

Interim Regional Outcome Agreement 2020-21

1. Introduction

West College Scotland has a new Corporate Strategy for 2019-2025 with four main priorities:

- **Personalisation**
- **Collaboration**
- **Agile and Adaptive**
- **Digital**

In responding to the COVID pandemic, the College has rapidly progressed all of our Corporate Strategy priorities, proving to be exceptionally agile and adapting quickly, collaborating with others, developing our digital capacity and approaches and providing a more tailored and personal learning experience for our students.

As stated in the initial 2020-21 Regional Outcome Agreement, our role is to ensure students leave West College Scotland equipped with the skills and knowledge to compete in the jobs market; to make a full contribution to the wellbeing of their families, their communities and the economic growth of the country. As well as scope, we also have scale. As one of Scotland's largest regional colleges, with over 20,000 students, around 1,200 staff and a turnover of £71.9 million, ours is a huge organisation and a major employer, uniquely placed to help shape the West Region's educational landscape and contribute to its social and economic development.

COVID has made our role even more critical in ensuring that we provide relevant learning opportunities for our students to gain appropriate skills and that we contribute to economic recovery post-COVID in our region and beyond.

We are fully committed to proactively delivering the key Sector priorities and outcomes for students - ensuring fair access, particularly for our most disadvantaged students, enabling student success and progression through high quality learning, teaching and support. As a College we are committed to our role regionally and nationally in contributing to economic recovery and social renewal and being both a responsive and collaborative institution. We believe that our work through 2020-21 demonstrates this commitment and capability. Our progress and successes this year show our College's capacity to adapt and respond, with our students at the centre.

2. Outcomes for students

2.1 Fair access and transitions.

West College Scotland is committed to ensuring that we provide the highest quality of learning opportunities for students from all backgrounds and support them all to flourish, achieve and progress to further study or employment. The College has continued to work towards the recommendations within the Blueprint for Fairness Report, particularly in supporting students and young people from deprived areas and those with a Care Experienced background.

Deprivation

The West Region has some of the most deprived areas in Scotland and as a College we have always recognised and worked to address the many challenges our students face in achieving full success. We have continually adapted learning to better meet their needs and provide appropriate support, particularly in relation to resilience, mental health and wellbeing. During 2020-21 this focus has been even more critical and we have responded by supporting those in digital poverty to provide vital access to digital equipment to enable learning and have provided enhanced student support, particularly for health and wellbeing.

The College Community Outreach programme for 2020-21 has had a mixture of online classes and classes delivered on our campus locations due to venues not being open in the local community, including the Colleges Ferguslie Learning Centre which serves one of the most deprived areas in Scotland.

Despite challenges relating to IT and connectivity, varying degrees of IT skills and lack of confidence for some staff and students for the new ways of learning online, 24 community classes, approximately 25% of the planned programme, have taken place since August 2020. Classes have been in construction, humanities, computing and IT, care, mental health, essential skills, business, textile technology, horticulture and childhood practice. A similar number of classes are planned to be delivered before June 2021. If these can all go ahead, that will represent approximately 50% of the usual programme delivery. Delivery has been reduced due to lack of venues, lack of confidence using IT and some learners not wanting to learn online and choosing to wait until face to face teaching returns.

The College Community Outreach programme serves three of the most deprived areas in Scotland and as such there have been many barriers to learning including lack of IT devices, lack of connectivity, ill health and a large proportion of the population unwell due to COVID-19 or self-isolating as a result. This is in addition to the normal barriers faced by many students who access this programme, including caring responsibilities, addictions, mental health issues and poverty.

Retention on Community programmes has this session been variable due to the individual circumstances of the student. The mental health of some students has deteriorated significantly throughout this pandemic. Students would normally be able to interact more socially but due to the restrictions we are operating under and with online learning this hasn't happened to the same extent and the lack of social interaction and peer support has impacted on engagement. Where there has been engagement however, many students have achieved their qualifications. Their IT skills have improved and the College Wellbeing Team have supported many students to grow in confidence and move forward. They have not only made a difference for themselves but have also helped others in the community. [Horticulture Dec 2020.pdf](#)

The College has also been successful in securing £60k in a Tackling Child Poverty bid for a 'Learning beyond Lockdown' project, in partnership with West Dunbartonshire and Inverclyde Council, to help young parents in poverty have a sustainable route to positive destinations and a route out of poverty. The project will support young parents in further education, acknowledging the particular support they need and enabling them to build a future for themselves and their families.

Care Experienced, Carers and Estranged Students

Each Care Experienced, Estranged, Young Adult Carer and any unpaid Carer student has a named person who welcomes the student to the College, supports with paperwork and funding

applications, establishes adjustments that may be necessary and ensures these are communicated sensitively to their lecturers. The Named Person carries out a wellbeing check with the student at 12-week intervals (sooner if there is a concern around wellbeing or if the students are seeking support e.g., time extensions for assessment, flexibly study, etc). The Named Person also works closely with local authorities and external services for carers.

The College has a Student Wellbeing Officer and team of Counsellors who support many of our Care Experienced, Estranged and Young Adult Carers and are continuously enhancing their service to encourage other Care Experienced and Young Adult Carers to make use of the service in flexible ways. The College Students' Association also has a Young Adult Carers and Unpaid Carers Officer to support and offer respite opportunities.

The West College Scotland Student Experience team are currently working across our special interest student groups to reflect on our Corporate Parenting Plan and redefining the aims. The research will include access, support, advice, progression opportunities, aspirations and transitions.

During this session, the College is working towards achieving the Carers Trust Going Further Student Carers Recognition Award and Driving Change Project in FE:

- identify, support and report on student carers, and recognise good practice
- improve the support that young adult carers receive in further education
- receive tailored one-to-one support to review their provision for young adult carers
- Implement actions that will enable our young adult carers to achieve better

Working with The Carers Trust and Driving change in FE project, we aim to improve access to College courses for Carers, ensure wellbeing and support services are accessible as and when needed, improve retention and attainment, enhance understanding of being a Carer and make positive adjustments to practice that benefit carers, establish a support network within the College and in partnership with local services for carers and celebrate success.

We have seen a significant increase in students declaring that they are a vulnerable group student with a 38% increase in students this year alone. This puts considerable pressure on our Student Services team in providing the continued support as set out by national agenda programmes.

Digital Access

The Scottish Funding Council announced, in August 2020, additional capital funding for colleges and universities in 2020-21 to support digital provision for learners. Colleges and universities received £4.7 million of this package of investment to distribute in the form of ICT equipment for students to access remote learning. West College Scotland was allocated £220,506 and in addition was able to utilise student support funds to purchase 2,600 Chromebooks for those students most in need. Purchasing these digital devices has:

- enabled students to access and engage with new blended models of learning and assessment.
- supported, and provided access and structure to students' off campus learning with online classes being part of the students' normal timetable, replicating standard classroom attendance.

- enabled student access to recorded class sessions for those who cannot attend or to replay later to reinforce learning.
- provided flexibility for students to suit their personal circumstances in a more inclusive way. Using Chromebooks from home has provided clear structure, including addressing deadlines, opportunities for support, catch up and tutorials to support individual learning.
- supported those practical classes still required to be on campus i.e. students able to watch demonstrations prior to coming into College for practical work.
- Provided functionality which supports the student learning experience, including Office 365 and Microsoft Teams, OneNote and PowerPoint together, with the ability to download the required subject Apps from the Apps Store and work in tandem with the College Student Portal 'MyDay'.

Indicative feedback from our Portfolio Reviews, Curriculum Planning Reviews and our Student Survey indicate an increase in students online class attendance compared to normal classes and positive feedback on the learning taking place. Interestingly, 29% of students in the Student Survey from almost 2,000 student responses undertaken November-December reported that they actually preferred virtual classes to classes on campus. This feedback was particularly positive in Learner Development, in the more theoretical subject areas and those areas with more mature students. This feedback and further analysis will inform future plans for curriculum delivery post-pandemic.

Through the work of our WCS Digital Strategy Group, we identified that equipping students with a device wasn't our only priority. We were acutely aware of the need for a support service to aid students in their digital engagement. We created a bespoke Student TechTeam Helpdesk with both an on campus presence and remote access support service. This service, run by our own HN Computing students as paid work placements, has enabled the successful distribution of the devices and the wrap around support services needed for student engagement.

In addition to this, basic training and support was identified and created for operating and navigating through the new digital platform in use - Microsoft Teams. A series of CPD sessions were made available for students, parents and guardians to enable them to engage as smoothly as possible with their online classes and tutorials. These were widely offered across our social media platforms and Student Intranet.

As an extension to further support digital skills, we launched the Jisc Digital Capability Tool with our students. This means of digital self-assessment has enabled our students to benchmark where their strengths and areas for development lie. This programme has in-built signposting to free digital upskilling packages to encourage independent learning and skills development.

A second tranche of funding opportunities became available to further support the digital poverty agenda. The Connecting Scotland Funds enabled us to apply for more digital devices including Chromebooks and MiFis. Our bid was successful for our Paisley, Ferguslie and Greenock campuses. With identified Digital Champions to take this forward and the investment will support those identified families with children, care leavers and our vulnerable students.

Finally, we have been approved by the Savoy Trust Hospitality Charity to apply for a grant fund to support Conference digital camera kits for our Training and Production Kitchens. This will enable streaming and recording of practical demonstrations for students to view online and will significantly widen the opportunities for student engagement in this very practical subject area.

Health and Wellbeing

The College has Health and Wellbeing Strategies for both Employees and Students the same themes under 'PROSPER' – Promote, Respond, Observe, Support, Practice, Educate and Review.

[Staff Health and Wellbeing Strategy](#)

Student link: <https://www.westcollegescotland.ac.uk/media/213570/student-health-wellbeing-strategy.pdf>

The College won the 'Health Promoting College' award in the CDN Awards 2020, recognising our work in supporting Health and Wellbeing for both students and staff, particularly during the pandemic. Our Strategies and our connected Healthy Working Lives approach enabled us to respond well to the challenges faced through the COVID-19 pandemic and to proactively support staff and students.

The PROSPER framework is at the core of everything that we do as a College and we are confident that we have a sustainable and strategic approach which recognises different dimensions of health promotion. Our Health & Wellbeing programme throughout this academic year has seen a calendar of valuable support, development and community activity.

In 2019-20, the College had an increase in students declaring a mental health condition. These students were identified prior to COVID and had already placed additional pressures on staff and support services during that session. The College is acutely aware of the impact COVID has, and continues to have, on our student mental health this session. The College has in place a team of Counsellors working across the campuses and welcomed the additional funding of £122k to increase this team and better meet demand, with new members recruited post lockdown and immediately equipped to engage with students remotely. Further funding was announced in December 2020 and the College will use this to provide additional support to students during this very difficult period.

The College has invested in the training of Mental Health First Aiders across our teaching and support teams and this enables staff to better understand the mental health related issues faced by both students and staff and complements our Counsellor team. In addition, in 2019, the College invested in SilverCloud Online cCBT Resource, an online mental health support platform covering support tools dealing with, COVID-19, anxiety, body image and resilience. We have continued to deliver more staff CPD to help with their own mental health and wellbeing and to better support our students.

In 2020-21 the College introduced the C.A.L.M Mindfulness tool, developed by one of our teaching team. This is a tool to help students and staff cope with the demands of online learning/teaching or any anxiety about being within the College environment. A "Mindfulness safety valve" to release pressure in a healthy, controlled manner is achievable using C.A.L.M. The technique can be used at the start, during or at the end of a lesson.

Articulation and Transitions

The College is committed to enabling students to progress their learning and to shortening the student journey by improving articulation.

Our strong partnership working with Glasgow Caledonian University has, this year, resulted in an increase in the volume of Guaranteed Places on offer and an increase in application rates across our programmes in Business, Tourism, Social Science and Sport. With two new degree routes created, the pathway opportunities for our students into GCU have become wider.

In addition to working on articulation pathways, the College has maintained a very positive relationship with SWAP West, delivering programmes in Social Sciences, Science and Access to Primary Education, enabling mature students from deprived areas to access University. The College was the first in 2019-20 to deliver the January start Access to Nursing, and whilst challenging, particularly with COVID, the students successfully progressed to University.

The College has continued to support student transitions and progression between institutions and courses and where appropriate, adapted to digital means. Curriculum areas have reported that that online or phone interviewing for 2020 courses has been successful and a process that should be continued post-COVID in many areas.

The Learner Development Sector has supported transitions with all of their students successfully completing and progressing onto other Learner Development courses or gaining places on mainstream courses from 2019-20. There was a significant reduction in successful employment outcomes for these students due to the impact of COVID 19. Currently, the Learner Development Sector has adopted and embraced online learning with vigour and some real successes are being seen for this challenging cohort, resulting in renewed thinking for the curriculum for 2021-22.

School College Partnership

The College is continuing to deliver the School College Partnership courses in 2020-21 following the delivery of an adapted online Preparation for College course during May and June. There have been challenges in the delivery of the school provision due to COVID restrictions and difficulties for schools to support alternative online delivery models.

Recruitment this year has been affected by COVID with a reduction of 21% overall but we have seen an 11% increase in the recruitment of young people to Foundation Apprenticeships. This session withdrawals have doubled from previous years with many related to on-line learning aspect of delivery, poor attendance and parents not wishing to send their child on school transport to College locations. Some units have had to be altered to accommodate remote learning while still allowing pupils to obtain the Group Award.

For 2020-21 we introduced 6 new courses to our School College Programme in key employment areas to improve skills pathways, including Practical Science with Forensics, HNC Business, Foundation Apprenticeships in Accountancy and Digital Manufacturing.

It is anticipated that the new DYW Coordinator roles will play a significant role in supporting those school pupils most at risk of not reaching a sustained positive destination. It is envisaged that these roles will work closely with the DYW Regional Group and be able to introduce more

employer offers into the school and the College will aim to work closely with these coordinators once identified or appointed.

Despite attempts by the College to engage with the Regional Improvement Collaboratives (RIC) for our area, there is no link to the RIC and no real involvement in developments from this programme, as yet. School/College Operational meetings (4 per session) have been attended by College representatives, Local Authorities Education representatives, Deputy Head teachers, curriculum leads from schools to plan provision and delivery.

As a regional College we are actively promoting post-school progression opportunities via the School College Programme where pupils get the opportunity during their course to speak with lecturers and other students regarding progression pathways. The West Partnership has a dedicated member of staff, Foundation Apprenticeship School Engagement Coordinator working with all the schools in the West Region partnership promoting FAs. Marketing material and course specifications outline articulation routes. The Student Advisory Service, SDS Careers Advisor and Sector staff also take part in post-school progression giving information and advice.

2.2 Quality learning, teaching and participation.

The College is committed to ensuring the highest quality of learning experience for students and to support them to engage, achieve and progress.

During 2020-21, staff have worked to adapt a classroom-based learning into interactive online learning experiences and provided a blended approach for practical delivery. The student survey in the autumn had responses from almost 2,000 students across our campuses. 83% of students reported that they were happy with the way their course had been adapted in response to the pandemic. Social distancing measures have required adaptations to class sizes and to learning activities on campus as well as classes being taught remotely. 75% of students reported that their virtual classes were engaging with lower satisfaction levels of 69% in the very practical of Hairdressing, Beauty and Construction but higher levels in Learner Development and more theoretical subject areas. Through ongoing staff development, the College will continue to improve the delivery of remote learning. Staff in the more practical areas had less time to prepare and upskill at the start of session due to the higher levels of deferral activity. By delaying the start for 2020-21 students, staff were able to support many of the deferred 2019-20 students to achieve, prepare online learning and undertake CPD in technical and pedagogical approaches for online learning. Those with less deferral activity were able to use this time more for CPD and course preparation. The Digital Strategy Group led the CPD programme for staff and this has been supported by strong team approaches, including team teaching and peer mentoring.

Students were prepared for their 2020-21 learning through a specific induction programme, including information on student support services, COVID measures and training in the use of Microsoft Teams. 85% of students reported that they felt well supported to learn digitally. The College adapted processes to minimise campus attendance, including online interviews and by producing the first digital student card, providing the same benefits for students, including use on public transport, and available on their phones.

Student Advisory Services, our libraries and Enabling Services have all adapted their practice to provide online access and continued support to students. Enabling Services have supported an increased number of students in their learning this session. Feedback from students on services and adaptations made by staff has been positive and engagement has been high.

Overall within the student survey they were a 90% satisfaction rate which is the same rate as the early student survey in 2019-20. Considering the disruption to learning, this can certainly be seen as positive feedback on the staff efforts.

The College works in partnership with the Students' Association to support and develop the student voice across all areas of curriculum and Support Services. During 2020-21 this partnership working has been even more critical and we have worked effectively together to plan and coordinate important messages to students about COVID, learning arrangements and support student wellbeing. The Student President has been a key member of the 'Mobilisation Group' which has weekly meetings to oversee the return to campus and safe operations thereafter.

The College worked with the Student Association to adapt the Student Behaviours Framework in response to COVID and to promote the health and safety measures for students on campus.

Class representatives have been recruited and trained online and despite the challenges of working more remotely, to date there has been an increase in Class Representatives compared to this point last year.

Early retention rates for 2020-21 have improved for both FE and HE full time courses with a higher proportion of students continuing to engage in their courses despite the pandemic. This is a more marked improvement for HE students, although the initial HE enrolment was impacted by HEIs increased places. Whilst student engagement continues to be high, challenges in completing all elements of courses put attainment of full qualifications at risk in many subject areas.

A formal review of the student progress in courses was undertaken after Christmas as the College entered a second period of campus closures. In general, progress in online learning and theoretical subjects to this point is positive and most students are on track to complete as planned. Engagement in these classes has generally been very good, although there will be some challenges for parents during the current period of home-schooling and further individual 'catch up' opportunities may be required later in the session. Good progress has been made in many practical subjects also but there are critical difficulties in covering the range of practical vocational skills in Hairdressing, Beauty and Make Up Artistry due to COVID restrictions. Courses in Care, Early Years and others requiring a work placement to meet employment requirements are also at risk of not being completed within the session. Other practical classes will require additional time in college to complete, planned for later this session if COVID restrictions allow but this will require extended access to College accommodation and additional staffing delivery costs.

2.3 Learning with impact – students are equipped and ready to take up appropriate employment in the future.

Our major priority is to provide a curriculum which meets employers' needs, supports the economic growth of our region and provides our students with appropriate qualifications and skills to build successful long-term careers.

Through the business transformation plan 'Future Proofing our College,' we aimed to ensure that our curriculum was well aligned to meet regional needs and our courses provided effective and efficient pathways for students. In a response to COVID, we have adjusted our curriculum more rapidly to respond to demand from students and employers and to take advantage of any additional funding opportunities available.

During the initial lockdown period in 2019-20, we scaled up our online learning curriculum and the associated staff team to respond to and support the significantly increased demand, particularly from those working in the Care sector. Our learning materials to support upskilling for those working in Care, with children or to support mental health and wellbeing proved to be very relevant to meet the needs of online learners at that time and through this session.

The College recognised the critical digital skills needed for both learning and future employment and developed a new 'Developing the Confidence to Learn Online' online unit which is now being adapted as a 'Skills Boost Digital' unit to provide important employability skills needed for collaborating, learning and working online. Student survey results show that 85% felt that they were well supported to learn digitally. Our continued enhancement of digital learning and support materials should increase this further.

Our training for employers has been adapted to online and blended provision and we have developed packages of learning to meet key upskilling requirements. Our work with Renfrewshire Council in providing 'Your Employability Skills' provision was recognised in the CDN 2020 Awards by winning the Essential Skills category. This provision is being adapted for the Meta and Employability Skills Boost provision following the announcement of further funding in December 2020.

Normal College processes to review the curriculum have continued throughout 2020-21 in online Portfolio Review and Curriculum Planning meetings. External analysis, labour market information and Regional Skills Assessments are being used to make in-year adjustments to provision and plan the 2021-22 curriculum to best contribute to economic recovery, student and employer needs. The College is committed to ensuring we respond to meet the growing upskilling and re-skilling needs of individuals within our Region. We have accepted the additional SFC allocation of 2,761 credits which was offered at the end of December 2020 in order to deliver 'Skills Boost' provision this academic year for over 25-year-old unemployed, at risk of being unemployed or being made redundant through National Transitional Training Fund and 16–24-year-olds funded through Young Persons Guarantee. The timing of this allocation means that it will be challenging but initial discussions with curriculum staff have identified key areas where appropriate courses can be developed and offered to match the target market.

The College has significantly increased the work experience elements in courses over the last few years and works closely with employers to provide students either with placements or live project working. In addition, students benefit from simulated work-experience within the College, particularly in Hospitality, Hairdressing and Beauty Therapy. In these areas our training dining rooms and salons have been forced to close due to COVID restrictions and students have not been able to undertake the breadth of work-experience. The College has however, been able to provide enhanced work-experience for Computing students by employing them to run the IT Student Helpdesk and work in the College IT Team. Where possible, live project working and involvement with employers in course delivery has continued. External placements in most areas have been curtailed though and in areas such as Health and Social Care and Childhood Practice students are at risk of not achieving their qualification or being able to practice without undertaking the mandatory placement hours.

For Foundation Apprenticeships, the public health situation and restrictions on certain sectors and workplaces, has necessitated adaptations to work placements. The design of Customised Units will make it easier for Foundation apprentices to complete their qualification, whilst still building the practical knowledge they need for their vocational area. Work placements are no

longer on-site and we have developed customised units or virtual placements in Creative and Digital Media and Childcare for up to 40 pupils across all four Local Authorities. For Creative and Digital Foundation Apprenticeships, work placements are delivered on a remote working basis, with an employer partner identifying appropriate project work. For Children and Young People FAs, the college has developed customised units within our nursery setting. Our approach has been amplified by SDS to other training providers as a model of good practice.

Practical on campus classes are restricted in size due to COVID social distancing measures. Students have been learning through blended online theory and small group practical classes. The campus closures early in 2021 mean that practical classes have been postponed and students are being provided with online support and additional learning where appropriate, to keep them motivated and engaged. January start classes in some areas have had to be delayed. Completing the practical classes once the campuses can reopen will require additional time for delivery, including the likelihood of using evenings and holiday periods. Each curriculum area has produced scenario plans aiming to enabling all students to complete courses, with the major priority on ensuring the development of skills for final year students progressing to employment. For those students progressing onto a College course next session, deficits in the development of practical skills may need to be addressed during 2021-22.

2.4 Equalities and inclusion.

The College is currently collecting evidence to report progress on its statutory Equality Outcomes 2017-21 and developing new Equality Outcomes which aim to mitigate the impact of the pandemic on staff and students who share protected characteristics.

Normal governance procedures for equalities have continued to operate throughout 2020-21 with scheduled Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Committee meetings being held online, including student representation.

A series of online training sessions (“Challenging Times”) were delivered to Teaching Staff in August 2020 to anticipate the particular barriers faced by protected groups in remote learning. The sessions provided staff with a better understanding of the experience or protected groups during the pandemic and improved capability in meeting their diverse needs.

The World Health Organisation has reported that the increase in gender-based violence during COVID-19 and therefore the College has increased the visibility of support for gender-based violence survivors and have commissioned Rape Crisis to deliver specialist training for staff. We are also using the White Ribbon campaign to encourage men to stand up against gender-based violence.

The College has continued to support students with disabilities, including remote support for our deaf students. Caption.ed (<https://talk-type.com/captioned/>) has been investigated and supported for implementation in 2020-21. It will provide a means of supporting those with Specific Learning Difficulties, not only BSL and will provide invaluable support for those who struggle with the written word as a form of communication.

3. Outcomes for Economic Recovery and Social Renewal

3.1 Responsive institutions - meeting future skills needs, including upskilling and reskilling.

The College is focused on responding to employer needs and to prioritising the current and future skills requirements of our Region. Senior staff have been participating in Local Authority economic development forums and economic recovery planning. Prior to the College Curriculum Planning and Review process in the autumn, a session was held with Curriculum Heads and SDS to consider priorities for our Region and implications of City Deal. The College is utilising the regularly updated SDS Regional Skills Assessment and Labour market data during this period and is using the information to address curriculum changes and plans. In response to labour information, we have increased our offer of Winter start courses, including new provision in FinTech, Coding and Cyber in response to the fast-moving external market needs. The focus very much on skills development and bite-size learning.

The College continues to engage with local Community Planning partners and regional stakeholders. We are an active and key contributor to economic recovery discussions with West Dunbartonshire Delivery and Improvement Group, Inverclyde Alliance Board, East Renfrewshire Local Employability Group and Renfrewshire Economic Leadership Panel as well as the Glasgow City Deal Skills group; supporting integrated economic recovery planning and ensuring skills alignment with a Covid-19 focus and economic recovery response. From this, a range of interventions and partnerships have been developed, including measures to address digital equity, tackle poverty and respond to the needs of our local and regional economy

In the short term, we have been liaising with over 200 local employer partners, to ensure that our Modern Apprentices, Foundation Apprentices and employed learners continue to have access to support, learning and assessment services. The College has retained work-based learning teams to pre-lockdown levels and continues, where available, to support apprentices and learners who have been furloughed during lockdown.

With on campus provision restricted, our focus on supporting those individuals looking for upskilling and reskilling opportunities has been through our Distance Learning provision which has been well marketed across social media and continues to receive a healthy response. As a College, we have the advantage of a well-established Distance Learning Team who are experienced in supporting learners and ensuring their ongoing participation.

The College involvement in delivering the Tackling Child Poverty 'Learning beyond Lockdown' project will enable young parents (under 25) of school age children, to develop their Essential, Digital and Communication literacy skills. In doing so, the project will equip young parents with skills that enable them to be both parent learners, more impactful students; and better prepared for the modern world of work.

Flexible Workforce Development Fund

Our Flexible Workforce Development Funded (FWDF) provision continues to grow and respond to market and recovery demands particularly in the areas of Business, Management, Leadership, Health and Safety, and Wellbeing. Substantial relationships have been developed with around 90 regional levy employers and we are looking to further expand our upskilling and reskilling delivery with the additional funds received for this group of organisations. Phase 2 of FWDF funding has been introduced to extend to SMEs which makes up the vast majority of both Scotland and the West Region's business base. We are working closely with our local Chambers of Commerce, the Federation of Small Businesses, SDS and CPP partners to maximise the impact and range of SMEs being supported. Our FWDF upskilling and reskilling

training is offered both on a blended and fully online basis however there are challenges with specific training which requires access to specialised workshops and equipment.

3.2 Work-ready

The practical elements of courses have been difficult to deliver during 2020-21 due to the social distancing restrictions, reduced numbers on campuses and recent complete campus closures. However, the College has enhanced work-ready skills in the digital area for all students, focusing not just on the technical skills but the important communication skills within a digital environment.

Undoubtedly, the employment situation for our students leaving courses will be severely impacted by COVID. At this time, staff are working to support students' employability skill development, continue to work closely with employers and adapt provision where required to provide the best opportunities for our students to be prepared to enter employment.

SFC published the College Leaver Destination report for session 2018-19 in November 2020 reporting on student destinations 3-6 months after finishing a course. Individuals who are in work, training or further study are counted as having a positive destination. The confirmed positive destinations for the College's students leaving session 2018-19 was 94%, a small decrease of 1% and just 1% below the Sector average. The employment situation for those who subsequently left in 2019-20 and those completing courses this session is likely to be difficult but the College is focusing strongly on employability skills for our current students and in using our 'Your Essential Skills' portal and guidance time to help students reflect on and recognise the development of their skills for employment gained in College and in managing their studies during the COVID period.

3.3 Innovation

West College Scotland continues to be a leader in the college sector in its approach to knowledge exchange and innovation particularly in its offer to employers and in recognising the need for our staff and students to be resilient and agile in order to support Scotland's economic recovery. The College supports the priorities outlined in *"Towards a robust, resilient wellbeing economy for Scotland"* Report of the Advisory Group on Economic Recovery, in particular those responses which focus on: Place, People, Skills, and Industries. In response, the College has successfully co-developed a number of strategically significant multi-agency initiatives between College teams and key stakeholders.

Innovation - Supporting Place and Industry

The College is currently working closely with Renfrewshire Council and other regional stakeholders in supporting the Advancing Manufacturing Innovation District (AMIDS) to be an internationally recognised location for innovation, research and advanced manufacturing. At the heart of AMIDS is the National Manufacturing Institute for Scotland (NMIS) which will support the transformation of Scotland's manufacturing industry in terms of innovation and digital opportunities, creating sustainable, high-value and highly skilled jobs. West College Scotland was successful in being awarded the primary strategic project of the Scottish Funding Council's College Innovation Fund for an initiative entitled 'Imagining the Critical Engineer' with the outcome of this competitive process being officially announced by the Minister for Trade, Investment and Innovation. Our project aims to engage 200 employees across 100 SMEs with a manufacturing and engineering focus, across the whole of Scotland with hubs in the West, East and North regions. West College Scotland is the strategic lead and we work

with our partner colleges, Chambers of Commerce, Skills and Enterprise agencies and technology partners to engage, inspire and amplify the productivity potential of Industry 4.0. Three major 'Hackathon' events are due to be staged across each geographical area, and the events will engage and inspire companies and their employees about the potential of advancing technologies while focusing on the cultural shift, skills and training requirements that will empower transformation. These 'hacks' will support primary research and strategic engagements across the country, enabling us to garner in-depth insight into the skills STEM employers require to capitalise upon developing national assets, such as National for Manufacturing Institute for Scotland (NMIS).

The College continues to deliver Engineer Apprenticeships for the Advanced Forming Research Centre (AFRC) in partnership with the University of Strathclyde. These partnerships provided a platform to submit a successful joint College and Council proposal to the Advancing Manufacturing Challenge Fund for further investment to support SMEs.

These innovative projects, partnerships and activities specifically support the four interdependent priority areas outlined in *Making Scotland's Future: A Recovery Plan for Manufacturing*:

- Collaboration and networks
- Supply chains and competitiveness
- Adaptation and transformation
- Skills and workforce

Innovation – Supporting Skills

Workplaces and employees are at the heart of the innovation process. Harnessing the innovation potential of employees depends on both Fair Work and the employers' ability to be innovative in how the workplace and work practices are designed. In the current economic situation, digital and management skills have become an even greater challenge for many organisations, both large and small, and a lack of skills in these areas plays an important role in the ability of some Scottish businesses to adapt to the new economic circumstances as well as emerging innovations and ways of working.

Given the pandemic, the College strategically enhanced our Care upskilling offer with new and relevant products and supported an additional c1,000 individuals to access fully online Care associated qualifications and skills to meet immediate demand and also support one of West College Scotland's key employment areas to respond to growing and changing needs of the current and emerging workforce.

Furthermore, to ensure businesses have the ability to maximise their potential to sustain and innovate we have creating a number of online and blended micro-credential training packages which focus on developing digital skills, lean management, leadership, team working, virtual collaboration and enhancing productivity. As one of the country's largest providers of training through the Flexible Workforce Development Fund (FWDF), West College Scotland is supporting the upskilling and reskilling of employees from across various parts of the Region including private, public and third sector organisations. Building on previous years, we continue to nurture current and new client relationships and develop new products and services directly informed by business demand. To date we have introduced over 150 'new to market' products ranging from Strategic Leadership and Digital Skills to Health and Safety and Resilience Building as well as supporting opportunities for role specific in-work training. The College continues to successfully deliver the FWDF in 2020-21 now including training for both

levy paying organisations and SMEs, and gaining further insight into employer skill and product demands that inform college curriculum development to ensure our students have the skills and attributes required by employers.

Innovation – Supporting People

To support workforce development, our Learning Technology team developed and enhanced CoLT, the Centre of Learning Technologies, an innovative online hub which aggregates all interactive online learning, teaching and assessment tools in one place and supports people through tutorials and examples to easily create engaging and enriching interactive content to provide high quality teaching and learning assessment experiences for students and staff.

This resource provides key digital skills enhancement for both our staff and students supporting them on their digital journey. A number of new products have been developed for students both in employment and those who are hoping to enter industry to ensure they have the requisite digital skills to sustain themselves through their training and qualification and ultimately in the workforce.

Given the shift in digital skill requirements, we recognised that a significant number of people would need baseline skills in order to be able to undertake training and skills development whether provided remotely, blended or online. A multifaceted resource was developed to help build confidence to learn online, provide the tools and skills to engage, support health and wellbeing and maximised connectivity with others. We not only provided this to people undertaking skills and qualifications but also offered it to parents, carers and families who may also require these skills themselves or to support others. In showcasing this product and its potential reach and impact, the College has had significant interest from our community and local authority partners in how we can provide further access to people who need this most and for whom it may be a barrier to work, education, services and ultimately inclusive economic growth within the Region.

3.4 Public health emergency

From the initial planning for session 2020-21, in response to COVID the College adopted three Key Principles:

- To have the fewest possible people on a campus at any one time.
- To ensure the safest possible environment for those on any campus
- To ensure the best possible learning and working experience for students and staff.

These principles guided our College operations and ensured that we had very restricted campus activity from the start of 2020-21, with most staff working off campus and student classes delivered online. This was enabled by equipping both staff and students with the necessary IT resources and providing significant staff CPD and student support.

By November 2020 the College had moved to having only 6% of timetabled classes on campus with all other classes taught online and this was reduced even further when two of our campuses moved into Level 4 restrictions. All learning was online from Christmas, through January with practical classes suspended to be completed once the COVID situation in our area improves and in line with Government guidance.

The West Region communities have been disproportionately impacted by COVID due to the high levels of deprivation in Inverclyde, Renfrewshire and West Dunbartonshire. In the initial part of the pandemic, Inverclyde was the 'COVID capital of Scotland' and after Christmas this area again had the highest proportion of COVID cases in Scotland. The West Region has

continued to have high levels of cases throughout the year, but no cases reported as being contracted on campus.

The College implemented rigorous health and safety measures on all campuses and undertook structured planning and monitoring of our COVID response through a weekly Mobilisation Group, including student and Union participation and a contracted Project Manager. This group reports into a weekly COVID Executive Group and continued to meet. The health and safety of our staff and students was prioritised and ensured through the collaborative approaches of the Mobilisation Group and with regular communication to all staff and students. In addition, regular meetings were held with local Trade Unions and a strong collaborative approach was taken to addressing any issues. The College has complied with Government Guidance at all times and adjusted activities in response to changes in local and national restrictions. Staff were informed of changes through regular updates, a dedicated area of the staff intranet and the CDN highly commended staff 'Home working Times' publication which provided an important sense of community in a time when staff were dispersed.

The College has recognised the different levels of digital access and capabilities of our students and during the pandemic we facilitated the provision of a student IT Helpdesk, staffed by paid Computing student placements on every campus. We have also provided MS Teams Student/Parent/Guardians Training Sessions to support participants of all ages to utilise Microsoft Teams through live demonstrations of Teams for Educational features including meetings, conversations, documents planning, classroom tips, and troubleshooting.

3.5 Collaboration

Throughout 2020-21, West College Scotland senior staff have been very active externally, working collaboratively with other Colleges, with Awarding Bodies, SDS and Local Authorities in addressing the COVID challenges and response to the pandemic. The current emergency has improved the collaborative working of the College sector nationally and joint working has been instrumental in successfully meeting many of the recent challenges, particularly in relation to quality and health and safety. College teaching staff have benefited from collaborative working at curriculum level with other Colleges and through networks including CDN to share development work and approaches to adjusting the curriculum and enabling interactive online learning.

Partnership working with the University of the West of Scotland has continued to support the delivery of our Drama courses and the COVID testing of students if required. A joint curriculum session has been arranged for our senior team and the University of the West of Scotland to consider new initiatives and ways of working for the benefit of our students and region.

3.6 Responding to the climate emergency

Details of how the College is responding to the climate emergency can be found on the College Sustainability Webpage which is updated on a regular basis. A key component of this response is the targets within the College Carbon Management Plan 2016-21 (CMP) to achieve a 10% reduction (530 tonnes) on CO₂ emission by 2021. This was achieved during 2017-18 and as outlined in the 2019-20 Self Evaluation report, the College continues to make good progress in reducing the emissions it makes, despite a lower than required level of investment and an aging estate.

The College has, during the past 12 months consolidated its waste contract, completed the roll out of Skype for Business, continued to educate its students on the impacts their decisions

have on the climate and replaced more lights / fittings across all campuses with more efficient equipment. The challenge for 2020-21 and beyond is to take some of the actions required to address the global pandemic and ensure that the previous 'sustainability bad habits' do not return – travel to meetings when video conferencing is a suitable alternative, printing of materials given the work to move to digital delivery and home working to continue where possible thereby reducing the use of office space. All these challenges are being considered by the College as we move into 2021.

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)	166,520	159,174	159,039	160,376	157,853	155,288	152,855
Credits Delivered (ESF)	0	7,086	7,094	7,103	6,673	9,308	5,838
Credits Delivered (Core + ESF)	166,520	166,260	166,133	167,479	164,526	164,596	158,693
B Volume of Credits Delivered to 10% most deprived postcode areas	46,369	45,832	45,261	41,664	41,227	41,357	39,765
Proportion of Credits delivered to 10% most deprived postcode areas	27.8%	27.6%	27.2%	24.9%	25.1%	25.1%	25.1%
C Volume of credits delivered to care-experienced learners	870	3,788	3,119	2,463	8,277	13,822	10,315
Proportion of credits delivered to care-experienced learners	0.5%	2.3%	1.9%	1.5%	5.0%	8.4%	6.5%
D Number of senior phase age pupils studying vocational qualifications delivered by colleges	178	115	97	342	425	563	425
E1 Proportion of enrolled students successfully obtaining a recognised qualification (Full time FE)	59.7%	63.7%	68.7%	69.2%	67.9%		67.9%
Number of enrolled students successfully obtaining a recognised qualification (Full time FE)	2,531	2,699	3,174	3,045	2,953		
Total number of FTFE students	4,237	4,240	4,622	4,402	4,348		
E2 Proportion of enrolled students successfully obtaining a recognised qualification (Part time FE)							
Number of enrolled students successfully obtaining a recognised qualification (Part time FE)	8,366	7,613	9,467	9,414	9,574		76.1%
Total number of PTFE students	13,002	14,501	14,003	13,023	12,576		
E3 Proportion of enrolled students successfully obtaining a recognised qualification (Full time HE)							
Number of enrolled students successfully obtaining a recognised qualification (Full time HE)	1,858	1,817	1,849	1,912	1,713		64.9%
Total number of FTHE students	2,771	2,780	2,693	2,757	2,640		
E4 Proportion of enrolled students successfully obtaining a recognised qualification (Part time HE)							
Number of enrolled students successfully obtaining a recognised qualification (Part time HE)	329	420	445	491	494		80.3%
Total number of PTHE students	430	567	579	612	615		
F Number of students achieving an HNC/D qualification articulating to degree level courses		545	526	609	608		
Number of students achieving an HNC/D qualification articulating to degree level courses with advanced standing		297	243	311	317		
Proportion of students achieving an HNC/D qualification articulating to degree level courses with advanced standing		54.5%	46.2%	51.1%	52.1%		51.1%
G Total number of full-time FE college qualifiers (in confirmed destinations)	2,149	2,455	2,594	2,474	2,345		
Number of full-time FE college qualifiers in work, training or further study 3-6 months after qualifying	2,065	2,362	2,502	2,353	2,258		
Proportion of full-time FE college qualifiers in work, training or further study 3-6 months after qualifying	96.1%	96.2%	96.5%	95.1%	96.3%		95.1%
Total number of full-time HE college qualifiers (in confirmed destinations)	1,542	1,517	1,519	1,601	1,492		
Number of full-time HE college qualifiers in work, training or further study 3-6 months after qualifying	1,448	1,438	1,459	1,532	1,353		
Proportion of full-time HE college qualifiers in work, training or further study 3-6 months after qualifying	93.9%	94.8%	96.1%	95.7%	90.7%		95.7%
H Percentage of students overall satisfied with their college experience (SSES survey)	-	90.1%	93.4%	N/A	95.1%		95.1%