

**NORTH EAST
SCOTLAND
COLLEGE**



**REGIONAL
OUTCOME
AGREEMENT**
AY2022-23

CONTENTS



INTRODUCTION	1
OUTCOMES FOR STUDENTS	2
Fair Access and Transition	2
High Quality Learning, Teaching and Support	3
Partnership, Participation and Student Experience	5
Learning with Impact	6
Equalities and Inclusion	7
ECONOMIC RECOVERY AND SOCIAL RENEWAL	8
Responsive Institutions	8
Confident and Highly Capable - Work-Ready - Graduates	11
Knowledge Exchange and Innovation	13
Collaboration	13
Climate Emergency	15
CLOSING STATEMENT	16
APPENDIX A - SUPPORTING DATA	





INTRODUCTION

North East Scotland College (NESCol) is the only further education college located within the North East of Scotland, and provides a wide range of education and training opportunities across the region to meet the needs of individuals, communities and employers. The College's main (College-owned) centres of delivery are in Aberdeen (3 sites), Fraserburgh and Peterhead with a number of leased community-based learning centres across the region. NESCol serves an extensive geographical area (Aberdeen City: 186 sq km, Aberdeenshire: 6,313 sq km), with its 2 main centres of delivery, Aberdeen and Fraserburgh, located 41 miles apart.

College services are also provided in a number of the region's main centres of population out-with Aberdeen City: Ellon, Inverurie and The Scottish Maritime Academy in Peterhead. Further detailed information on the College, its courses and services can be accessed at www.nescol.ac.uk.

This Outcome Agreement aims to capture, at a high level, the College's contributions, impact and outcomes, and to provide assurance to the Scottish Funding Council (SFC) on use of allocated funding in AY2022-23.

The College's Strategic Plan for 2021-23 can be accessed [here](#).

Supporting Data, including national measures and associated targets are included as Appendix A. In setting targets for AY2022-23, the College has considered its own past performance; the most recent national performance outcomes (AY2020-21); the current regional economic circumstances and the impacts of COVID-19. The targets are considered to be realistic, given the challenging and unique circumstances in which the College continues to operate, but ambitious in terms of recovery.

Whilst the targets are for AY2022-23 only, it is acknowledged that the impacts of the pandemic and economic change will continue to impact significantly on the College for a number of years and that recovery will be gradual and dependent on restored confidence in education; improved alignment with the school senior phase curriculum; freedom from restrictions on course delivery and improved understanding of career prospects in the region. Using the College's well-established partnership links will be critical for this purpose.

OUTCOMES FOR STUDENTS

FAIR ACCESS AND TRANSITION

NESCol works hard to ensure that anyone who wants to come to College can gain a place on a course, by removing any barriers and providing support so that all students reach their potential and successfully complete their course of study. Groups of particular interest, such as care-experienced and those from the 10% most deprived postcodes on the Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD10), are guaranteed a place on a course. There is also a focus on student carers and estranged students, to help them be successful.

The College plays a pivotal role in developing skills of young people across the region, most significantly in the region's approach to the Developing the Young Workforce (DYW) agenda. The College's relationship with DYW co-ordinators has been strengthened by working together more closely and sharing its offer with school pupils.

An innovative approach to working with schools has been developed to ensure NESCol can meet the needs of senior phase pupils and school leavers. This involves staff from the College Schools-College Partnership Team and other staff from across the College working with teachers, Skills Development Scotland (SDS) careers advisors, DYW co-ordinators and community planning groups. Better sharing of information and data insights will support planning for an appropriate offer to school pupils.

The College also supports many opportunities for mature, part-time and distance learners including those returning to education for up-skilling and re-skilling. Strategic initiatives and community planning partnerships have also been established regionally, which offer opportunities to more vulnerable sections of the community across both Aberdeen City and Aberdeenshire. NESCol also works closely with the University of Aberdeen (UofA) and The Robert Gordon University (RGU) and a tripartite approach, branded as the National Energy Skills Accelerator (NESA) is focussed on developing the skills required for the region's energy transition ambitions. These activities support NESCol to provide learning to senior phase school pupils, to extend its reach to the most deprived areas in the regions and to encourage students to continue their studies by articulation to university, or via work-based distance and part-time learning.

NESCol has been working especially closely with RGU to improve students' experiences and outcomes while studying at College. Areas of collaboration include subject level reviews, admissions and offers, validation and marketing school transitions products. A new approach to Additional Funded Places will be introduced next year.



NESCol works closely with a wide range of partners to support fair access and transitions. A key partner is Aberdeen Foyer, with whom the College works to ensure it reaches vulnerable people within the community. This is one example where digital poverty is being addressed. Students referred to NESCol can be supported by the provision of digital devices so that appropriate studies can be completed, especially when some delivery continues to be online.

Care-experienced students is one of the groups of specific interest to NESCol. NESCol wants to expand the number of care-experienced students studying at College, and to improve the outcomes for this group of students. Care-experienced students meet as a group, where tailored support is made available, and essential guidance and advice is shared with them. This approach is being extended to student carers and estranged students. The group will also provide useful feedback on the support provided to them. In the past, a number of students self-disclosed as care-experienced inaccurately and the application process has been redesigned to gather more robust and accurate data.

NESCol continues to run its pioneering and sector leading "Bring Your Own Device" (BYOD) scheme, where students are required to use their own laptop for their studies, and to bring it to College when they are required to attend. Students are expected to supply their own device, but support is available in the form of a bursary-funded device which can be made available if the student is eligible, or by the student applying for a loan device if their course is not bursary funded. Loan devices are available from funds allocated to the College by the SFC to address digital poverty. Students can also apply for loan devices on courses which are not BYOD courses, if required, as most courses have some element of online delivery. Support from the digital poverty fund is being extended to include or improve internet connection.



HIGH QUALITY LEARNING, TEACHING AND SUPPORT

Moving on from the restrictions imposed by the COVID-19 pandemic, the focus for the College in AY2022-23 is to restore the student experience to a predominantly campus-based model so that students benefit from access to NESCol's excellent facilities and the advantages of learning together. The lessons learned from blended models will be incorporated and applied where they have been successful to build a more sustainable and current framework for learning and teaching with a view to facilitating successful outcomes for all students.

The collation of feedback and evaluation of the learning and teaching experience of both staff and students in AY2021-22 has informed the updated "Framework for Curriculum Planning and Delivery" which sets out standards for course design and delivery. This document, now stored alongside all other curriculum and quality-relevant documents in a single shared space - Curriculum and Quality Essentials. It has been prepared to support teaching staff to keep up with good practice and lessons learned from the blended learning experience in previous years whilst retaining the necessary rigour in terms of structure and quality assurance. Quality processes, suspended during the pandemic restrictions, such as lesson observation and internal audit, will also be re-instituted to support enhancement of the student experience.

Student support needs to continue to be provided through the "Whole College Support Model". This begins with front-line teaching and support staff and allows referral of more complex needs to progressively more specialised staff in the Student Advice and Support teams. Development of the delivery model will continue in AY2022-23, with training in trauma-informed practice and neurodiversity being particular priorities. The College-devised Academic and Personal Skills Development unit was introduced to help Academic Tutors to support students and to develop transferable skills of students. However, outcomes have not been as successful as expected and so improvements to the design and application of this unit have been identified for implementation in AY2022-23. These will improve understanding and consistency of requirements through enhanced resources, communication and opportunities for professional discussion.



Curriculum & Quality Essentials 22-23

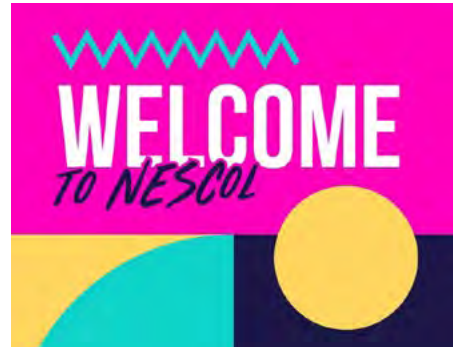
Following the curriculum management restructure of AY2020-21, feedback from managers has been gathered, collated and used to inform improvements to process and sharing of good practice. As a result, a revised Curriculum Manager Forum will be introduced to allow these critical leaders to come together and discuss key themes. The introduction of level 1 promoted posts - Academic Improvement Leads - in AY2021-22 - has enhanced the leadership capacity in teaching teams with these staff supporting innovation and enhancement cross-campus in designated subject areas. The impact of these posts will be reviewed and monitored during this year (AY2022-23).

Significant resource, through the internal Learning Technologies Team and the use of other learning platforms, will continue to support continuing professional development in developing digital teaching skills so that these can be incorporated into revised approaches to learning and teaching. Further work is planned to deliver webinars on topics such as digital accessibility, universal design, contemporary pedagogy and online assessment.

The College's partnership with RGU continues to be sector-leading with respect to the opportunities offered for transition and widening access to HE (Higher Education) in the region. Work is in progress with RGU through the SFC North East Pathfinder projects to explore joint planning and provision of new programmes and pathways and, also including UofA, to develop a Health and Social Care Partnership to promote routes into careers in this critical sector. The College will also be working on Pathfinder projects with local authorities and regional universities on developing a more coherent senior phase for school pupils, again building on the excellent foundations which have been in place for many years. Further information is included in the "Collaboration" section.

Internal review and self-evaluation is an essential process employed by the College to ensure the ongoing continuous improvement in the delivery of high-quality learning, teaching and assessment, and an effectively integrated and embedded student support experience. A review of student outcomes has highlighted a need to address high withdrawal rates, particularly in Further Education (FE) courses. An enhanced evaluation and action planning process - Spotlight Review - has been instituted in AY2022-23 which will be applied to identified courses and teams to direct resources to, and generate enhanced action plans for, those areas most in need of improvement. The reviews will be based on evidence generated from student outcomes and feedback as well as quality assurance processes such as verification; complaints and internal audit. Any evidence gaps will be addressed, and supportive measures instituted.

Education Scotland undertook its most recent progress visit to the College in March 2022. The progress visit explored five overarching themes linked to the College's enhancement plan and priorities around COVID-19 recovery. Twenty-eight areas of positive practice were identified and 8 areas for further development. The College made satisfactory progress in almost all areas, however, insufficient progress was found to have been made in improving outcomes for all learners. The College has addressed all areas for improvement identified in the College self-evaluation report. The next visit is scheduled for March 2023. In preparation for this, and to maintain dialogue with Education Scotland, the Director of Quality attends monthly engagement visits with the College Inspector and reports key messages to the Leadership Team. The College is currently participating in the SFC review work through a variety of bodies, including the Principal and Vice-Principal groups and the College Development Network (CDN) Quality Network.



PARTNERSHIP, PARTICIPATION AND STUDENT EXPERIENCE

The College has a range of mechanisms to support effective student partnership. These are outlined in the Student Partnership Agreement which sets out the College's approach to student engagement, detailing priority objectives and associated actions. The College and the Students' Association work collaboratively to deliver the objectives and review progress at the Student Engagement Action Group (SEAG), which has been in existence for a number of years and is the main mechanism for overseeing student engagement and partnership.

The Student Partnership Agreement structure which was introduced in AY2021-22 has worked well by allocation both a College lead and a Students' Association lead, demonstrating a true partnership approach to supporting student engagement. This continues in AY2022-23 with four key projects for the session: Student Wellbeing, Healthy Body Healthy Mind, Response to the Cost-of-Living Crisis and the Students' Association strategy renewal.

Two initiatives approved to date so far under the Response to Cost-of-Living Crisis project are the introduction of Community Pantries and Free Breakfast Club. The planning and delivery of these initiatives lie with the Students' Association but are jointly funded alongside the College. Both will be up and running early December 2022 and will continue to be monitored and developed throughout the session. The Free Breakfast Club is in partnership with the catering provider, Inspire, who are providing resources at cost price to help support students.

SEAG continues to be the main forum for ensuring student voice heard. The sabbatical officers continue to sit on relevant committees and action groups, but a more considered approach is being taken to ensure attendance at meetings does not impact negatively on capacity to implement the projects and deliver on their manifestos. Once the executive officers are in place, they will also join some groups and where there is no sabbatical or executive officer represented on a group, input and feedback will be provided via SEAG.





All students are provided with opportunities to take ownership for their own learning and influence their college experience. Students are encouraged to be active participants in College life and encouraged to co-design and steer the way in which key services are provided to them. This is supported via a wide variety of engagement activities including class representative meetings, course committee meetings, peer-led reviews, as well as via feedback shared through the Students' Association.

The College, and the Students' Association will continue to work closely in partnership with Student Partnership in Quality Scotland (sparqs) and National Union of Students (NUS) Scotland to support the work of the Students' Association, including wider student engagement. Class Rep training has again been delivered by sparqs, helping to equip the class reps to undertake their duties and participate in activities such as Course Committee Meetings. Following the review of the class rep system last session, the team are introducing a new format for the class rep meetings by incorporating incentives to encourage attendance and engagement at the on-campus meetings. Clubs and Societies have also been very successful to date and the team continue to build on this. In addition to the promotion of these engagement opportunities during Welcome Week, the Students' Association delivered promotional activities in November through on campus stalls to support students with setting up their own club or society and promoting those already in place.

The sabbatical officers continue to engage with the Wellbeing Matters group established to deliver NESCol's Wellbeing Strategy. This session the Students' Association projects align very well with the aims of the strategy, providing further opportunities for joint projects - for example introducing Sensory Spaces to support the existing Wellbeing Hubs which were introduced last session. The Students' Association have also worked with the sports curriculum teams to promote the opening of fitness facilities on all three main campuses, which further supports the Healthy Body Healthy Mind. In addition, NESCol has signed up to Sport Scotland's Active Campus initiative and are actively engaging with Scottish Student Sport (SSS) to maximise opportunities for students.

LEARNING WITH IMPACT

As part of the whole-College support model, the Student Advice and Support team offer a series of events for transitions support. This year, following review of last year's event, UCAS week has been rebranded as "UCAS and Transitions Week" and will offer a programme of events to help prepare students for the next stage in their journey, whether that is progressing with their studies or moving into employment. The event is being delivered virtually as it was last year, offering a series of live sessions and pre-recorded content. A number of stakeholders are involved in the event including RGU, UofA, The Open University (OU), SDS, SAAS, The Royal Air Force, The Royal Navy, Army and Police Scotland.

This event, and other initiatives like Hack Your Studies, a week-long programme of study skills sessions supported by the NESCol Study Toolkit, have been incorporated into the delivery of the Academic and Personal Skills Development unit (detailed below) and is shared with all Academic Tutors across FE and HE courses. The foundation created during these events will prepare students for future extension events later in the year, including Enterprise and Employability Week and Virtual Careers Week. All employers who participated last year confirmed their intent to be involved again this academic session.

The College works closely with SDS on-campus careers advisers to provide support to graduates and leavers.

In addition to supporting the above events, RGU regularly engages with NESCol students through information stands on campus and bespoke in-class sessions to promote Degree Link programmes. This work supports the annual subject level review meetings focused on articulation arrangements and transition activities. All the arrangements described above will be further supported working collaboratively with the Head of Planning and Academic Partnerships.

EQUALITIES AND INCLUSION

The College strives to support people from a wide range of backgrounds to access high-quality educational provision and improve their positive destinations in life. To that end, it continues to seek to ensure that, as an organisation, it creates a more equal, diverse and inclusive learning and working environment where students and staff are respected, valued and supported.

The College produced its Equality Mainstreaming report and revised Equality Outcomes in April 2021 and work in AY2022-23 continues to focus on the application of the actions and outcomes identified by these exercises.

The attainment gap between students with and without a declared disability remains a priority, with work focussing on early identification and intervention; support mechanisms and development of resources to support student resilience. Evidence suggests that action is reducing the attainment gap but that a gap still exists. Additional staff training and promotions will be focussed on neurodiversity as part of the College Respect initiative. This remains a common and sensitive challenge in terms of staff skills and confidence.

Specific interventions for digital poverty and under-represented groups are other areas of focus. This year the region is accommodating a significant number of Ukrainian refugees and so planning is taking account of their needs in terms of language, skills and pastoral support. Partnership working with the Local Authorities, Grampian Racial Equality Council (GREC) and others will facilitate planning and delivery of appropriate activity to support their integration into the community.

Particular attention is also focussed on care-experienced students with the specific intention of improving outcomes for this group. Application of support arrangements for this group continued to be challenging but the attainment gap reduced for full time students in AY2021-22 from 22% to 11%. Additional support measures are now better established, and curriculum colleagues are more experienced in dealing with potential needs of students in this group.

Whilst robust live and trend data is available for most protected characteristics, work is underway to improve qualitative feedback on the student experience. Student-led and run LGBTQ+ and disability groups are planned for AY2022-23 and it is expected that they will help to promote good relations and inform improvements to the student experience. The appointment of staff Equality Champions is also planned to support colleagues in their implementation of mainstreaming.

The College's commitment to provision of an accessible and inclusive environment includes mainstreaming activity such as incorporating challenge questions for support teams to develop understanding of mainstreaming equalities and diversity within their own teams and additional support for equality impact assessment writing, evidence collection and evaluation.



ECONOMIC RECOVERY & SOCIAL RENEWAL

NESCol is a driving force in the economic recovery and social renewal of the North East of Scotland. A proactive approach to responding to the downturn in the oil and gas sector and supporting energy transition in tandem with addressing the impact of BREXIT and the many harms of COVID-19 will be crucial during one of the most challenging periods in the region's history.

The North East region is experiencing positive economic recovery fuelled by an emerging renewable sector alongside a relatively strong oil and gas sector with job opportunities often outweighing suitable candidates who can fill them. NESCol is playing a crucial role in developing new and existing talent to support these growth areas as well as other strategically important sectors like digital technology, food and drink, life sciences and tourism. NESCol is embedded in its regional business and community networks and supports numerous initiatives which are mutually beneficial in terms of financial sustainability for NESCol and economic support for the Region.

RESPONSIVE INSTITUTIONS

NESCol is guided by a wide variety of labour market intelligence which comes from sources including:

- *Direct engagement with employers*
- *Skills Development Scotland (SDS)*
- *Local Authorities*
- *Aberdeen and Grampian Chamber of Commerce (AGCC)*
- *Department of Work and Pensions (DWP)*
- *Industry bodies*
- *Media releases*

NESCol staff represent the College on a variety of regional groups including:

- *Community Planning Groups (where the CPA Management Group oversees the delivery of a LocalOutcome Improvement Plan through 7 themed Outcome Improvement Groups).*
- *PACE (Grampian, Shetland and Tayside)*
- *Local Employability Partnerships*
- *Employability Training Providers Forum*
- *Aberdeen City & Aberdeenshire Hotels Association*
- *National Energy Skills Accelerator (NESA)*
- *University links with 9 associate universities*

The sources above provide regular and current labour market intelligence which guides curriculum planning and decision-making through discussion at the College's Regional Board, Executive Team and Leadership Team and is cascaded throughout the organisation. Programme development and delivery for NESCol students and commercial clients and stakeholders is also contextualised with this market intelligence.

Courses are designed and delivered to produce graduates who are equipped for the world of work and so employability skills are highlighted in all programmes. In particular, the introduction of the APSD unit to non-advanced programmes (see "High Quality Learning, Teaching and Support" above) has provided opportunity to explicitly recognise and develop the meta-skills which will enable students to perform well in the world of work.

NESCol benefits from its partnership relationships, and these are becoming increasingly important with bodies including Energy Transition Zone (ETZ) and National Energy Skills Accelerator (NESA) and new membership arrangements with Offshore Energies UK (OEUK), which will bring us closer to new employers and inform new curriculum development.



Through AY2022-23, the College has seen a significant increase in demand for Modern Apprenticeship (MA) training, with 172 contracted places offered by Skills Development Scotland and demand which significantly outweighs this number. Other colleges are experiencing similar demand and Scottish Government funding seems unlikely to be able to offer additional support. The College will focus on MA training providers and seek to utilise non-contracted places. The recent successes in recruiting Construction and Hospitality MAs will continue. The College will monitor the progress of these new frameworks closely offering high quality customer service and seek to expand them in the future (subject to contract capacity and employer demand).



NESCol's support of the apprenticeship family will create 154 new Foundation Apprenticeship (FA) places across a range of frameworks. There have been challenges in recruiting students for FA programmes this session, partly due to the lack of opportunities to promote this offer to schools during periods of lockdown. Working with local authorities, SDS and DYW, short film promotional and marketing materials have been developed to raise awareness of FAs and progression opportunities to young people and influencers. In addition, school visits have been arranged to provide guidance and support throughout the year and at specific subject choice events.

The Flexible Workforce Development Fund (FWDF) is NESCol's primary focus for commercial delivery, however at the time of writing, colleges still await confirmation of funding for AY2022-23. While delivery of contractual commitment from AY2021-22 continues up to the calendar year end, it is deeply concerning that the College has been unable to pursue new activity with the uncertainty over funding. The College expects that an announcement will be made in the very near future which will enable the College to rebuild momentum with the wholly owned subsidiary, Aberdeen Skills and Enterprise Training (ASET). A waiting list has been established with new and existing customers and the College is ready to launch quickly to secure new activity to support regional economic recovery and indeed new opportunity. The College will continue to work with key partners to promote the FWDF opportunity to small, medium and large businesses in all sectors.

NESCol's longstanding relationship with Shell UK Ltd, is continuing in AY2022-23 with a new cohort of 12 Shell technicians, and growth in "Girls in Energy" where 155 students are now working towards their National 5 Skills For Work Energy qualification. There is also a reinvigorated S2 Skills competition reaching 17 secondary schools (with two new schools this year and over 2,000 pupils in total) across Aberdeen City and Aberdeenshire. The Shell Digital Passport programme will continue in the early part of the year until committed activity has been delivered. Over 70 candidates have, so far, benefitted from improvements to their digital literacy and most achieving the Digital Passport qualification. The sponsorship is a great indicator of the strength of relationship between the College and Shell UK Ltd. NESCol was delighted to win a CDN award which celebrates this success.



Wind Technician Training has increased in demand and the main partner, Vestas, has now increased the number of apprentices training at Fraserburgh campus with 8 new offshore technicians commencing their journey alongside four onshore technicians. The onshore technicians have transferred from another college to progress to higher levels of study and on completion in June 2023, will immediately be deployed to a new windfarm development in Shetland.

Wind Technician training has also now commenced at the College's Altens campus where the Engineering Construction Industry Training Board (ECITB) has created scholarships for new entrants to this industry. Growth is anticipated at both campuses as new Scotwind opportunities are initiated, and programmes will evolve in line with employer demand in this sector.

NESCol has benefitted from a very generous 6-figure donation from a local businessperson in AY2020-21 enabling an innovative FutureSkills Centre at its Fraserburgh Campus. A second donation, double that of the previous, has recently been received from the same person and will allow further investment in the Fraserburgh Campus with the development of a renewables workshop. This area will enhance the learning experience of future technicians as well as aspiring young engineers from local schools. Developing inspirational facilities and learning experiences is key to the College's future success. Having supportive partners helps to enable this vision and the delivery of an excellent learning experience.

Within NESCol's commitment to support its business and communities, are a range of partnerships which help to protect some of the more vulnerable regional groups. This provision helps to ensure equality of opportunity in areas which can often be neglected.

The College's partnerships with Aberdeen Foyer, Project Search (UofA) and the regional Community Planning Partnership (CPP) offer learning experiences and progression opportunities for candidates at different stages of their learning journeys.

With Aberdeen Foyer, the College co-delivers a number of employability programmes for candidates who have often not engaged in school or been impacted by turbulent home lives. The College hopes to continue Foyer Families projects, made possible by Tackling Child Poverty funding, and awaits confirmation from the Scottish Funding Council of this support. This innovative programme encourages family friendly hours and support while upskilling adults and children as a family unit.

Project Search is an international transition to work programme committed to transforming the lives of young people with learning disabilities and Autism. This supported learning and internship opportunity for 12 candidates per year has a high success rate in securing long-term employment which would otherwise have been difficult to achieve. The programme delivered a near 90% success rate of placing candidates in employment in AY2021-22. The College will continue to work with UofA, Values Into Action Scotland (VIAS), SDS and the two local authorities to enhance opportunities for young people.

The University of Aberdeen Medical School and NESCol are in receipt of Scottish Government funding to support an innovative access programme to their MBChB medical degree programme. The first cohort was recruited in AY2017-18 and there has been an intake each year since then, with funding secured until AY2022-23. Students are recruited from groups traditionally poorly represented in medicine, fulfilling criteria such as rurality, SIMD postcode, first generation university and care background. They complete a pre-medical school year, the first half of which is spent at NESCol consolidating their science and they move on to medical school courses in January. Successful completion of the course and UCAT testing allows the students access to the first year of the MBChB degree. Eighty-two students have entered over the first 4 intakes. Retention and progression rates have been excellent.

NESCol's English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) provision has doubled in size this year with significant demand primarily from Ukrainian refugees but also from other troubled areas of the world. The CPP is collectively supporting this activity, however it creates new challenges and based on forecasts, there could be a doubling of refugees arriving in the region.



Fair Work

The College is committed to the 'Fair Work Statement for the College Sector' that is currently being developed nationally in consultation with trade unions. This aims to continuously improve working practises 'that offers effective voice, opportunity, security, fulfilment and respect'.

This is demonstrated by:

- *Good industrial relations with representative trade unions and all staff.*
- *The most recent Investors in People (IiP) report which highlighted the improvements that have been made in relation to internal communications, and it also recognised the College's commitment to staff and student wellbeing through the Wellbeing Matters and Respect action groups.*
- *Significant investment in learning and development, including the majority of lecturing staff holding, or achieving TQFE within three years of employment.*
- *The College's commitment to paying the Living Wage, recognising that organisational/workforce change can have a significant impact on employees. Therefore, the College applies the fundamental principle that consultation and communication with trade unions and employees during these processes are essential.*
- *The College aims to provide predictability of work commitments in relation to working hours and, as an accredited Living Wage Employer, does not directly employ anyone on zero hours contracts.*
- *The College is committed to reducing its gender pay gap. There has been an increase in the number of female staff employed in the College, but there continues to be a predominance of female staff in the lower paid roles. Further investigation is planned to understand why there are more women in lower salary, and part-time roles, and if there are any barriers to progression.*

CONFIDENT AND HIGHLY CAPABLE WORK-READY - GRADUATES

Ensuring that all students, regardless of their background or personal circumstances, are provided with opportunities to develop the skills necessary to be successful as confident, resilient and highly capable work-ready graduates, is at the heart of NESCol.

The world of work is changing and along with it, the suite of knowledge, skills and attributes that graduates must possess to thrive in a highly complex and ever-changing work environment. Technological, societal and environmental innovations and disruptions are rapidly transforming a wide range of industries across the world, and these changes are being felt particularly acutely within the North East of Scotland where a combination of BREXIT, COVID-19 and the increasingly urgent need to transition society away from oil and gas to green and renewable sources is fundamentally affecting the economic landscape, and as consequence, wider society as a whole.

NESCol understands the importance of delivering a curriculum that is employer-informed and explicitly designed to address the unique needs and skills demands of the region, ensuring a pipeline of high quality, technically skilled graduates who possess a broad schema of essential knowledge and understanding. One of the defining characteristics of the student experience at NESCol is the way that qualifications are designed and delivered to place the development of essential domain, core and higher order meta-skills front and centre.

All qualifications at NESCol are designed with substantial employer input and industry insight, and are shaped further via close partnership work with students. By engaging directly and working closely with key regional stakeholders the College can ensure that all students are provided with opportunities to develop their work-readiness via regular access to work placement, work experience, simulated industry environments and practical hands-on learning using industry-standard equipment and resources. NESCol believes strongly in the vital role of hands-on learning, and the value provided by expert direct instruction and time spent engaged in deliberate practice enabled via placement and on-campus attendance. This philosophy has strengthened during the COVID-19 pandemic and associated campus/workplace lockdowns where the lack of access to campuses, peers, College staff and the workplaces has had a detrimental impact on the student experience.

That is not to say that the College does not see digital, blended or online learning as important elements of current or future provision, indeed NESCol has been at the leading edge of digital learning within the College Sector for well over 10 years. Because of this early commitment to digital learning NESCol was particularly well placed to respond to the pressures of the COVID-19 pandemic. Through the, previously mentioned, BYOD and Digital Futures initiatives, the College had already made considerable investment in its IT infrastructure, student access to devices, online resources and in the digital capabilities of staff and students.



Indeed, NESCol strongly believes that high-level digital skills are the essential underpinning skills for the current and future world of work and so the development of high-level digital skills is integral to and embedded within every course that the College offers. Use of tools such as the JISC digital capabilities model and the CDN Digital Standards for Lecturers in Scotland's Colleges have enabled the College to ensure that all students are supported to develop key capabilities that will enable them to work, communicate, create and collaborate safely and confidently online.



Central to ensuring that all NESCol graduates are confident and fully prepared to transition to their next level of study or enter the workplace is investing sufficient time in raising their awareness of the wider world and expanding their personal development and employability skills. To ensure consistency and alignment in this approach across all qualifications, NESCol has designed a bespoke stand-alone module, entitled Academic and Personal Skills Development, that is aligned to SCQF levels 4, 5 and 6 that is integrated into all FE programmes of study. This mandatory 3-credit module was centrally designed as an "off-the-shelf" product that all academic teams can customise to support contextualised delivery of essential personal and employability skills development. Its integration within all programmes of study helps ensure that sufficient focus is dedicated to the delivery of these skills and provides Lecturers with the essential ring-fenced time that they need to ensure that all students have access to vital employer, peer, group and one-to-one support and guidance.

NESCol works very closely with local authority, third sector and national skills agency partners to address and respond to the skills and training needs of the region and is represented across a wide range of key regional economic, community and skills groups. The College co-chairs the Regional Skills Partnership and is working closely with private sector catalysts, Opportunity North East and Energy Transition Zone to ensure that NESCol graduates possess the range on industry knowledge, skills and experience so vital in supporting economic recovery within the region and across the country.



KNOWLEDGE EXCHANGE AND INNOVATION

NESCol is committed to working collectively with partners across higher, further and tertiary education to support strategic and operational knowledge exchange, best practice sharing and innovation.

This is evidenced by the work that NESCol are leading on as part of the SFC's Pathfinder Project, details of which can be found in the "Collaboration" section of this document.

The College's commitment in this area is evidenced via its willingness and enthusiasm to engage with local and national groups, including the Scottish Government, SFC, Education Scotland and Colleges Scotland to influence and co-design national strategies, policies and procedures aimed at:

- supporting the Sector (and society more widely) through the COVID-19 pandemic
- a Green Recovery
- a Wellbeing Economy, and
- a Just Transition to a Zero-Carbon Economy.

Through national entities such as the College Principal's group, Curriculum Vice-Principal's group, the Quality Manager's group, the Finance Director's group and the Business Development Director's group, members of the NESCol Leadership Team play a leading role in sharing good practice and shaping the national approach taken by the SQA, SFC and Scottish Government.

The legacy of proactive engagement and collaboration with key schools and university partners has placed the College in an ideal position to lead on the development of new and innovative models of tertiary provision and it is hoped that NESCol will be able to play a leading role in supporting SFC work in this area.

COLLABORATION

As previously mentioned, the North East of Scotland continues to face unprecedented and unique challenges as a consequence of the legacy impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, continued disruption caused by BREXIT, the downturn of the Oil and Gas Industry, and the financial crisis that has been exacerbated by the terrible events in Ukraine and recent UK government economic policy.

Whilst these issues are all very different in the way in which they affect the region, with some, such as the shift from oil and gas to renewable and greener forms of energy production, presenting tremendous future opportunities, it is clear that effective collaboration between local authorities, educational institutions, the third sector, and wider industry will be essential in safeguarding the future success and prosperity of Aberdeen City and Aberdeenshire.

NESCol is very much committed to working in partnership with others to address these challenges and ensure the ongoing delivery of sustainable and coherent provision for those progressing from school, looking to re-enter the workplace or for those currently employed looking to diversify or update their skills set.

The College engages regularly with a wide range of key industry partners to ensure that its curriculum continues to meet the needs of employers, is tailored to address skills deficits or industry demand within the region and provides opportunities for those facing redundancy because of the current economic crisis.

NESCol has a number of key collaborative projects ongoing in AY2022-23 including the continued growth and development of NESA, the formal partnership between the College, RGU, UofA, SDS and Energy Transition Zone Ltd (ETZ) which aims to provide the energy industry with a clear gateway to access bespoke qualifications, training and skills development, and the research and development expertise required to train workers for the energy transition. In October 2022, NESA was awarded £1m grant funding through the Scottish Government's Just Transition Fund to conduct an exciting new Pilot Energy Transition Skills project. This will run alongside the NE Pathfinder strand focusing on supporting the energy transition.



The College has secured involvement, subject to Regional Board approval, in ETZ's new Advanced Manufacturing Hub that will be co-located next to the College's Altens Campus. ETZ has secured £4m in Scottish Government Just Transition funding.

Over the coming 2 years, this funding will enable NESAs to determine the skills required to meet the needs of a just energy transition. The research and development project will leverage the North East of Scotland's leading academic institutions to assess the energy transition skills landscape from now until 2030, and design pilot training programmes.

The pilot programmes will support people in joining the energy transition by creating accessible, demand-driven courses to attract new entrants, re-skilling opportunities for people impacted by redundancy or transferring from other sectors such as oil and gas, and up-skilling options to improve regional job retention. The pilot scheme will be a testing ground for innovative and novel delivery methods and pave the way for future large-scale programmes. This project will help establish Scotland's North East and Moray as an energy transition hub, bringing further investment and opportunities to the regions' workforce and communities.

Building on 20 years of joint working and trust, NESCol and RGU are intensifying their partnership with the introduction of enhanced course co-design and joint planning arrangements as part of the SFC's Tertiary Provision Pathfinder Project.

This initiative will accelerate a joint approach to skills and provision planning and development between the two institutions and deliver pathways for learners which respond to changing skills needs in priority sectors for the region. Alongside SFC, SDS will play a key role in supporting this intensified approach to skills and provision working. By working together, the partnership will identify and develop new courses and learning routes which provide the highest quality student experience, as well as promoting widening access and participation for the region.

The extension of the partnership through the pilot will make best use of resources and expertise to build highly effective pathways benefiting learners, employers, the North East region, and beyond.

In addition, the College is working both local universities and Aberdeen City and Aberdeenshire local authorities to deliver a third Pathfinder Project focusing on enhancing provision across the region's senior phase. This project focuses on three tests of change designed to enhance the senior phase:

- *Developing a meaningful winter leaver programme (with progression opportunities)*
- *Introducing HNC (Level 7) group awards to S6*
- *Senior phase - regional connections - creation of a strategic working group, comprising local authorities, College and both local universities. The remit of the group would be to maximise opportunities, as a collective, for the enhancement of the senior phase.*

Recently the College has strengthened its relationship with Jobcentre+ via the creation of a new "Youth Hub" within the City Campus. From this new Hub, DWP Work Coaches are helping young jobseekers access local training and job opportunities, as well as a range of services to address wellbeing needs. This work aligns well with the collaborative work already underway with SDS which sees their advisors working from within the College's Students Advice Centres.

NESCol is also playing an active role in national collaboration and continues to work closely with the Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA) in the development of the Next Generation of Higher National Qualifications. With representation on the National HN Next Gen Steering Board, as well as leading on the development and piloting of two of the new courses, the College is ideally placed to help shape the future direction of these world class and renowned qualifications.

CLIMATE EMERGENCY

The College continues to make considerable progress in addressing the climate emergency working on delivering the actions identified in the College's Carbon Management Plan 2020-2025. NESCol aims to reduce the CO2 emissions from its activities by 50% from the 2018-19 baseline by 2025. A new Sustainability Strategy was launched in July 2022 and sets out the Colleges ambitious target of reaching Net-Zero by 2035.



NESCol fully recognises its responsibilities concerning Environmental and Social Sustainability as an education and training provider, but also as a business, an employer and external partner. The College continues to have representation on the College Development Network Climate Emergency Expert Panel and engages pro-actively with the Environmental Association of Universities and Colleges (EAUC). NESCol is also a partner in the National Energy Skills Accelerator and actively engaged with the North East Energy Transition Zone and the North East Scotland Hydrogen Ambition Board.

For AY2022-23, the College is undertaking several specific actions:

- *The College has secured grant funding to take forward several specific estates projects which will reduce its CO2 footprint, with the Solar PV project completing in early 2023. In addition, funding has been secured from the 'Green Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme' for 2 projects with decisions on a further 2 pending:*
 - *City Campus - South Block glazing - approved*
 - *Fraserburgh Campus - LED lighting - approved*
 - *Altens Campus - double glazing - decision pending*
 - *Building Management System upgrade - decision pending*
- *NESCol has a new Sustainability Strategy, which takes account of the UN Sustainable Development Goals, which will be delivered via the Sustainability Committee.*
- *The College is rolling out sustainability training to all NESCol staff in this academic year.*
- *NESCol are working to meet the requirements of the Deposit and Return Scheme for Scotland Regulations 2020, looking into reverse vending options being in place before the August 2023 deadline.*






CLOSING STATEMENT

NESCol has an integral role in realising the ambitions of the North East Regional Economic Strategy. The College, anchored in Aberdeen and Aberdeenshire with a commitment to shaping the workforce of the future, is proud of its role in the evolution of traditional industries and excited by the opportunities presented by new and emerging sectors.

An engaging, supportive and inclusive learning environment is at the heart of a College experience designed to give every student the opportunity to fulfil their potential in employment and in life as we work together to build a vibrant, innovative and sustainable future.



APPENDIX A - SUPPORTING DATA

College Outcome Agreement Framework: Supporting Data


Measure	Base Year										Forecast
	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23		
A	Credits Delivered (Core)	132,327	137,897	135,312	135,125	130,069	131,296	130,709	128,812		
	Credits Delivered (ESF)	0	3,898	2,881	1,140	2,154	2,433	2,525	1,049	0	
	Credits Delivered (Core + ESF)	132,327	141,795	138,193	136,265	132,223	133,729	134,469	131,758	128,812	
B	Volume of Credits Delivered to 10% most deprived postcode areas	6,257	6,587	7,130	2,928	2,813	2,597	2,395	4,087	3,220	
	Proportion of Credits delivered to 10% most deprived postcode areas	4.7%	4.6%	5.2%	2.1%	2.1%	1.9%	1.8%	3.1%	2.5%	
C	Volume of credits delivered to care-experienced learners	16	982	1,314	1,210	1,296	5,332	8,609	8,744	8,373	
	Proportion of credits delivered to care-experienced learners	0.0%	0.7%	1.0%	0.9%	1.0%	4.0%	6.4%	6.6%	6.5%	
D	Number of senior phase age pupils studying vocational qualifications delivered by colleges	154	277	425	553	567	802	575	597	650	
E1	Proportion of enrolled students successfully obtaining a recognised qualification (Full time FE)	61.9%	67.4%	66.2%	66.6%	64.8%	61.8%	56.7%	56.8%	60%	
	Number of enrolled students successfully obtaining a recognised qualification (Full time FE)	2,459	2,800	2,649	2,704	2,663	2,565	2,127	2,197	2,520	
	Total number of FTE students	3,973	4,152	4,001	4,058	4,112	4,152	3,750	3,857	4,200	
E2	Proportion of enrolled students successfully obtaining a recognised qualification (Part time FE)	62.2%	71.1%	71.2%	69.0%	72.4%	73.4%	71.8%	76.6%	78%	
	Number of enrolled students successfully obtaining a recognised qualification (Part time FE)	5,481	4,142	4,156	3,018	4,118	4,229	4,743	3,208	3,050	
	Total number of PTFE students	8,809	5,827	5,837	4,371	5,687	5,759	6,607	4,183	3,910	
E3	Proportion of enrolled students successfully obtaining a recognised qualification (Full time HE)	72.0%	77.1%	75.0%	74.1%	72.0%	70.4%	71.2%	64.8%	68%	
	Number of enrolled students successfully obtaining a recognised qualification (Full time HE)	1,884	2,101	2,135	1,953	1,772	1,703	1,832	1,482	1,350	
	Total number of FTHE students	2,616	2,724	2,847	2,634	2,460	2,420	2,574	2,286	1,986	
E4	Proportion of enrolled students successfully obtaining a recognised qualification (Part time HE)	82.8%	80.1%	80.1%	79.5%	71.8%	66.9%	83.2%	83.2%	77%	
	Number of enrolled students successfully obtaining a recognised qualification (Part time HE)	1,293	1,245	1,025	744	599	467	546	585	308	
	Total number of PTHE students	1,561	1,554	1,280	936	834	698	656	700	400	
F	Number of students achieving an HNC/D qualification articulating to degree level courses	0	600	673	817	772	675	600		446	
	Number of students achieving an HNC/D qualification articulating to degree level courses with advanced standing	0	411	485	528	453	456	435		324	
	Proportion of students achieving an HNC/D qualification articulating to degree level courses with advanced standing	-	68.5%	72.1%	64.6%	58.7%	67.6%	72.5%		72.7%	
G	Total number of full-time FE college qualifiers (in confirmed destinations)	2,268	2,517	2,467	2,550	2,527	2,169	1,917	1,974	1,977	
	Number of full-time FE college qualifiers in work, training or further study 3-6 months after qualifying	2,042	2,322	2,220	2,415	2,377	2,037	1,849	1,898	1,911	
	Proportion of full-time FE college qualifiers in work, training or further study 3-6 months after qualifying	90.0%	92.3%	90.0%	94.7%	94.1%	93.9%	96.5%	96.1%	96.7%	
	Total number of full-time HE college qualifiers (in confirmed destinations)	1,030	1,177	1,269	1,171	1,065	982	944	738	702	
	Number of full-time HE college qualifiers in work, training or further study 3-6 months after qualifying	850	1,069	1,109	1,125	999	916	913	709	675	
	Proportion of full-time HE college qualifiers in work, training or further study 3-6 months after qualifying	82.5%	90.8%	87.4%	96.1%	93.8%	93.3%	96.7%	96.1%	96.2%	
H	Percentage of students overall satisfied with their college experience (SSES survey)	-	90.6%	90.9%	N/A - see note	93.3%	-	86.2%	90.3%	90.1%	


Please note that 2019-20 figures for measures E, G and H and all 2020-21 figures were impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic and may not be directly comparable to other years

Data not available


Outcome Agreement between North East Scotland College and the Scottish Funding Council for AY 2022-23

On behalf of North East Scotland College:

Signed: 
Print name: NEIL COWIE
Position: Principal and Chief Executive
Date: 28/04/2023

Signed: 
Print name: SUSAN ELSTON
Position: Chair
Date: 28/04/2023

On behalf of the Scottish Funding Council:

Signed: 
Print name: Karen Watt
Position: Chief Executive
Date: 26 July 2023