

# Regional Outcome Agreement 2023-24

## 1. The College Context

The 2023-24 financial situation and the serious fiscal predictions for the future, bring even greater challenges for us as a College to ensure that we fully meet the needs of our Region and make the very best impact with the government funding available. As a College, we aim to continue to provide the highest quality of support, skills development and life enhancing opportunities for all our students and for those who would benefit from the College. In a challenging financial context, we are working to make the necessary savings required for 2023-24 and for the future through more streamlined College processes and staff structures, working to protect and enhance the student learning opportunities and the College quality of experience, where at all possible. This is being supported through several projects and a *'Be the Change'* initiative for staff.

Our role is to ensure that West College Scotland students leave equipped with the skills and knowledge to compete in the jobs market and to make a full contribution to the wellbeing of their families, their communities, and the economic growth of the country. We are working to ensure our College priorities are in line with key national priorities, including the National Strategy for Economic Transformation (NSET). As well as scope, we also have scale. As one of Scotland's largest regional colleges, with over 20,000 students, around 1,000 staff and a turnover of £75 million, ours is a significant organisation in the region and a major employer, uniquely placed to help shape the West Region's educational and skills landscape and contribute to its social and economic development.

The College has received £44.1m to deliver 140,450 credits for academic year 2023-24, a reduction of 10.7% on target credits for last session. This reduction has allowed us to adjust some curriculum to ensure that we focus on key priority areas and deliver best value for money. We welcome the adjusted qualifying date to claim funding for full time students for 2023-24 and this will contribute to the significant costs for recruiting and supporting students in their early weeks. The additional support we provide through the recruitment, induction and start of term is critical for students. We recognise the SFC desire to reduce the credits per full-time student and have taken action to remove some of the additional learning credits we previously claimed as part of courses and the additional guidance unit for HE students. Further reductions have not been possible due to the timing of the SFC credit guidance and having planned our delivery and made commitments to employers and students. We are currently working with SFC around the average credits per student implications for 2023-24 and will contribute to any sector feedback to ensure students are not disadvantaged in their learning or progression in the future.

We have set challenging, but we believe, realistic targets in the accompanying Measurement Table and we will aim to achieve these figures. These are broadly based of figures achieved pre-COVID but we do however recognise the continued volatility of the 2023-24 session, particularly in relation to national industrial relations and the cost-of-living impact on our students. We also recognise the significant increase in students with mental health conditions requiring support to continue to successfully engage in their studies. This may be a challenge for all colleges and our

aim is to retain our above sector success rates for full-time FE and improve our other results against sector benchmarks, particularly compared to Colleges with a similar demographic profiles to our own.

The West College Scotland Corporate Strategy 2019-2025 has four main priority areas: **Personalisation, Collaboration, Agile and Adaptive** and **Digital**. The Strategy was reviewed in 2022-23 with a plan to refresh but it was considered that a more major change may be required to reflect the national education, skills, and financial context. We will be working on this revised strategy during 2023-24.

In responding to the COVID pandemic, the College significantly progressed all our Corporate Strategy priorities, proving to be exceptionally agile and adapting quickly and continually as pandemic conditions changed. We proactively collaborated with others, developed our digital capabilities and capacity, our working practices, curriculum delivery and provided a more tailored and personalised learning experience for our students. COVID has made our role as a College even more critical to ensure that we provide relevant learning opportunities for our students to gain appropriate skills for now and the future and that we contribute to an education-led economic recovery post-COVID in our Region and beyond.

Recruitment to 2023 August start full-time courses has increased, although variable across the curriculum with some areas continuing to show regional decline and others growth in demand. Our increased demand is in line with our Curriculum Strategy but is in the more expensive areas of SCQF4, Construction and Engineering, along with Cyber Security and ESOL. We will continue to increase options for part-time and shorter upskilling courses, including an online and blended format and provide learning for students furthest from the labour market. The College will continue to flex and adapt our curriculum to meet student demand where it exists and work closely with our employer and Local Authority partners in planning provision to meet their needs and those of our communities, within the challenging financial context of the College. Last session, estates issues seriously impacted on many areas of our curriculum in Paisley and the College will be operating with ongoing estates challenges due to the aging estate in Greenock and Paisley. Last session we funded significant voluntary severance in areas where we were able to support changes to delivery or management. Whilst the savings were required as a College and initial reviews show that new structures are working well operationally, we are aware of the stretched management capacity for development.

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 the highest quality learning, teaching, and support. We are an ambitious College, keen to take a leading role in our Region, adapt and innovate. We are committed to our role regionally and nationally in contributing to economic recovery and social renewal and being a responsive and collaborative institution. We believe that our work through COVID and beyond demonstrates this commitment and capability. Our progress and successes in the last few years shows our College's capacity to adapt and respond, with our student needs at the centre.

## **2. Priority area 1: Fair Access and Transitions.**

West College Scotland is committed to ensuring that we provide straightforward and fair access to appropriate learning opportunities for students from all backgrounds and support them to flourish, achieve and progress to further study or to employment. The College has embedded the recommendations of the Commission on Widening Access (COWA) and those within the Blueprint for Fairness Report, particularly in supporting students and young people from deprived areas and those with a Care Experienced background, within the core work of the College.

### **Deprivation**

The West Region has some of the most deprived areas in Scotland and we have always recognised and worked to address the many challenges that our students face in accessing, attending college and achieving full success. We are acutely aware that communities within our Region have been disproportionately impacted by COVID and post-pandemic recovery is challenging. The most deprived area in Scotland is Greenock Town Centre and prior to this, it was Ferguslie in Renfrewshire which remains a seriously deprived community.

Our College contributes to the Scottish widening access agenda with 38% of our students from the 20% most deprived backgrounds in 2022-23. The Scottish widening access target is by that by 2030 20% of entrants to HE will be from SIMD10 and 20. In 2021-22, 37.5% of our HE entrants were from SIMD10 and 20 which was the second largest proportion of any college. In the same year, 38.9% of our HE qualifiers were from the most deprived areas, and this was the highest percentage of any college. Benchmarked data for 2022-23 is not yet available but our proportion of SIMD10 and 20 full time enrolled HE students was 43%.

With one of the highest proportions of students from deprived areas, we are confident in our approaches in promoting access, although we will continue to address any enhancements. Our main challenge remains however, to support these students to attain and progress in line with students from less deprived areas. The current cost of living crisis is impacting even further on these students and those who potentially would benefit from the College but are not able to afford to study with us or to continue to study. We are working to adapt our course attendance patterns and the support available to help enable students to benefit from college whilst in employment or with caring responsibilities.

In line with the Adult Learning Strategy for Scotland (2022-2027) we endeavour to improve life chances for adult learners by providing accessible, flexible local opportunities for learning. We are working in collaboration with our Local Authority partners to deliver shared CLD priorities as outlined in the Community Learning and development plans (2021-2024). College team members are active contributors to strategic and operational groups across all partners.

A new internal partnership approach has been created whereby Learner Development specialist staff work with vocational staff for SCQF4 courses to ensure students at most risk of becoming disengaged are supported, placed on the most appropriate course and provision is more personalised to meet student needs. Post-COVID, an increased proportion of our students require more support in developing their social skills and adapting their behaviour to suit a College environment. This partnership approach joins experienced specialist staff with vocational staff and whilst there is more staff time required to operate the model, it is already showing a positive impact.

## **Care Experienced, Carers and Estranged Students**

The College is committed to the priorities within the SFC's National Ambition for Care-Experienced students and works towards equal outcomes for all. 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, establishes adjustments that may be necessary and ensures these are communicated sensitively to their lecturers. The Named Person carries out regular wellbeing checks with the students and works closely with Local Authorities and external services including Who Cares? Scotland.

The College has a very high number of care experienced students and enhancements have been made to the online application and enrolment forms to allow for earlier identification of Care Experienced applicants. The [Corporate Parenting Action Plan](#) outlines both our existing support practices and our enhancement ambitions. We recognise that there are still significant differences in the attainment levels for Care Experience students and their peers and for 2023-24 we will be providing further staff development and resources to increase awareness and support for these students, including a session for our lecturing staff on our Learning and Teaching Day in August.

## **Equalities**

The College has published our [Equalities Mainstreaming Report 2023](#) which reports on our Equality Outcomes 2021-23. As set out in the report, our Equality Outcomes in the next four years will focus on BAME, Disability, Gender and Gender based Violence, LGBTQIA+ and in the wake of the cost-of-living crisis on individuals who are at a socio-economic disadvantage.

## **School College Partnership**

The College places real value the School College partnership work with all our Local Authority partners to provide vocational opportunities, skills development, and appropriate pathways for young people. The College continues to refresh our College School Partnership offer and takes cognisance of Scottish Government strategies. This partnership programme currently involves the delivery of courses across 5 local authorities involving 35 schools and 1,400 pupils. Some subjects traditionally taught by the college are now taught by the schools themselves but we have increased demand for provision for S3 and 4 and for pupils who have disengaged from school. We continue to have high demand for Construction, Engineering and Motor Vehicle.

The continuation of the ability to claim SFC credit funding for STEM activities for younger pupils is welcomed by the College, the schools and Local Authorities and we will continue to offer valuable opportunities for young people to engage in STEM learning, promote career pathways and gender equality.

## **Articulation and Transitions**

The College is committed to enabling students to progress their learning and to shortening the student journey and by improving articulation to university, where this is appropriate. The latest available published figures show that following successful completion of an HE qualification in the College in 2021-22, 50% of our HE students articulated to degree programmes with advanced standing. This was a reduction on previous percentages (62.4% for 2020-21) but the reduction we believe was impacted by COVID, the availability of employment and the cost-of-living increases and was similar to other colleges.

We have well established articulation pathways and will continue to promote these to students. The University of the West of Scotland remains the College's largest articulation partner by volume, but relations with Glasgow Caledonian University and other universities continue to strengthen. We have worked with all Universities over summer 2023 to ensure our student articulation is not impacted by the EIS-FELA National dispute.

In addition to working on articulation pathways, the College maintains 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 although recent demand for these courses has reduced.

The College is continuing to support student transitions and progression between other institutions and between courses in West College Scotland, including on transitions from SCQF4 courses and schools.

### **3. Priority area 2: Quality learning and teaching**

The College will continue to work to ensure the highest quality of learning experience for students and to enable them to engage, achieve and progress and a safe, supportive environment.

As a College, we are experienced in continually adapting learning and support services to better meet our student needs, particularly in relation to building resilience and improving mental health and wellbeing and this has been recognised externally in many awards. We will continue to support those in digital poverty to provide vital access to digital equipment to enable learning and providing enhanced student support, particularly for health and wellbeing.

Staff are building on the experiences of adapting classroom-based learning into interactive online learning and providing a blended approach for delivery. Curriculum teams report a better level of student engagement through campus-based learning but our learning through COVID has also enabled new ways of working in relation to embracing digital. We started 2023-24 with a strong renewed focus on Learning and Teaching practice with a dedicated CPD day for all lecturers and will be building on this throughout the session with CPD and the development of our Centre for Meta Performance.

Through Evolve, the College's new sector-leading learning experience platform, staff can view and add to their personal learning records and have access to a wide range of learning opportunities, with a mixture of facilitator led and self-directed learning. Evolve has made it easier to identify skills gaps and to close those gaps by taking ownership of individual learning and development. This is working alongside a new approach to reflection on development needs and objective planning 'My Conversations' and through this we aim to support more enhancements and innovations in learning and teaching.

Student Advisory Services, our libraries and Enabling Services have all adapted their practice to provide online access and continued support to students. A new student communication tool 'MyWestApp' has been developed for students. Through digital means, Enabling Services are now able to support a student on any campus and flex their staffing to ensure equity in student access to support, no matter where staff are based. This has helped our efficiencies and response times

to students. Demand for this service continues to grow however and staffing levels are under review to ensure our students receive the support they need.

The College has continued to support students with disabilities, including remote support for our deaf students. Caption.ed (<https://talk-type.com/captioned/>) was implemented in 2020-21. This provides 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.

There is a continued focus on our digital business improvements to enhance the quality of learning and teaching and student experience. 23-24 prioritises business transformation through the adoption of more automation and AI. The Jisc Digital Elevation tool findings have created a valuable baseline for our transformation journey which we are working through.

Our overall student success rates for 2022-23 are not fully known at this time due to the EIS Action Short of Strike impact on resulting, however we had improvements in full time early retention in 2022-23 as a result of increased on campus learning. Our FE retention continued to be better during the year but HE retention was at a similar level to the previous session. We will continue to have a strong focus in 2023-24 on student retention, partial success conversion and supporting full attainment of qualifications, particularly in HE where our rates are lower than national benchmarks.

### **Health and Wellbeing**

Issues with health and wellbeing can have a real impact on learning and we place a strong focus in supporting this area. We recognise that the work we do to support students with health and wellbeing is critical for their success in College and in life. We have seen a significant increase in students declaring that they are a vulnerable group student year on year. In 2023-24, there were 5,700 students who declared a disability, a further increase of almost 500 on the previous year and over 2,500 students reported a mental health condition which was a significant increase from the previous year.

The complexity of student issues and annual increases in students with declared disabilities and with mental health conditions, puts considerable pressure on our Student Services team and lecturing staff in providing the support required. The number of safeguarding referrals increased in 2022-23, with 38% of these with students presenting with suicidal thoughts. In recognition of the critical role our wellbeing team play in the support for students, we mainstreamed the funding for these posts since they are absolutely critical within the College. We welcome very recent announcement of the specific funding for Counsellors in 2023-24 but have budget concerns that this will not continue. We will continue to invest in and protect our student support and minimise the impact of budget cuts on our students, but we recognise the strain placed on our staff overall and our college budget in providing critical student support.

With the significant increase of student support required, in 2022 the College published a new Health and Wellbeing Strategy for both student and staff - RISE. We want to ensure that all our employees and students have the tools, knowledge, skills, and experiences they need to live fulfilled, worthwhile, and happy lives.

We invest in training for Mental Health First Aiders across our teaching and support teams and will also offer trauma informed awareness training for staff in 2023-24. This enables staff to better understand the mental health or trauma related issues faced by both students and staff and complements the work of our Counsellor team. We will continue to invest in face-to-face support through our Student Wellbeing Advisor activities, provide safe space for students and offer a variety of resources to help keep our students on track with their studies and daily life. The College has a WCS Wellbeing page on Instagram and Facebook, updated daily with different local initiatives and highlights local mental health and wellbeing services. We welcome the new addition of an Active Campus Coordinator post in 2023-24, funded in partnership with Sports Scotland.

There is strong evidence of the positive impact of the range of mental health support we provide for students, but we have serious concerns about being able to afford to continue to provide the same critical level of support with the growing student demand and potential reductions in funding in the future.

### **Student Participation and Engagement in their educational experience**

The College works in partnership with the Students' Association (SA) to support and develop the student voice across all areas of curriculum and Support Services.

There was increased engagement in the 2023-24 Student Association elections, aided by the new development of election manifestos for all candidates. We continue to have challenges ensuring that all our student population recognise and engage with the work of the Student Association. To help address this, we changed our model for student representation last session and the 2023 Student Survey showed a 9% increase in the proportion of students who believed that the SA influences change for the better in the College. The Education Scotland Annual Engagement in 2023 highlighted the need to further develop and increase the profile of the SA. We will continue to work with the new Student Association in 2023-24 to support further strengthening of the student voice and student involvement in decision making across our College. The Board recognises the critical role of the student representatives and is working to support their improved engagement in the work of the Board, including through providing mentoring and support for the Student President. A new, earlier induction has been provided for the 2023-24 SA team and they are working with NUS and SPARQs on their 2023-24 SA plan. The students will be working this year on the development of a new Student Engagement Strategy.

## **4. Priority area 3: Coherent Learning Provision**

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

The College is focused on responding to employer needs and prioritising provision for current and future skills requirements. The College Curriculum Strategy 2021-26 sets out the direction of curriculum, including ensuring consistency in course design, with explicit pathways, work integrated learning and the development of core and Meta Skills. It directs the priorities to make our courses more flexible, respond to growth opportunities and revise provision. We are working to grow apprenticeship delivery and standardise the learning approaches and management of SCQF4 provision across the College. Whilst we continue to develop a cross-campus approach to

curriculum development and delivery, the Strategy also recognises the requirement to differentiate our curriculum to meet specific local needs. In meeting the aims of the Strategy, we are adapting resources including accommodation and staffing.

Senior staff participate in Local Authority economic development forums and economic recovery planning to inform and shape the College offer. In a response to COVID and labour market information, we have adjusted our curriculum far more rapidly to respond to demand from students and employers and to take advantage of any additional funding opportunities available. We are continuing to increase our Construction and Engineering offering and meet the increased demand for engineering Apprentices for companies including BAE, Babcock, Fergusons and Dyodes. We are also extending our Health and Social Care apprenticeship delivery and associated sector partnerships, recognising the immediate workforce demands post pandemic and aiming to meet the additional ESOL demand.

The College continues to engage with local Community Planning partners and regional stakeholders in curriculum planning. 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.

As identified in the Education Scotland Annual Engagement Visit April 2023, “Staff use of well-embedded self-evaluation arrangements has been helpful in ensuring systematic review of programmes and the identification of actions for improvement”. Our curriculum review processes are well established and are being strengthened by improved access to internal data through Power BI developments.

We have recognised the requirement to refocus part-time provision where there is increased demand, to rapidly upskill the population in sectors such as Technology, Construction and Care as well as basic entry level employability programmes and this will be key to the College’s and the regional economy’s success. We are experiencing significant demand for English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) courses in the Region and are collaborating with several partners to advance joint opportunities including the Local Authorities, Skills Development Scotland (SDS), Developing the Young Workforce (DYW), Universities, and Third Sector agencies.

During the initial lockdown period in 2020, we scaled up our online learning curriculum to respond to and support the significantly increased demand, particularly from those in the Care sector. Our learning materials to support upskilling for those working in Care, with children or to support mental health proved to be very relevant to meet the needs of online learners at that time and we continue to have high demand.

West College Scotland plays an active role in local stakeholder partnerships and groups, including Inverclyde, Renfrewshire, and West Dunbartonshire Local Enterprise Partnerships. This enabled



the College to contribute towards the investment plan submitted by the Glasgow City Region, on behalf of 8 local authority area partnerships, to the UK Government Shared Prosperity Fund. Providing funds over a three-year period, this will lever significant investment to deliver projects and training that will make a scalable impact to our students, local businesses, and communities. From this, we plan to deliver approved projects to support jobseekers develop skills to access roles in the local care, hospitality and tourism economies, as well as business upskilling and entrepreneurial support for local people.

### **Upskilling and Reskilling**

Our upskilling and reskilling portfolio continues to grow reflecting the growing need for organisations within our region to have an agile workforce to respond to the changing economic context and continued focus on economic recovery and productivity growth. There has been and will continue to be significant expansion of our short course offer, online learning offering and continuous professional development training packages. The College will aim to fully deliver its remaining 22-23 FWDF allocation of training resources, however it should be noted that the lack of any FWDF for 23-24 will have a significant impact on our employer relationships and the ability to meet workforce development demands within our region. Notwithstanding this, we will endeavour to extend our industry and partner relationships working closely with our local Chambers of Commerce, the Federation of Small Businesses, SDS and CPP partners to maximise the impact and range of organisations being engaged.

## **5. Priority area 4: Work-based Learning and Skills**

West College Scotland has a three-year Modern Apprenticeship growth plan in place, which builds upon our strong employers and stakeholder partnerships, as well as developing new work-based learning and apprenticeship opportunities that respond to regional demand, national and international trends. We are committed to growing our apprenticeship portfolio through the management of our contract with Skills Development Scotland, as well as through our arrangements with managing agents CITB, SNIPEF and SECTT, and other sub-contracting arrangements with employers in the public and private sector.

From our assessment of the regional skills and labour market, we know that caring roles remain the most popular occupation in the region and will remain so in the medium to long term, with both short and long-term forecasts for jobs in the region show that the greatest net increase will be in job roles in Health and Social Work. Manufacturing is, and will remain, the largest sector by GVA in the region, with engineering, process manufacturing, and leather production and technology remaining key pillars of our regional economy; where the concentration of the latter is a unique feature of our region and West College Scotland is the sector's provider of choice.

In 2022-23, the College supported and delivered Modern Apprenticeships to a greater number of apprentices, across 11 different occupational groups and 18 frameworks, and a range of ages and qualification levels, placing us in the Top 5 of Scotland's colleges by breadth of provision. For 2023-24, we have secured almost 300 MA places via our SDS contract, providing us with an opportunity to increase the number of new apprenticeships starts by c.20%, from supporting 246 new apprenticeship starts last year, and we have also renewed our managing agent and employer partnership arrangements at increased volumes.

One of our primary objectives is to increase the number of employer partners, in turn increasing the number of new apprenticeships starts, in Care, Engineering, Leather Production and Technology. Further opportunities exist for us to increase our employer profile within both Life Sciences and Pharmacy Services. In addition, within an expanded Care portfolio, we are uniquely placed, as a college and training provider, to build upon our excellent track record working with the NHS, and increase the number of new start apprentices, increasing our reach, as well as diversifying into the pharmacy retail sector.

We are working closely with employers and adapt provision where required to provide the very best opportunities for our students to be prepared to enter employment and contribute to the economic development of our Region and Scotland. All our courses are designed to develop employability skills and we have a clear focus on core, digital and Meta Skills. Significant work is being done to help staff and students identify, embed, and evaluate Meta Skill development in student learning and within courses to flourish in current or future employment. This is being undertaken through our Centre for Meta Performance and the development of a new Meta Skills tracker for students. There are significant work experience elements in courses and the College works closely with employers to provide students either with placements, live project working or provide simulated work-experience within the College. In the 2022-23 student survey, 94% of our students reported that their courses had allowed them to develop the knowledge and skills for the workplace which was a 2% increase on the previous session.

The College works in partnership with Skills Development Scotland (SDS) to provide students with access to careers advice and other services related to career management skills.

The College continues to work collaboratively to promote Foundation Apprenticeships to school pupils across the region, however recruitment continues to be difficult and is declining despite some individual positive outcomes such as a WCS engineering FA student being awarded Foundation Apprentice of the year in 2022. We have however, seen an increase in interest in Level 5 FAs rather than Level 6.

### **Knowledge Exchange, Innovation and Enterprise**

Recognising that our students need to be capable of enterprising and entrepreneurial behaviour to cope with increased uncertainty and complexity, as well as supporting their entrepreneurial aspirations, West College Scotland's Corporate Strategy matches the ambitions and priorities of The Entrepreneurial Campus in supporting the development of an entrepreneurial, innovative and agile mindset in both our staff and students. To support this, the College will continue to be a partner with Bridge 2 Business and jointly deliver opportunities to develop relevant skills, knowledge and experience, and offer wrap around support and resources to support students to start their own business.

We had hoped to have the College Knowledge Exchange and Innovation Fund (KEIF) resources to support our, and the Scottish Government's, innovation ambitions, however, to date there has been no allocation of funding to the college sector thereby limiting our capacity and capability to fully engage with Scotland's innovation infrastructure initiatives. We are hopeful that this may be addressed in year.

Funding has been sought through other non-SFC sources including the Ecosystem and Pathways funds to develop early start-up interventions for under-represented groups, and co-curricular

opportunities for students and staff to learn and experience how to succeed as an entrepreneur. In supporting the Entrepreneurial Campus ambitions, we are also planning to further develop our partnership with Techscaler to build cross-curricular capacity in entrepreneurship for our staff through the Techscaler Community and provide access, mentorship and support for staff to complete the Techscaler Startup programme.

For 2023-24, the College will work with a small Scotland wide consortium of colleges on a project funded by The Gatsby Foundation to understand and analyse the depth of employer engagement in the sector, with an emphasis on support provided by Scottish Colleges to start-ups and the SME sector; articulate ways colleges engage with businesses to support the adoption and diffusion of innovation, review the Knowledge Transfer Partnership (KTP) model in the context of Scottish Colleges, help inform the Innovate UK Further Education Innovation Fund from a Scottish context; support the potential of Scottish Colleges to support businesses to innovate; provide a unique College approach to innovation creating breadth, depth and strength to boost Scottish innovation. The College is also establishing relationships with colleges in Northern Ireland, England and Wales to map a four nations college approach to innovation and enterprise.

### **Supporting Place, Industry and Skills**

The size and diversity of our upskilling, reskilling and work-based portfolio, coupled with the scale of our employer relationships, continues to provide a strong foundation for supporting our Region's industry and workforce ambitions. West College Scotland has been instrumental in bridging the gap between employers, industry and skills alignment in a number of our key growth sectors particularly in Healthcare and Engineering Technologies.

Recognising the need for a flexible workforce that meets the requirements of the General Pharmaceutical Council (GPhC) and employers in Scotland, we continue to take a leadership role in designing developing and delivering the Diploma in Pharmacy Services. To ensure accessibility to a wider range of employers, we engaged in extensive collaboration with various key industry stakeholders, including NHS Education for Scotland (NES), the Scottish Qualification Authority (SQA), the General Pharmaceutical Council, CDN and the Scottish Government. This collaborative effort enables the College to extend and share our expertise with other colleges across Scotland, developing resources and a unique approach to learning beyond traditional college boundaries. This sharing of knowledge and best practice has been a pioneering approach to cross sector collaboration helping to ensure a pan-Scotland skilled workforce for the future in pharmacy.

Our newly established Advanced Manufacturing Centre (AMC) at our Paisley campus has been launched for the start of our 2023-24 academic year to create a regional skills hub, embedding capacity, capability and infrastructure which will enable us to widen access manufacturing companies to expertise, equipment and skills through a combination of online, college and work-based learning, continuing access to expertise, equipment, innovation support and collaboration opportunities, including with the National Manufacturing Institute for Scotland (NMIS).

In line with our growth aspirations, the College is diligently expanding its capacity and capability to deliver training and skills through diverse modes, including online, in-person, and blended formats, while also focusing on the expansion of Micro-Credentials and the development of smaller qualifications. This approach ensures that we can effectively address the unique demands

of every business we serve, offering tailored and flexible learning solutions to meet their specific needs and in alignment with the SFC Sustainability Review recommendations.

## **6. Priority are 5: Net Zero and Environmental sustainability response**

In October 2022, the Board of Management approved the College Sustainability Strategy. The Board noted that the Strategy set out the intended direction of travel which the College planned to take in addressing the global climate challenge. The Board also noted that without significant investment by the Scottish Government, several of the objectives within the Strategy would prove difficult, if not impossible to achieve.

The Scottish Colleges' Statement of Commitment on the Climate Emergency highlights how college staff and students are working together to achieve a more sustainable future for Scotland. It includes 10 key actions, which have been developed to support Scotland's efforts to achieve net-zero climate emissions by 2045, and Scotland's colleges are aiming to achieve net-zero by 2040, or earlier. The West College Scotland Sustainability Strategy embeds the 10 key aims, along with adopting the main actions from the Roadmap.

The Strategy contains five objectives with a high-level delivery plan for each objective being noted within the Strategy. The five objectives are:

- Leadership and Governance
- Teaching and Learning
- Estates and Operations
- Partnerships and Engagement
- Carbon reduction and data collection

The College has created a Sustainability Oversight Group chaired by the Principal with membership of staff, students and union representatives. The Group met three times during 2022-23 and has a schedule of meetings planned for 2023-24. The actions contained within the Sustainability Strategy have been transferred onto the Pentana management system and an annual report on progress will be considered by the Corporate Development Committee and then the Board of Management.

The College has continued to comply with its annual reporting requirements under the 'Climate Change (Duties of Public Bodies; Reporting Requirements) (Scotland) Order 2015' to submit an annual report on compliance with climate change duties. A copy of the latest report can be found on the Sustainable Scotland website. The 2021-22 report records the continued progress of the College to reduce the overall level of emissions recording that the College reduced the level of carbon dioxide emissions by 2,415 tonnes or 46% during the year to 31 July 2022 compared to the 2014-15 base year. The 2021-22 report also highlights the projects and initiatives undertaken during the past year. The College is currently working on the 2022-23 report which will be submitted by the required 30 November 2023 deadline.

Going forward the College, through the Sustainability Oversight Group, will look to:

- Promote the College's commitment to ensure a sustainable future for the organisation in both the content of its teaching and support operations.

- Distribute widely the impacts that the College has on the environment through communicating the level of emissions and what staff and students can do to reduce these emissions.
- Continue to monitor the impacts of the connection to the Clydebank district heating system, along with investigating the availability of infrastructure support funding.
- Monitor the impacts of the “Paper Lite” initiative which aims to reduce further the level of paper and printing undertaken in the College.
- Increase the level of recycling of waste within the College through an initial waste audit and then tendering for a new waste contract.
- Implement several projects to reduce electricity use including a continuation of the ‘Switch Off’ campaign and powering down IT equipment.
- Work with the Student Association on the promotion of active travel.

The College continues to be a Sector Leader in delivering training in green energy, including training for solar energy, electric vehicle charging, heat pumps and smart controls. During 2022-23 we successfully audited the curriculum against the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and gathered over 190 examples of good practice. We will work with curriculum teams throughout 2023-24 to further embed the SDGs across the curriculum. This audit will now be conducted annually. Some staff during 2022-23 engaged in professional development offered by the College Development Network. We also engaged successfully in the Global Teaching in Week in March 2023 with several green events (speakers, exhibitions/stands, workshops) taking place on each campus. We are committed to developing our green skills portfolio and will continue to work with partners to design new transition to Net Zero programmes. For example, we have begun working with Built Environment: Smarter Transformation (BE:ST) and have plans in place during 2023-24 to develop provision around retrofit as well as accelerating our commitment to developing skills and the curriculum for the transition to Net Zero.

**Outcome Agreement between West College Scotland and the Scottish Funding Council for AY 2023-24**

**On behalf of West College Scotland**

Signed:

Print name: Liz Connolly

Position: Principal and Chief Executive

Date: 27 November 2023

Signed:



Print name: Waiyin Hatton

Position: Chair

Date: 29 Nov 2023

**On behalf of the Scottish Funding Council:**

Signed:



Print name: Karen Watt

Position: Chief Executive

Date: 15 January 2024

