further and higher education level
- Have clear vocational pathways from school to college, and from college to university, apprenticeships or employment
- Have a modern curriculum, responsive to the skills needs of the regional economy and supported by up-to-date and relevant facilities
- Integrate digital technologies across our curriculum and services for students
- Support our students facing financial, learning or mental health challenges.

To support economic recovery and growth, we will:

- Provide skilled people to help businesses survive, revive and thrive
- Ensure that all courses are relevant to industry and keep pace with developments in different economic sectors
- Be flexible in what, how, where and when we deliver
- Establish centres of excellence in areas such as computing and early years
- Enhance our STEM activity with schools, employers and partners.

To strengthen our communities, we will:

- Deliver more in our communities to reach people who are not in education or employment
- Enhance our partnerships with third sector organisations to achieve shared objectives
- Support our Community Planning Partnership and contribute to achieving its goals.

To lead with vision and empathy, we will:

- Be a trauma informed college working with local organisations to support our students

- Support positive mental health and wellbeing of students and staff
- Make work better for our employees by being a caring and supportive employer
- Help our workforce and students adapt to a post-pandemic world of work.

The college's four strategic goals align very well with the themes in SFC's Outcome Agreement and Impact Framework – outcomes for students, outcomes for economic recovery and social renewal, and being a responsive and collaborative college.



## Values

Our values underpin our vision and strategic goals.

Putting students at the centre of everything we do means exactly that. Through elected full-time sabbatical president and vice president, volunteer executive team officers and faculty ambassadors, our Student Association plays a pivotal role in the college. It sits at the heart of our decision-making and self-evaluation processes, ensuring that every decision we make enhances the student experience.

Being welcoming to all means that we ensure equality of opportunity, embrace diversity and are a truly inclusive college.

Always striving for better sums up our commitment to embracing a culture of continuous improvement. We know what we need to do to improve the learning experience for our students and make work better for our employees, and we are making good progress. For example, prior to the emergency years, we had improved student retention and attainment for two consecutive years, and achieved Investors in People silver accreditation in 2019. We will focus our collective energy on building on these improvements over the next three years.

## Supporting other strategic outcomes

Plans set out in this Outcome Agreement support the priorities of the West Lothian Community Planning Partnership, Scottish Government priorities on economic recovery and inclusive growth, widening access and addressing the attainment gap.

This Outcome Agreement aligns with and contributes to the high priority outcomes of the West Lothian Community Planning Partnership's Single Outcome Agreement 2013-23 to improve the employment position in West Lothian, and improve attainment and positive destinations for school pupils. The college plays a critical role in supporting individuals and businesses across West Lothian, contributing to inclusive economic growth.

The college contributes to a number of regional groups to support inclusive economic growth – including the *Economic Partnership Forum*, the *Jobs Task Force*, the *Chamber of Commerce*, *Job Centre Plus* and the *DYW regional employer group*.

Leaders of our early years curriculum engage proactively with the *Forth Valley and West Lothian Regional Improvement Collaborative*. We will continue to work with college, university and West Lothian Council partners on implementing skills projects created through the Edinburgh and South East Scotland City Region Deal, specifically focused on data driven innovation and construction. The college plays an active role on the City Deal HE/FE strategy group and is one of two colleges invited to join the recently convened elected members oversight committee alongside our involvement in the regional college co-ordination group.

The region is changing and the college aims to provide the skills necessary to help deliver inclusive growth, raise productivity, and meet the challenges presented by demographic, environmental and technological change. It is critical that our curriculum portfolio comprises courses that meet regional and national priorities, and address current and forecasted skills gaps.

Employers have a major influence in ensuring our curriculum is fully aligned with individual, economic and community need, and in 2020 we reorganised our curriculum faculties to reflect the regional economy. All faculties use labour market intelligence effectively, and involve employers in course design, for example through sector specific employer advisory forums.

### Looking further ahead

Despite the short to medium term challenges of the economic downturn brought about by the pandemic, forecasted growth over the next ten years in the population and the regional economy present opportunities for the college.

The population of West Lothian is over 180,000 and projected to increase by 21,200 by 2042. This college region has one of the fastest growing populations in Scotland, reflected in the growing number of students enrolling the college each year – from 6,151 in 2013-14 to 9,002 in 2018-19. Over the past five years, the college has consistently delivered above the target credit activity agreed with SFC and we expect this to continue given demographic and employment forecasts.

**It is important that SFC allocates considers more appropriate ways of allocating funding to enable the college to meet this growing demand.**

### Meeting the region's skills requirements

In planning a curriculum that meets the needs of the region, as well as understanding how industry sectors are expected to grow or decline over the next three years, the college pays close attention to changes in the economy and skills requirements at an occupational level.

The Regional Skills Assessment forecasts that the highest proportion of job openings in the next ten years require skills at SCQF level 7 and above. Given that only 36% of the adult population has qualifications at these levels, it is essential that people are able to achieve qualifications like HNCs and HNDs to be able to take advantage of higher value and more secure jobs. The college will therefore support a range of pathways to higher education including part-time HNC study for senior phase school pupils, moving on to HNC study straight from school, progressing from FE qualifications to HNC, and part-time learning in work through work-based SVQs or evening HNC/Ds.

The college continues to be the top destination for school leavers in West Lothian. Three quarters of school leavers who moved onto college chose West Lothian College, and as many leavers went to West Lothian as the total of those who moved onto all universities in Scotland.

## Achieving our goals and outcomes

Digital technology will continue to impact on every industry sector the college serves, on how we deliver education and skills, and on how we operate. The college will continue to modernise our curriculum, facilities and ways of working.

However, we face significant challenges in maintaining a digital infrastructure that meets the needs of our students and staff as hybrid models of learning and work persist beyond the emergency years. In 2019-20 we invested significantly in strengthening our network and improving WiFi, installing new and upgraded IT equipment including a second high-specification cyber security lab, and purchasing hundreds of laptops for lecturers and students to enable them to work and study from home.

**Demand for digital devices to support blended learning will increase with each new cohort of students and it is unclear how this can be supported by the small capital budget the college receives from SFC.**

There is increasing evidence of the impact that physical spaces have on students' learning experience and attainment. Flexible seating and collaborative spaces engage and support the capabilities of educational technology, and enable the learning environment to accommodate different learning styles. Extensive feedback from our students through the Student Association's self-evaluation process has reinforced that. Our twenty-year old campus was never designed with this in mind and there are no flexible learning spaces in our five buildings.

In recognition of the college's strong focus on improving its facilities, partnership with industry to enhance the practical learning environment, and innovative adaptations the SFC suspended repayments on the loan for a period of five years. This is welcome and will allow the release of funds for additional estates investment to improve facilities for students.

**However, more substantial capital funding is required to repurpose our whole campus so that it can support students, employers and other stakeholders well for the next twenty years.**



# OUTCOMES FOR STUDENTS

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**Fair access and transitions** – education is accessible to students from all backgrounds and students are supported through successful pathways

## Poverty/SIMD20

The proportion of students enrolled at the college who are resident in SIMD20 postcodes has increased significantly over the past three years, exceeding the relative proportion in the general population. Over this period, the college has achieved consistently higher than sector average success rates for students living in SIMD20 areas, demonstrating that we are reaching more people in communities affected by multiple deprivation and that we are closing the gap on attainment. This will continue to be a priority.

The precarious financial situation facing an increasing number of students makes committing to full-time study a serious challenge. Levels of poverty and homelessness amongst our students are rising, and we will continue to make use of established partnerships with a range of external organisations to provide vital financial and housing support.

The college works in close collaboration with the Student Association to enable students to remain on course and gain qualifications that will help them achieve improved life circumstances. As well as continuing to provide a free hot lunch for students, we will introduce a free hot breakfast in 2021 to ensure that students are not too hungry to learn. We will ensure access to government-funded free sanitary products, and our Student Association will continue to support the provision of dignity packs for students unable to afford basic hygiene products.

## Care-experienced students

We will continue to review our Corporate Parenting Plan to ensure that enhanced support is put in place for care-experienced students and we will continue to provide training to staff on what it means to be a good corporate parent. We guarantee an interview for all applicants who declare as care-experienced. Where students disclose as care-experienced on enrolment, we put support in place to enable them to progress successfully and achieve positive outcomes. This has proved very effective and has resulted in sustained above sector average success for care-experienced students.

We will make further progress towards SFC's refreshed *National Ambition for Care-Experienced Students*, work towards the *Going Forward for Student Carers* award from the Carers Trust, and the equivalent UK national award *Driving Change* from the Carers Federation. We will continue to engage with Who Cares? Scotland and CELCIS in our work with care-experienced students, in particular paying attention to the CELCIS learning points and recommendations. The college is represented on SFC's Care Experienced Governance Group and involved in the Care Experienced, Estranged and Carers East Forum.

The college will build on the excellent partnership with West Lothian Council's Inclusion and Wellbeing Service to support young people who are care-experienced and not in full-time education at school. Bespoke courses will develop their confidence in planning next steps when moving onto college or employment. This annual provision will be modelled around the three key areas of employment, resilience and vocational qualifications.

## Transitions and pathways for students

The college is working in partnership with schools to ensure that senior phase subject choices are compatible with school to college and college to university progression.

The college has a wide range of articulation agreements in place to allow students to progress to university with advanced standing from many of the Higher National qualifications delivered. We will increase the number of articulation agreements we have with universities and degree programmes to extend the availability of advanced standing for our HE students.

The college has worked in partnership with Edinburgh Napier University to replace the former BA Business Management franchise degree pathway with a new model delivered online and on the college campus by university lecturers. This new degree pathway will ensure West Lothian College students can progress to the degree without travelling to the university. Pastoral care will be provided by college lecturers known to the students from their journey through NC, HNC and HND qualifications.

## Working with schools to support pathways for students

West Lothian's school/college partnership is led strategically by the council's Education Services in close collaboration with the college.

The college has a very strong partnership with the region's eleven secondary schools, and liaises directly with heads and depute heads in each school as well as with council lead officers. Vocational pathways are available to all secondary schools, including courses specifically tailored for disengaged pupils that focus on essential life and employability skills. The college has a strong suite of vocational courses delivered to over 500 S4-S6 school pupils, providing access to vocational qualifications, national qualifications and Foundation Apprenticeships (FAs). The college is a strong supporter of FAs, and the focal point for the provision of FAs in West Lothian with most delivered at the college although some are provided in schools. We work collaboratively with West Lothian Council and the Developing the Young Workforce (DYW) regional group to ensure our FA offer is fit for purpose.

In support of the aims of DYW and the 15-24 Learner Journey recommendations, we will continue to work with the council to review existing planning processes to ensure that we have a comprehensive and responsive regional vocational portfolio. The college is supportive of shortening the learner journey for young people progressing to university and is now in the seventh year of delivering HNCs to S5/6 pupils (successful attainment of two Highers plus HNC enables pupils to articulate into the second year of some Edinburgh Napier University computing degrees). The college will review with the council changes in demand for these higher education qualifications to be delivered to school pupils.

Most courses for school pupils are taught at college, although some lower level courses for pupils who have disengaged from formal education are taught in the community. We offer School Link where pupils with additional educational needs attend college over three taster days and Schools Transition, a half day a week course over the academic year for school leavers from special education schools. We also offer a transition programme one morning a week for young people in their final year of school who are on the autistic spectrum and looking to apply for a full-time mainstream college course the following year.

The college embraces the opportunities presented by the regional improvement collaborative and will support fully its collective focus to driving continuous and

systematic improvement, particularly in relation to closing the poverty attainment gap. Our shared aspiration with the council is to produce a well-aligned, seamless vocational curriculum between school and college that supports progression, avoids duplication and results in a senior phase curriculum designed with young people at the heart. Increased engagement between teachers and lecturers to enhance delivery to students will be an important part of this. Seventy stakeholders took part in our school/college partnership planning event in February 2020 which resulted in the following pledges being agreed:

- Change the mode of delivery to offer depth and breadth of choice to pupils
- Enable every young person to develop their own unique pathway to success, with the shortest possible learner journey from school to college and university
- Attainment measures will promote success beyond outcome agreement measures and capture the achievements of every pupil
- Define credible pathways to work in partnership with employers
- Ensure the voice of the young people drives change and the pathways we offer.

The college will continue to meet Skills Development Scotland (SDS) careers help and guidance managers, West Lothian Council's Education and Access 2 Employment teams, and DYW regional group regularly to better understand, and integrate approaches to, positive destinations for young people. We are a member of the council's DYW Steering Board and the DYW Regional Employer Group Board.

**Quality, learning, teaching and participation** (students get a high-quality, safe and supportive learning experience that enables them to succeed in their studies and they find it easy to participate and engage in their educational experience)

Prior to the pandemic, improvements in student success were very good, sustained over two years, and all key categories were moving in the right direction. Overall success in 2018-19 for West Lothian students who studied over 160 hours was 74.7% compared to the sector average of 68.7% (the third highest of the fifteen regional colleges). Successful outcomes for students resident in SIMD10 areas, who were care-experienced, who declared a disability, and who were BAME were all significantly above the sector average. The college also had above sector average success rates for students on courses sponsored by their employers and courses offered as part of senior phase vocational pathways

Success is measured in other ways. Despite the cancellation of the Student Satisfaction and Engagement Survey for 2019-20 by SFC, the response rate obtained by the college equaled that of the 2018-19 survey and showed that student satisfaction increased from 95% to 96% year on year despite the pandemic. The actions set out in the college's 2018-21 Enhancement Plan are leading to improvements in student outcomes. A progress visit from Education Scotland in 2019 reported good progress being made on all actions.

#### Quality online/repurposed blended learning

In 2019-20, staff development activity focused on digital technologies for learning and teaching. While there is progress still to be made, the pandemic has acted as a catalyst in the adoption of digital learning. We delayed the start of the academic year to allow lecturers time to prepare online materials, all lecturers received new laptops in September 2020, and provided further access to training.

In August 2020 the college created a new Learning Continuity Group, led by a faculty director, to develop a shared vision for blended learning and to support lecturers in adapting pedagogy for this hybrid approach. A lecturer was seconded to lead this work and a colleague from West Lothian Council, who was supporting schools



implement their digital learning strategy, joined the group to ensure synergy between the college and schools. Bespoke training materials, developed initially for staff, were adapted and rolled out to students to enable them to gain the necessary digital skills to learn online effectively.

To enable our students to engage in blended learning the college has distributed 425 laptops to date, including to students enrolled in our January 2021 courses. In addition, we are distributing a further ninety devices and MiFi received from the Scottish Government's Connecting Scotland initiative, and 150 pay-as-you-go SIM cards as a result of a successful bid to Vodafone.

### Support for student mental health and wellbeing

The proportion of students declaring mental health problems is increasing each year. Collaborative efforts from staff, students and stakeholders are having a positive impact on students with poor mental health. We introduced *TogetherAll* in March 2020 and recruited two counsellors in April 2020. We will continue to make good use of the funding for mental health counsellors to enable us to enhance our support for students.

Importantly, we will support lecturers and other staff in the work they are doing to support their students' mental health. For example, to encourage male students to share concerns about mental health an engineering lecturer has established a support group, *The Man Cave WLC*, and a care lecturer supports college-wide efforts to support positive mental health and wellbeing of students and staff.

The Student Association's Student Mental Health Agreement was endorsed by the National Union of Students (NUS) Scotland and recognised by SPARQS. As well as a range of campaigns throughout the year to promote strategies for good mental health and wellbeing, the Student Association provides a range of excellent initiatives to support students struggling with mental health. For example, its RECHARGE initiative enables students to self-refer and be supported in looking after their mental health and wellbeing through advice on diet, exercise and how to be mentally healthy.

The Student Association will continue to offer *Mental Health First Aid* and *Living Life to the Full* training to student representatives. They will develop initiatives guided by NUS Scotland in response to additional SFC funding to student associations. The association will continue to work with a wide range of external partners across West Lothian to support student welfare.

The college will continue to engage with the Scottish Association for Mental Health (SAMH) Connect project to support students in the transition from school to college, working with the SAMH mental health coordinator to provide an additional layer of support for all students to promote positive mental health.

Adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) are recognised as having a potentially negative impact on an individual's future development, and it is evident that an increasing number of our students have experienced trauma in childhood and young adult life. The college will work with them to build resilience to enable them to achieve their goals. We will continue to host the West Lothian ACEs Hub and work with partners to support people affected by trauma.

We will work with West Lothian Council's Youth Justice, Criminal Justice, Addictions and Children and Families teams, and local criminal lawyer Iain Smith to offer bespoke admissions pathways for young people that ensure their pathway to rehabilitation starts with West Lothian College and not through custodial sentences or secure facility residential outcomes.

We are in a unique position in the college sector to contribute to Scotland's ambition to be an ACE-aware nation. Through the Children's Hearings Scotland Learning Academy our trainers develop the skills of thousands of panellists across Scotland and have considerable understanding of trauma-informed practice.

## Student Voice

Central to everything we do are our students. The student voice is critical in setting out the kind of college we want to be and the Student Association will continue to influence all decisions we make. The Student Association plays a vital role in evaluating the quality of learning and teaching in the college through its SPARKLE evaluation toolkit (for which it was shortlisted for a SPARQS award and won a NUS Scotland award in 2019). This has resulted in changes to college processes, delivery of learning and support for students. As well as evaluating the student experience, the Student Association self-evaluates its own performance and governance to ensure sustainability of capturing and acting on the student voice.

Over 800 students completed the Student Association's SPARKLE evaluation survey in late 2020 (an increase of 218 on the previous year). Overall results were very positive with students adapting well to blended learning and feeling supported by staff. When asked what they were finding difficult, the two biggest concerns were mental health and the lack of suitable space to study at home or in college.

The former is being compounded by significant heightened anxiety amongst students (and their lecturers) about the uncertainty how the SQA and other awarding bodies will deal with their interrupted learning. The latter reinforces the college's need to expand flexible study spaces on campus, a process that will begin this summer but will be limited by the lack of available capital funds.

Students have told us consistently that our library is not big enough, that there are no flexible learning spaces for individual or group work, and no quiet spaces to study. Refurbishment of the ground floor of our main building is planned for summer 2021 to create a modern learning resource centre and flexible, technology-enabled learning spaces.

The small budget we have identified for this work, consisting mainly of the £158,000 available due to the loan break agreed with SFC, will support refurbishment but not the expansion of learning spaces our students require. This budget is at risk due to the costs of the expansion of the engineering and construction workshops being higher than anticipated.

Feedback from engineering students in 2019-20 raised concerns on the need to travel off site as the required workshop space and facilities were not available on campus to support their courses. Workshop facilities in the critical curriculum areas of construction and engineering need urgent expansion and upgrading to enable the college to satisfy growing demand from industry and to improve the practical learning experience of students in these subjects.

Responding to these concerns, we put in place plans to double workshop space and install welding facilities. Planned work in 2020 was postponed due to lockdown but resumed in January 2021 and the facilities should be in place by April 2021 (pandemic permitting). **The project has come in significantly over budget (£620k vs £350k) posing a financial risk for the college in 2020-21. The college has requested additional in-year capital funding from SFC for this vital work.**

**Learning with impact** (students are equipped to flourish in employment and to lead fulfilling lives)

Analysis and engagement for a good understanding of the needs of business and industry

Our close relationship with West Lothian Council's economic development team yields insights into employers' current and future skills needs, and leads to the involvement of the college in proactive planning with businesses. Weekly meetings with the council, DYW group and JobCentre Plus enable us to be agile in designing provision that meets immediate and medium-term needs of industry sectors.

Ongoing engagement with the Chamber of Commerce and the Federation of Small Businesses (FSB) and college leaders informs strategic decisions about provision.

College leaders and faculty managers engage directly with companies and organisations to ensure we fully understand needs. As well as these individual relationships, employers take part in key strategic activities to plan course provision, for example through sector-specific employer forums and curriculum planning events.

**Right skills aligned with labour market information**

The college uses a wide range of sources to ensure that our course provision is aligned with labour market information. Each year we use the West Lothian Regional Skills Assessment to understand projected growth or decline in different industry sectors, occupational trends, and the profile and skills level of the population.

From July 2020, in partnership with others through a four-college collaboration, we have engaged with the skills alignment team in SDS to respond to real-time labour market insights across the four regions as the economic impact of the pandemic unfolded.

Regular engagement of college leaders with the FSB, Chamber of Commerce and industry bodies results in enhanced business intelligence on emerging skills needs.

**Provision for upskilling and reskilling**

In a normal year the college would have been shaping its provision to support upskilling and reskilling, for example through the Flexible Workforce Development Fund, the apprenticeship family, our extensive SVQ portfolio and part-time professional courses. In response to the economic challenges resulting from the first lockdown in 2020 the college designed Skills Boost academies (which later became part of the suite of products offered by the East Central Scotland four-college collaboration) and is offering accelerator HNCs, Pathway Apprenticeships and enhancing Kickstart jobs with relevant skills development.

**Equalities and Inclusion** (institutions ensure through effective equality impact assessment that the needs of the diverse student body are considered in every aspect of the student experience)

The college is committed to maintaining a culture of equality of opportunity where all staff, students and partners are treated fairly and with respect. We value diversity and aim to foster good relations, and eliminate discrimination, victimisation and harassment of any form, including gender-based violence. The college will continue to make progress on mainstreaming equalities through our Access and Inclusion Plan, Equalities Policy and Procedure, and Equalities Action Plan. These set out our direction in ensuring services and courses are open and inclusive for all, and that we attract and meet the needs of people from all backgrounds. A cross-college group, led by

one of our faculty directors, was created in summer 2020 to lead our diversity, inclusion and equalities work.

Our Equalities Committee includes ethnicity in equalities action planning and the college has engaged with Advance HE's Scottish Race Equality Network to inform and guide activity in the decolonisation of the curriculum.

Our vice principal for learning and attainment is a member on SFC group tackling persistent inequalities. In addition to her college experience, she is a board member of WhoCares?Scotland and will bring current experience of the care system to this planning group that aims to take an intersectional approach to determine the true impact of inequality and how colleges and universities can work in partnership to better align access and inclusion.

We will build on our achievements in 2019-20 in becoming a Disability Confident employer, gaining the Epilepsy Friendly Award and being awarded LGBT Charter Silver Status.

### All students supported to achieve their full potential

A dedicated student support team of well qualified, proactive and experienced staff meet the needs of individual students. Students are encouraged to disclose specific needs when they join the college and, increasingly, before they enrol. Support is personalised to facilitate learning and attainment, and is available during the day and out of hours to support part-time students. Our student support team provides a high-quality service, evidenced by our above average sector success for students living in areas of multiple deprivation, care-experienced students, and those with a declared disability. Individual plans are developed in consultation with students, and these plans are shared with teaching staff to inform strategies for retention and attainment. Student progress is monitored throughout the year by named staff.

The college supports disabled students and staff well, as evidenced by sustained above sector average successful outcomes for students who declare a disability. Students who disclose a disability are referred to the student support team who develop a support plan with them relevant to the nature of their disability. The Equalities Committee ensures that disabilities are fully considered and reasonable action taken to ensure every student has an equal chance to succeed. Students leaving school and who have been in a supported learning environment benefit from a transition period which is well supported by full-time college courses that enable students move onto opportunities including employment or volunteering.

# OUTCOMES FOR ECONOMIC RECOVERY AND SOCIAL RENEWAL

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**Responsive institutions** (Institutions are responsive to employer and industry needs and to current and future skills requirements)

Using labour market intelligence to align provision

College leaders use the annual West Lothian Regional Skills Assessments and monthly regional labour market insights to influence our curriculum planning. Board of governors' meetings and strategy sessions discuss how well the college is responding to labour market intelligence. This includes involving SDS presenting labour market analysis for consideration.

In June 2020 during the first lockdown, the principals of Edinburgh, Fife, Forth Valley and West Lothian Colleges formed a four-college collaboration to develop a multi-region response to economic recovery supported by new joint delivery models. We created a suite of strategic initiatives that we discussed with the chief executives of SFC and SDS. Following positive responses from both, senior leaders from each of the colleges worked with peers from SDS and SFC to flesh out eight propositions in light of current bespoke labour market intelligence provided by SDS. Two of these, Skills Boost Academies and Accelerator HNCs, are being rolled out to the wider sector through the Young Person's Guarantee and National Transition Training Fund.

Upskilling and reskilling the existing workforce

The use of additional funding is enabling the college to add breadth and choice to curriculum in 2020-21. Skills Boost courses offer a light-touch entry into study with a firm focus on employability for those most impacted by job or opportunity loss as a result of the pandemic. Accelerator HNCs are being offered to enable people to achieve HE qualifications in areas such as cyber security and accounting. Given that West Lothian College typically has more demand than can be addressed with limited resources, this is a welcome opportunity to help those most in need to recover economically at this challenging time.

The college is responding very well to the economic crisis brought on by the pandemic. In partnership with West Lothian Council's economic development team, and as part of *West Lothian's Action for Jobs Plan*, we have maximised the additional FWDF funding for small and medium-sized businesses with the council matching providing a further £150,000. The college is engaging with the Federation for Small Businesses and the Chamber of Commerce to raise awareness of this funding.

Pathways for people without work to study and move into jobs

The college is offering Pathway Apprenticeships in a range of areas to enable young people who in normal circumstances would have been in employment. These are designed to support the Kickstart initiative, providing individuals with six-month job opportunities supplemented with high quality skills development that will help them progress into Modern Apprenticeships that become available.

As part of the Edinburgh and South East Scotland City Regional Deal (through the Data Driven Innovation Gateway project) will work with other colleges to develop a suite of courses that enhance the digital skills of groups including those furthest away from education and employment, women returners, and those currently employed and in need of reskilling. In 2020-21 this includes the provision of data science courses.



**Work-ready** (Work-ready graduates are ready to meet employer needs. Students are equipped to take up employment and succeed when the job market opens up)

While pandemic restrictions in most industry sectors mean that many students will not benefit from work placements, the college will deliver alternative industry experiences in the best way possible online. This includes placement opportunities for foundation apprentices.

#### Pipeline of technically skilled people to fill skills gaps

After a successful bid to the SDS Digital Start Fund we will deliver a six-week cyber security course to help graduates over the age of 25 who left college or university in the last twelve months to retrain and gain skills in data analysis, software development and cyber security. Supported with SDS funding, the college will create and deliver a cyber security course for neurodivergent students as part of a Scottish Government project to provide learning pathways that support more neurodivergent people into cyber security roles.

The college will continue to design courses in partnership with employers to address skills gaps in industry sectors, for example in external wall insulation. We will make full and effective use of all apprenticeship family products to support a pipeline of skilled people, including the new Pathway Apprenticeships.

#### Impact of Covid19 on the jobs market

The College Leaver Destinations 2018-19 Report, published in November 2020, demonstrates that West Lothian College students had above sector average positive destinations (96.2% for FE qualifiers and 97.2% for HE qualifiers). Overall, 96.6% of qualifiers from the college moved onto a positive destination compared with the national figure of 95.1%.

The college has been contracted directly by SDS to deliver 124 new start Modern Apprenticeships in 2020-21, a 45% increase on the previous year. We aim to increase apprenticeship starts each year in the three years from 2020 to 2023 and anticipate growth in a range of sectors. The college will continue to support Scottish Electrical Charitable Training Trust and Construction Industry Training Board apprenticeships, and aim to introduce plumbing apprenticeships through the Scottish and Northern Ireland Plumbing Employers' Federation.

We will intensify its work on STEM and our curriculum portfolio will offer a broader and deeper range of qualifications in engineering, computing, construction and science. We will continue to facilitate regional partnerships through the West Lothian Regional STEM Partnership and work with partners to establish a regional strategy. Over the next three years, we will continue to work in partnership with schools to support a range of STEM activities (appropriate to the restrictions imposed by the pandemic) and increase demand for our STEM courses.

### **Innovation**

#### *Innovative partnerships*

In partnership with Edinburgh, Fife and Forth Valley Colleges we created a new East Central Scotland College Collaboration to explore new ways of working including co-design, co-development and co-delivery across our four regions.

The college is working in partnership with Heriot-Watt University, Scottish Enterprise and a range of companies to establish a Centre for Regulated Bio-Manufacture. While the outcome of this bid will not be known until April 2020, success would support

collaborative work to develop industry-relevant curriculum in bio-manufacturing. This would see improved articulation prospects for students and shorter learner journeys from college to university. The college would also secure the right to access to the Centre for Bio-Manufacture at Heriot-Watt and benefit from improved facilities on campus with £60k for lab remodelling and £190k for materials.

#### *Innovation in the curriculum*

We aim to continue to be an early adopter of new approaches to curriculum design and delivery. Working with partners, we will leverage opportunities brought about by the Edinburgh and South East Scotland City Regional Deal, in particular related to digital and construction skills. The college will build on its innovative partnerships with companies like Morrison Construction to evaluate vocational courses co-designed with them.

In 2019-20 the college integrated outdoor learning into our childhood practice curriculum and delivered this with children from local nurseries and primary schools in our forest classroom. We will further develop learning opportunities for outdoor learning which benefit our students, staff, stakeholders and young people in nursery, primary and secondary settings.

Established in 2019-20, we will evaluate the projects funded by the college's Learning and Teaching Innovation Fund and adapt the parameters of the fund to incorporate lessons learned. The Fund will open for applications in 2021 for the 2021-22 academic year.

#### *Innovation in physical and virtual learning spaces*

In summer 2021 the college will repurpose the ground floor of the main campus building to create a modern learning resource centre supported by flexible technology-enabled learning spaces for individual and group study. While this will make the most effective use of our existing physical space, ultimately, we need to build an extension to create additional learning spaces for students. We will investigate what that might cost and explore funding options for 2021-22.

#### *Engaging with the innovation landscape*

The college will continue to engage with the Innovation Centres, in particular The Data Lab and Construction Scotland Innovation Centre, on professional development opportunities for our staff and access to emerging technologies for our students and collaborative projects. We will build on innovative digital developments in 2019-20 such as our inaugural Interrupt Digital Conference, our student-led Ethical Hacking Club and support for industry initiatives.

#### *Enterprising education*

Although West Lothian was identified as the sixth most resilient local authority in the UK by the Oxford Economics Vulnerability Index one reason for this is a lower proportion of small businesses and self-employment. The college will support the region to be more enterprising.

Many courses include enterprise units that involve students in work placements or simulated activities that develop skills for employment. We will build on our excellent collaboration with *Bridge2Business* to inspire, connect and support college students into business, and continue to raise awareness of the opportunities available to students once they are at university, for example the Converge Challenge.

## RESPONSIVE AND COLLABORATIVE

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**Public health emergency** (Institutions are responsive, have assurance mechanisms in place to comply with guidance, communicate well with students, staff and communities, and remedy situations as they arise)

We planned a safe return to campus from August 2020 in consultation with local trade union representatives and the Student Association. There have been three wholesale changes to timetables so far in the current academic year – one to make space for deferred students, the second to accommodate Level 4 guidelines on 27 November on restricted blended learning, and then the preparation for online only for the early weeks of January to accommodate and plan for the consequences of the relaxation of guidance over Christmas.

From August to December 2020 we supported campus-based learning for students and apprentices who needed to learn practical skills. Qualifications in subject areas such as business, computing and social science have been taught wholly online since September, while students in subject areas like childhood practice have experienced a blended approach. The campus closure resulting from the lockdown in the first two months of 2021 is presenting significant difficulties for our students.

### Ensuring the health and wellbeing of students

The economic impact of the coronavirus pandemic has led to challenging times for students. Increasing numbers are struggling financially and students already experiencing poverty are finding it harder than ever before. Many have lost part-time jobs, some have partners who have been made redundant, and others are homeless. In response to feedback from staff, we introduced a free hot breakfast for students so that hunger does not prevent them from focusing on achieving their qualification.

Our Student Association and support staff work with local charities and social enterprises to help students facing financial difficulties. In the lead up to Christmas they worked with The Larder and the West Lothian Financial Inclusion Network to provide hot meals to students and their families. For students with children, who faced additional financial pressures over the festive period, the Student Association accessed help from River Kids and West Lothian Financial Inclusion Network so that no child went without a Christmas present. And, with the support of the West Lothian School Bank, students were able to get school clothes for the new term for their children.

Like other educational institutions, the college buildings closed for at least two months at the start of 2021. With schools and nurseries also closed, there are considerable challenges for many staff and students to be able to fulfil their work or study commitments while looking after or home schooling their children. There is no doubt that this will impact on the learning experience.

### Mental health support

We are witnessing increased anxiety from students, aggravated in particular by the delay in the SQA deciding how qualifications will be assessed in the context of interrupted learning caused by the pandemic.

The college published a Health and Wellbeing Strategy which cover students and staff and complements the Student Mental Health Agreement. A cross-college staff experience group works on improving working practices and mental health, and the

health and wellbeing strand of this group consists of relevant staff who contribute to supporting good mental health and wellbeing for students and staff. The Student Association promotes a range of health initiatives to students throughout the year and, having already achieved 4 Stars for the Healthy Body, Healthy Mind award, will work towards 5-star accreditation over the next three years.

### **Collaboration** (There is active collaboration with other institutions)

#### **New ways of working with other institutions**

##### *East Central Scotland College Collaboration*

In June 2020 during the first lockdown the principals of Edinburgh, Fife, Forth Valley and West Lothian Colleges formed a four-college collaboration to develop a multi-region response to economic recovery in East Central Scotland. We created a suite of strategic initiatives that were discussed and agreed with the chief executives of the SFC and SDS. The Scottish Government agreed to fund two of these initiatives at a national level through the Young Person's Guarantee funding.

In support of the West Lothian Council Action for Jobs plan the college will work even more closely with partners to implement this. An excellent outcome so far is the council matching the additional funding the college was allocated through the Flexible Workforce Development Fund to support SMEs.

The college will build on excellent partnerships with third sector organisations and networks in West Lothian to support people in the communities they serve. This will include creating further learning pathways from courses delivered by the third sector into college.

### **Climate emergency** (Institutions take urgent action to help reduce or halt climate change, avoid irreversible damage, and support environmental sustainability measures)

#### **Innovative responses to the climate emergency**

Becoming more sustainable and reducing our carbon footprint is a key priority for the college. To give this more prominence across the college we held a very successful Sustainability Summit in March 2020 where all staff and students set aside normal activities to engage with this priority and generate ideas about what we can do as a college. The actions from this day are feeding into the college's new Sustainability Plan and help determine targets for reducing our carbon footprint.

The college plans to launch its Net Zero Carbon Plan in September 2021. The actions and initiatives planned will have a cross-college approach to demonstrate our commitment to climate change. Our sustainable goals will include biodiversity, building emissions, the circular economy and will focus on key UN goals such as poverty, zero hunger and good health and wellbeing. These which will be taken forward by staff and students in conjunction with partner organisations.

During COP26 week the college will showcase what has been achieved and our plans in conjunction with partners who will be working with the college to deliver on the Net Zero Plan. We will encourage visitors to come to the college throughout the COP26 week to meet staff, students and partners so that we can demonstrate our intent to meet the net zero target by 2045.

## College Outcome Agreement Impact Framework: Supporting Data

Measure	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21
A Credits Delivered (Core)	44,198	43,417	42,595	44,132	44,607	44,737	43,646
Credits Delivered (ESF)	0	973	1,490	1,194	833	1,187	707
Credits Delivered (Core + ESF)	44,198	44,390	44,085	45,326	45,440	45,924	44,353
B Volume of Credits Delivered to 10% most deprived postcode areas	2,129	1,938	2,437	3,694	3,986	3,959	
Proportion of Credits delivered to 10% most deprived postcode areas	4.8%	4.4%	5.5%	8.1%	8.8%	8.7%	8.8%
C Volume of credits delivered to care-experienced learners	0	246	164	576	2,148	2,364	
Proportion of credits delivered to care-experienced learners	0.0%	0.6%	0.4%	1.3%	4.7%	5.2%	4.7%
D Number of senior phase age pupils studying vocational qualifications delivered by colleges	75	134	186	197	278	314	278
E1 Proportion of enrolled students successfully obtaining a recognised qualification (Full time FE)	63.6%	64.1%	61.9%	65.5%	67.7%	62.9%	65.7%
Number of enrolled students successfully obtaining a recognised qualification (Full time FE)	849	842	788	875	838	713	
Total number of FTFE students	1,336	1,313	1,273	1,336	1,237	1,133	
E2 Proportion of enrolled students successfully obtaining a recognised qualification (Part time FE)	74.2%	70.6%	77.7%	78.7%	85.5%	83.9%	81.0%
Number of enrolled students successfully obtaining a recognised qualification (Part time FE)	2,482	1,676	2,241	2,675	3,735	2,379	
Total number of PTFE students	3,344	2,374	2,883	3,400	4,370	2,836	
E3 Proportion of enrolled students successfully obtaining a recognised qualification (Full time HE)	71.1%	69.7%	72.5%	69.8%	70.5%	68.3%	69.0%
Number of enrolled students successfully obtaining a recognised qualification (Full time HE)	507	513	525	531	541	520	
Total number of FTHE students	713	736	724	761	767	761	
E4 Proportion of enrolled students successfully obtaining a recognised qualification (Part time HE)	73.9%	65.5%	74.6%	78.5%	81.7%	88.5%	82.0%
Number of enrolled students successfully obtaining a recognised qualification (Part time HE)	334	306	362	547	468	570	
Total number of PTHE students	452	467	485	697	573	644	
F Number of students achieving an HNC/D qualification articulating to degree level courses	207	221	241	231	0		
Number of students achieving an HNC/D qualification articulating to degree level courses with advanced standing	94	88	111	92	0		
Proportion of students achieving an HNC/D qualification articulating to degree level courses with advanced standing	45.4%	39.8%	46.1%	39.8%	-		39.8%
G Total number of full-time FE college qualifiers (in confirmed destinations)	763	841	759	787	743		
Number of full-time FE college qualifiers in work, training or further study 3-6 months after qualifying	749	797	738	749	715		
Proportion of full-time FE college qualifiers in work, training or further study 3-6 months after qualifying	98.2%	94.8%	97.2%	95.2%	96.2%		95.2%
Total number of full-time HE college qualifiers (in confirmed destinations)	466	477	486	476	497		
Number of full-time HE college qualifiers in work, training or further study 3-6 months after qualifying	454	466	473	463	483		
Proportion of full-time HE college qualifiers in work, training or further study 3-6 months after qualifying	97.4%	97.7%	97.3%	97.3%	97.2%		97.3%
H Percentage of students overall satisfied with their college experience (SSES)	-	92.2%	94.2%	N/A	95.4%		95.4%





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