

Newbattle Abbey College Outcome Agreement



2021-22 Outcome Agreement

1. Introduction

This 2021-22 Outcome Agreement outlines Newbattle Abbey College's contribution to the delivery of Scottish Government priorities and our response to the needs of learners during the unprecedented challenges of the past two years. It also includes our achievements and aspirations as Scotland's national adult learning college. The support and advice from our Board of Directors and Trustees have been essential in enabling the college to adapt and develop during the periods of lockdown. The commitment of staff in all teams has ensured that our students continued to progress, despite the difficulties we faced.

Newbattle received approximately 48% of its annual income from SFC in 2020-21. This has increased to 58% in 2021-22, with the remaining 42% being generated through corporate activities and curriculum developments, funded by other sources. The impact of the pandemic has had a major effect on corporate business, which has been significantly reduced since March 2020.

As a national adult education college, Newbattle continues to play a major role in the development of adult learning in Scotland. We do this through our contribution to the Adult Learning Strategic Forum and to the development of the national strategy for adult learning, due to be launched in spring 2022.

As detailed below, the college has extended its curriculum through strategic partnerships with a range of local and national organisations.

2. Our Curriculum

Our curriculum reflects the priorities of our 2016-20 Strategic Plan https://www.newbattleabbeycollege.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/02/NAC_Strategic_Plan_2016-20_.pdf

It also reflects the priorities detailed in the 2020-21 Strategic Plan, endorsed by the Board. A new Strategic Plan is being finalised for 2022-26.

In 2021-22 SFC funding will be used to support the delivery of the following courses:

- 1 year full-time Access to HE Arts & Social Sciences - SCQF Level 6
- 1 year full-time Access to HE Arts & Social Sciences (Primary Education), SCQF Level 6, in partnership with Queen Margaret University

- 1 year full-time Access to HE (Celtic Studies) - SCQF Level 6
- 1 year full-time HNC Social Sciences (SCQF Level 7), an Associate Degree with Queen Margaret University
- 1 year full-time National Certificate in Rural Skills (SCQF Level 4)
- 6 month full-time Preparation for FE Course (SCQF Level 4), in partnership with Midlothian Council

In 2021-22 we also plan to deliver:

- Adult Achievement Awards (SCQF Levels 2-6) to over 200 learners across Scotland
- Forest and Outdoor Learning Awards (SCQF Levels 2-8) to over 200 learners across Scotland
- short courses in Gaelic language, Rural Skills and Beekeeping

In response to the pandemic and to extend accessibility, we prioritised digital development in our 2020-21 capital programme for the benefit of students and staff. This digital programme is now complete and includes: improved infrastructure and connectivity across the college; an additional platform for learning through the development of a Virtual Learning Environment; extended professional development in digital skills for staff across the college. Plans are also underway for a collaboration with Borders College to take space on their MIS. This will be implemented in academic year 2022-23.

3. Promoting Fair Access and Transitions

Since its inception in 1937, Newbattle has demonstrated the value of promoting access to adult learners, particularly those facing major barriers to learning. In the past ten years, we have also extended access to younger learners at points of transition in schools and in the community. All of our courses reflect successful collaboration with local and national partners: colleges, universities, community learning and development services, training providers and third sector organisations. Throughout 2020-21, our courses were delivered on a blended learning basis, with students returning to campus at the start of academic year 2021-22. However, there was a brief transition to remote learning at the end of 2021 and the majority of learners continued their studies online until the end of January 2022. Rural Skills students continued to attend college on a reduced timetable and students who required pastoral support were invited to attend one-to-one sessions.

The return to face-to-face learning has had challenges with a number of withdrawals and the need for both staff and students to self-isolate. However, efforts to support students through Semester 2 were intensified with opportunities for both academic and pastoral support.

Despite these challenges, we set ourselves the following delivery priorities for 2021-22:

- Our credit target is 921, and this has been achieved. We are keen to extend our SFC credit allocation, given our continuing success in exceeding annual targets.
- Our successful Preparation for FE Course has been co-designed with Midlothian Council to offer progression to adults engaged in community-based programmes. For the past 9 years this course has offered a supportive curriculum pathway to adults with few qualifications, for whom one year full-time courses are not feasible for a variety of reasons. Prior to the pandemic, over 80% of students progressed to full-time courses at Newbattle or other colleges.
- Our Access to HE Primary Education Course, with a progression pathway to the BA Education Studies at Queen Margaret University, demonstrated another successful partnership with higher education.
- Through successful collaboration with a range of partners, in 2021-22, 94 credits (10%) in the above courses were delivered to learners in SIMD 10 areas. This is an increase from 55 credits (5.9%) in 2020-21. 168 credits (18%) were delivered to care-experienced learners, an increase from 146 credits (15%) in 2020-21.
- In addition, 13.3% of the 203 learners who completed Adult Achievement Awards in 2020-21 were from SIMD 10 areas. These awards, which are not funded by SFC, offer adults accreditation for their learning in a range of locations and promote access and progression. We received funding from the Scottish Government as part of the Community Based Adult Learning COVID Recovery Fund to run a new programme 'Prescribe Nature', promoting mental health, reducing social isolation and improving employability. Participants in this course are working towards an Adult Achievement Award.
- Attainment across all courses funded by SFC in 2020-21 was 72%, a decrease of 20% on the previous year. 8.3% of students were from SIMD 10 areas and 16.7% were care-experienced. Attainment across all courses funded by SFC for 2021-22 improved to 78%.
- In 2021-22 we received funding through the Young Person's Guarantee (YPG). Our Forest College team delivered FOLAs to over 90 pupils in S4 across six schools in Midlothian who were at risk of leaving school with few or no qualifications. Plans are in place to continue this initiative in 2022-23.
- We engaged with Mayfield & Easthouses Youth 2000 Project (known as Y2K). This is a small youth led community project working with disadvantaged young people. We delivered FOLAs helping them gain skills and improving their confidence.
- We received a small allocation of funding from FWDF and have used this to fund places on our 2022 FOLA 8 Leadership Award.

4. Quality Learning, Teaching and Student Participation

Throughout 2021-22, the Learning & Teaching Team have been on campus to deliver the curriculum whenever possible. During the period of semi-lockdown late 2021/early 2022 this was through online learning, with some face-to-face delivery for practical subjects, where feasible. Methodology included: online teaching via Zoom and Teams; enhanced online guidance and extended Support for Learning; health and wellbeing support; extensive online support materials

The Learning and Teaching Team continued to meet weekly to support students experiencing particular difficulties. All learners had Individual Learning Plans and all students with an identified need had a Personal Learning Support Plan.

Scottish Government funding enabled the college to extend ICT resources to students to allow them to access the curriculum. The timetable was also adjusted to enable students and teaching staff with caring responsibilities to work flexibly. Despite this, some of our students experienced difficulties in working online and required additional support. This was offered in a variety of ways:

- ICT/PC Passport session as part of Induction
- ICT drop-ins/individual support (face to face and virtual)
- loaned equipment - chrome books/laptops and assistive technology, if required

Additional counselling was also available to students and staff, through a paid subscription to an online health and wellbeing portal (TogetherAll) and an online counselling referral service via Health in Mind Scotland. A Mental Health Team, involving staff and students, has now been set up and the Student Representative Council (SRC) includes a Mental Health representative. The college has also committed to the Mental Health Agreement, in partnership with NUS Scotland.

The college quality cycle ensured that the student learning experience remained positive and that the student voice was clearly represented. Quality measures included:

- fortnightly meetings with Education Scotland
- a programme of virtual Quality Days
- mid-unit student evaluation and focus groups
- weekly online SRC meetings

In early 2022 a Microsoft Teams 'Quality' area was established and this is being regularly updated by Learning & Teaching. The objective is to support the development of a robust quality assurance process that supports effective attainment.

A Progress Visit was scheduled to take place in January 2022. The five overarching themes to be explored are linked to the College's enhancement plan and priorities around COVID-19 recovery. These themes are:

Outcomes and impact
Leadership and quality culture
Curriculum
Delivery of learning and services to support learning
Learner engagement

The Depute Principal leads on the preparation for this visit and ensures representative staff and students are available to meet with Education Scotland and all necessary data is collated.

SRC office bearers represent the student body on various college committees to help improve the quality of all aspects of college life. Students were also represented on the fortnightly COVID-19 Working Group meetings, a forum for consultation and engagement with staff and students on health and safety arrangements. A Student Partnership Agreement has enhanced student participation and engagement. Students have also gained from SPARQS training and from NUS membership, which was finalised last session. In 2022, we became part of the NUS Think Positive initiative which aims to help create a more joined up student mental health support sector.

As a result of these measures, student retention and attainment in 2020-21 remained relatively positive, given national circumstances.

- Our retention across all full-time FE courses was 78%. This represents a 12% decrease on our 2019-20 figures.
- Attainment across all courses funded by SFC was 72% in 2020-21, a decrease of 20% on the previous year. In 2021-22 attainment across all courses improved to 78%.

Student progression, based on college figures, remained positive, despite the impact of the pandemic. 90% of all students who successfully completed their courses progressed to a positive destination in further education, higher education, employment or volunteering.

Our students valued the supportive environment of the college throughout the challenges experienced in 2020-21, as noted in the comments below:

- *Nothing was too much trouble for the staff. The content of the course opened my eyes to opportunities and set me up for my future studies at university.*
- *I think the size of the college and all the staff at Newbattle are what sets it apart from other colleges and of course the building itself! I had a far better college experience than I had anticipated.*
- *The lecturers - the support and encouragement they offer and the fact that they genuinely want everyone to succeed, are what makes the college stand out. A student is only as good as their teacher. They go above and beyond their job descriptions.*
- *I loved everything. The staff are amazing. They worked extremely hard to ensure we achieved our best and supported us during these uncertain times.*

Student evaluation of our 2021-22 induction programme was also very positive. Mid Unit Evaluations and Focus Groups continue to be held to provide further student evaluation on all aspects of college life.

The college continues to monitor student engagement, retention and attainment closely to maximise student success and progression.

5. Equalities and Inclusion

In 2020-21, the college made progress in extending support to learners from different protected characteristics. This was mainly achieved through the work of our Equalities and Diversity Group and our Learning & Teaching Team. Statistics relating to learners from different protected characteristics are detailed below:

- ethnicity: 250 credits (26.8%)
- disability: 476 credits (51.07%)
- male: 436 credits (46.78%)
- female: 481 credits (51.61%)
- care-experienced: 68 credits (7.3%)

It has been challenging during Covid restrictions to ensure the involvement of Learning & Teaching, Support Staff and Students with our Equalities & Diversity Group. This will be a priority for the new academic year.

See also the link to our Equalities Mainstreaming Report:

<https://www.newbattleabbeycollege.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/06/Equalities-Outcome-Report.pdf>

The gender balance across all courses in 2020-21 was 46.8% male, 51.6% female and 1.6% other. This compares with 43.5% male, 56.5% female and 0% other in 2019-20.

We have had limited success in enrolling female students on our Rural Skills Course, despite extended marketing and community engagement. In 2021-22, however, we enrolled 3 students on the NC Rural Skills Course and 13 female volunteers were involved in our Forest College volunteer programme. In addition, our Forest and Outdoor Learning Awards are included in the BA Education Studies at Queen Margaret University. In 2020-21, 89% of students studying on this course were female.

The gender balance in our Board of Directors is 76% male and 24% female. In 2020-21, the three members of our senior management team were female. However, a male Principal was appointed in November 2021, following the retirement of the previous incumbent. The college has now established a cross-college reporting system in relation to gender-based violence and a student forum group has met to

discuss this issue. In 2020-21, there were no reports of gender-based violence. Our Gender Action Plan is available at:

<https://www.newbattleabbeycollege.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/06/Newbattle-Abbey-College-GAP-excerpts-from-the-AY-2019-22-OA.pdf>

We have also implemented a Menopause Policy to support female staff and students.

6. Public Health Emergency

The college community has responded well in the past 2 years to minimise the effects of the pandemic on students and staff. With support from our Health & Safety Consultant, we produced COVID Guidelines for a safe return to college following the first lockdown. These worked well last session and were amended in September 2021, in alignment with national guidance. The guidelines have been followed by staff and students and monitored fortnightly through a Covid Working Group, involving students and representatives from all staff teams. This enabled the curriculum to be delivered effectively in 2020-21, using a blended learning approach. Direct teaching resumed for SCQF Level 4 courses in April 2021 and for all students in September 2021. Students are also encouraged to support their peers in taking responsibility for their own and safety and the safety of all members of the college community.

As indicated in section 2, the online methodology demanded during the periods of lockdown enhanced staff expertise but also highlighted the need for further digital development across the college. These include developing a virtual learning environment for students and staff, data transformation to Cloud, refreshing networks and upgrading hardware.

The Senior Management Team have met with JISC and have engaged with their Building Digital Capability service. Plans are ongoing to involve staff and students in this initiative which will develop digital skills across the college.

7. Learning with Impact through Collaboration

As a national adult education college, Newbattle has always developed successful partnerships with local and national agencies. These were extended in 2020-21 in a variety of ways:

- We were awarded funding from the Midlothian Community Mental Health Support and Services Framework Covid Response Fund to support the mental health of vulnerable young people in Midlothian through outdoor learning programmes. We now work with all 6 secondary schools in Midlothian to plan and deliver this programme. In addition to supporting mental health and wellbeing, this partnership enables learners to achieve a Forest and Outdoor Learning Award, improve core skills and enhance employability.

- We also continued to work with Midlothian Council to deliver a family learning project and to extend the Rural Skills programme for adult offenders. These were delayed by the pandemic but resumed in June 2021. The continuing success of this programme has enabled learners to progress to full-time programmes at Newbattle.
- Newbattle continues to play a leading role in promoting Gaelic language and culture. Our ongoing partnership with Sabhal Mòr Ostaig has enabled us to enrich the Celtic Studies curriculum by offering students a residential Gaelic language programme in Skye. Likewise, successful partnerships with local and national Gaelic organisations, have enabled the college to offer Gaelic language courses in the community. Funding from Bòrd Na Gàidhlig has supported a partnership project with Newbattle and Ceòlas in South Uist to develop the Gaelic language skills of staff in early years education.
- The pandemic resulted in the postponement of the national adult learning conference scheduled for 2020, which would have been the 8th successive national event hosted by Newbattle. However, in partnership with Colleges Development Network, Newbattle hosted an online international conference in May 2021 to celebrate the 700th anniversary of the Declaration of Arbroath, which was drafted at Newbattle.
- Our Forest College programme involves partnership with 12 Approved Centres to deliver Forest and Outdoor Learning Awards at SCQF Levels 2-8 across the country. As well as supporting the green agenda, the awards develop skills to support employability and have extended college partnerships with outdoor learning businesses.
- Our Adult Achievement Awards have continued to expand and we now work with 17 partner organisations across the country. The awards have been included successfully in some of our own full-time courses. They offer access and progression to learners with few or no qualifications in areas of deprivation across Scotland.

To extend learning pathways and respond to the national economic recovery, the college has a number of plans to develop the curriculum in 2021-22 and beyond, including:

- deliver accredited outdoor learning short courses, in partnership with Midlothian Council and Forestry and Land Scotland, to enhance the employability of young people and adults in our local community
- develop an HNC in Childhood Practice with Outdoor Learning, in partnership with Queen Margaret University
- develop an HNC Course (Learning in the Community) in partnership with the University of Edinburgh
- extend our corporate market in outdoor learning programmes for businesses and community groups
- explore further online opportunities for curriculum delivery in relation to all of our programmes

- develop learning programmes, in partnership with local medical centres, to enable adults to participate in outdoor learning within the culture of social prescribing
- develop micro credentials to enhance our current Rural Skills programme for adult offenders in Midlothian to enhance employability

These development plans are being reviewed on an ongoing basis as the pandemic continues, and as a result of the recent changes in leadership and senior management.

We have demonstrated the success of our Rural Skills and Awards programmes in promoting access and progression and offering national accreditation to marginalised learners. We have also exceeded our credit targets over the past 5 years. We continue to seek additional SFC credits to achieve the ambitions outlined above and respond to national economic recovery.

8. Climate Emergency

The college continues to make progress in this area. With capital funding from SFC, we introduced LED lighting and insulation in teaching areas and student communal areas. We also introduced instant hot water heaters in the kitchen and student toilets in the main building and in student communal areas. Roof and window repairs throughout the main building have also reduced energy costs.

Our Green Team, which includes students and staff, focuses on sustainability across the college. It responds to the 17 Sustainable Development Goals of the United Nations through actions designed to have a local and worldwide impact. Rural Skills students play a key role in putting their new skills into practice across the college estate. Our Forest College volunteers and course participants have enhanced the woodland environment for the college and the wider community.

The impact of the Coronavirus on all aspects of society has highlighted the importance of outdoor learning in supporting sustainability and promoting the health and wellbeing of people of all ages. We are very well placed to respond to the Scottish Government focus on the green agenda and sustainability. Our Forest College programme offers accredited learning options to a wide range of learners across Scotland, including:

- 3-18 pupils and staff
- 16-24 year olds
- adult returners
- Third Age learners
- outdoor learning practitioners
- corporate clients

The Rural Skills programme and Forest and Outdoor Learning Awards are delivered in our 125 acre estate and in community locations. Our Community Woodland Ranger and Forest College Co-ordinator have continued to engage people of all ages in outdoor learning and volunteering. This community involvement has

increased significantly since the start of the pandemic. Our outdoor learning facilities, established through SFC capital funding, have enabled us to extend curriculum and commercial opportunities.

While the impact of the Coronavirus continues to have an adverse effect on college income, Newbattle is well placed to emerge from the challenges of the past 2 years with confidence. Support from SFC and our Trustees has greatly enhanced the condition of the main building, outdoor teaching areas and student residency. Our staff expertise and our successful collaboration with partners offer major opportunities to respond to the green agenda through curriculum and corporate developments. Although challenging, online delivery of the curriculum has enhanced the skills and creativity of staff. These skills will be valuable in developing our digital development programme. Likewise, the difficulties faced by all members of our college community have strengthened our collective commitment to work together for the continuing development of Newbattle Abbey College.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Brian Lister', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Signed:

Brian Lister, Chair of Board
29 November 2021

College Outcome Agreement Impact Framework: Supporting Data

Measure	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22
A Credits Delivered (Core)	1,220	1,320	833	1,190	1,148	1,237	932	921
Credits Delivered (ESF)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Credits Delivered (Core + ESF)	1,220	1,320	833	1,190	1,148	1,237	932	921
B Volume of Credits Delivered to 10% most deprived postcode areas	40	80	64	50	70	147	55	94
Proportion of Credits delivered to 10% most deprived postcode areas	3.3%	6.1%	7.7%	4.2%	6.1%	11.9%	5.9%	10.0%
C Volume of credits delivered to care-experienced learners	0	0	0	84	16	189	146	168
Proportion of credits delivered to care-experienced learners	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	7.1%	1.4%	15.3%	15.7%	18.0%
D Number of senior phase age pupils studying vocational qualifications delivered by colleges	0	0	0	0	0	10	3	0
E1 Proportion of enrolled students successfully obtaining a recognised qualification (Full time FE)	78.6%	68.6%	77.4%	52.1%	75.0%	54.3%	66.0%	78.0%
Number of enrolled students successfully obtaining a recognised qualification (Full time FE)	55	48	41	38	54	44	35	65
Total number of FTFE students	70	70	53	73	72	81	53	70
E2 Proportion of enrolled students successfully obtaining a recognised qualification (Part time FE)	-	-	100.0%	-	-	-	80.0%	0.0%
Number of enrolled students successfully obtaining a recognised qualification (Part time FE)	0	0	12	0	0	0	8	0
Total number of PTFE students	0	0	12	0	0	0	10	0
E3 Proportion of enrolled students successfully obtaining a recognised qualification (Full time HE)	82.4%	64.3%	78.9%	66.7%	66.7%	73.7%	80.8%	80.0%
Number of enrolled students successfully obtaining a recognised qualification (Full time HE)	14	9	15	16	18	14	21	11
Total number of FTHE students	17	14	19	24	27	19	26	13
E4 Proportion of enrolled students successfully obtaining a recognised qualification (Part time HE)	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	0.0%
Number of enrolled students successfully obtaining a recognised qualification (Part time HE)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total number of PTHE students	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
F Number of students achieving an HNC/D qualification articulating to degree level courses	0	7	9	13	16	16	16	11
Number of students achieving an HNC/D qualification articulating to degree level courses with advanced standing	0	6	8	11	15	12	13	11
Proportion of students achieving an HNC/D qualification articulating to degree level courses with advanced standing	-	85.7%	88.9%	84.6%	93.8%	75.0%	81.3%	84-6%
G Total number of full-time FE college qualifiers (in confirmed destinations)	42	40	45	36	50	0		51
Number of full-time FE college qualifiers in work, training or further study 3-6 months after qualifying	41	34	44	36	47	0		51
Proportion of full-time FE college qualifiers in work, training or further study 3-6 months after qualifying	97.6%	85.0%	97.8%	100.0%	94.0%	-		90.0%
Total number of full-time HE college qualifiers (in confirmed destinations)	13	9	8	16	18	0		11
Number of full-time HE college qualifiers in work, training or further study 3-6 months after qualifying	13	9	8	16	18	0		11
Proportion of full-time HE college qualifiers in work, training or further study 3-6 months after qualifying	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	-		100
H Percentage of students overall satisfied with their college experience (SSES survey)	-	-	95.7%	N/A - see note	94.9%	-		100.0%

Please note that figures for 2020-21 are impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic and may not be directly comparable to other years



Outcome Agreement between Newbattle Abbey College and the Scottish Funding Council for AY 2021-22

On behalf of Newbattle Abbey College:

Signed:

Print name: Roddy Henry

Position: Principal and Chief Executive

Date: 1st June 2022

Signed:

Print name: Brian Lister

Position: Chair

Date: 1st June 2022

On behalf of the Scottish Funding Council:

Signed:

Print name: Karen Watt

Position: Chief Executive

Date: 28 July 2022