

Solihull College & University Centre
and Stratford-upon-Avon College

STRATEGIC PLAN 2022-2025

Impact and Progress

Update 1

January to July 2023



Solihull College
& University Centre

Stratford-upon-Avon
College





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Foreword

It is with great pleasure and pride that we introduce the first 6-month update to our 2022-2025 Strategic Plan. As we review our journey over the past half-year, we are delighted to report that we have made significant strides towards realising each of our five strategic ambitions. This update provides an opportunity for us to reflect on our accomplishments, recognise the dedication of our college community, and chart our course for the upcoming six months. It also gives us the opportunity to publicly share our progress and goals, demonstrate our performance as a provider of local services, and embrace our accountability to staff, our communities and regulators, policy and decision makers.

Our strategic ambitions, carefully crafted to align with our mission of progression, reflection and success, have seen remarkable progress. Whether it be fostering innovation in teaching and learning, leading research on a national scale, expanding access to education, or pioneering sustainability, we have seen tangible achievements in all domains. We are truly pleased with the dedication and resilience of our team in pursuing these ambitions.

The efforts of our staff, students, and governors have not only borne fruit within the College but have rippled out to build our reputation nationwide. Our commitment to excellence has attracted recognition and reward. Our reputation as a high quality, collaborative, forward thinking College continues to grow, and it is a testament to the tireless efforts of everyone involved.

As we look ahead, we are keenly aware that our journey is far from complete. Our strategic plan has set the course, but it is in our ongoing commitment to its execution that we truly make a difference. In this update, we outline clear priorities for the next six months, ensuring that we remain focused on achieving our strategic ambitions. These priorities have been crafted with the same level of care and dedication that has brought us this far.

We would like to extend our heartfelt gratitude to our exceptional staff and students, and our dedicated governors. Your unwavering commitment to the College's mission and vision has been the driving force behind our progress. Together, we have weathered challenges, celebrated triumphs, and created an environment of excellence and inclusivity that is truly remarkable.

Finally, it brings immense satisfaction to observe that our new strategic plan and ambitions, and re-launched values are embedding well within our institution. They have become more than just words on paper; they are guiding principles that shape our daily actions and decisions. This alignment of purpose is a testament to our collective commitment to the College's future.



Dr Rebecca Gater
Principal & Chief Executive



Barbara Hughes
Chair of Corporation

6-Month Review

JAN
2023



Opened our new brick workshop at our Woodlands Campus.

FEB
2023



Leaders Unlocked event with SLT.

MAR
2023



Barbering students won 6 awards at the North of England hair awards.

JUN
2023



CEO & Principal, and Dean of HE and Research awarded the very prestigious Principal Fellowship of the Higher Education Academy (PFHEA).

MAY
2023



Chloe invited to event in Westminster to speak to Secretary of state for Education, Gillian Keegan and Skills Minister, Robert Halfon, about her experience at college, and as a HTQ student.

APR
2023



Opened the newly refurbished 'F block' at our Stratford upon Avon campus.

Strategic Ambition 1

Deliver a high-quality curriculum that enhances the life opportunities of our learners, the inclusive growth of our communities, and the productivity of the employers with which we work.



Over the past 6 months we have:

Quality and Curriculum

- Successfully trialled Teaching Triangles from January 2023 as part of the College's evaluation of the quality of teaching and learning. Feedback from teachers and coaches involved has been positive and improved teaching practice.
- Enabled students from a range of curriculum areas to succeed in Worldskills UK. Students in Engineering, Hair & Beauty and Computing are through to the Worldskills UK National Qualifiers.
- Celebrated a Bench Joinery Apprentice who has excelled in the WorldSkills UK competition. He has now joined Team UK and will compete in the EuroSkills Finals in the Polish city of Gdansk. He will compete against 20 qualifying learners across multiple subject areas.
- Been selected by Rumpus Media to train TV production assistants to establish live broadcasts from Birmingham, including Late Night Lycett. The impact and success of this programme was captured in an article by The Guardian.
- Been represented by a sports student who was selected to take part in the Association of College's (AoC) Rising Leaders Programme. Funded by The Football Association (FA) and delivered by the AoC, the programme enables equality of opportunity for female BAME students by increasing their resilience, motivation and communication skills.
- Secured funding for a further six Digital Bootcamps, focusing on skills in production management, commissioning, content creation, live capture and multi-platform streaming.

- Joined the steering group of Research College Group (RCG), which we co-founded. Additionally, a member of Solihull College staff has also been elected to lead on research publications within the steering group.
- Engaged in an international research project funded by Impulse Immersion Programme. One of our maths teachers has been funded to undertake an extended stay in Japan, experiencing first-hand the successful teaching techniques used in the Japanese education system, with a view to implementing core findings in 2023/24.
- Concluded a year-long research project conducted with NCFE to assess the impact of using artificial intelligence (AI) to individualise learning experiences in maths and English.
- Begun to invest in a digital transformation project with the recruitment of a manager responsible for the digital transformation of the college. The first phase of the JISC elevation tool has also been completed.
- Significantly improved apprenticeship satisfaction – overall satisfaction has increased by +9% compared to last year. Importantly, apprentice satisfaction around wider support and college services has also grown significantly; this is a key action on the Quality Improvement Plan (QIP). Survey questions around the Quality of Education also show improvement from last year (For example, 92% of apprentices feel that their assessor stretches them to achieve high grades, up from 84% in 2021/22).

Partnerships and Outreach

- Made a robust recovery with enrolments returning to pre-pandemic levels in our community learning provision. The recovery plan targeted delivery of Community Learning in the deprived wards of North Solihull, where we have grown by 40% from 2018/19.
- Engaged in over 10 English and Maths research projects with partner colleges, partners and the Department for Education (DfE) to improve the quality of classroom practice. For example, the team is working with Brockenhurst College to explore trauma informed approaches to the teaching of English and Maths, and we have joined the "Greater Than Network" of GFEs sharing best practice across the sector to improve quality and achievement.

Reputation

- Presented at Association of Colleges (AoC) conferences to secure our expertise and excellent reputation in the sector. Rachel Arnold shared her research on "bridging the empathy gap" at the AoC English and Maths Conference. Mary Younan presented on "implementing Higher Education ethos in Further Education" at the AoC Higher Education Conference.

Priorities for the next 6 months:

- Launch an ambitious set of reformed qualifications in September 2023, including T-Levels in Business, Construction, Health and Science, and Higher Technical Qualifications (HTQs) in Cyber Security and Healthcare Professionals.
- Tailor the Personal Development curriculum to individual learner needs. Work to date has led to a series of virtual reality workshops at Woodlands Campus to enable learners to better protect themselves from knife crime and county lines through immersive experiences.
- Launch the LIFE Survey for all new start students in September. The aim is to better understand our learner starting points from day one and tailor the curriculum to their individual needs.
- The majority of curriculum areas now have employer engagement and employer boards in place. The priority moving forwards is to engage these employers in curriculum intent and co-creation.
- Conduct a training needs analysis with employers to enable the stronger curriculum intent and co-creation described above.



Strategic Ambition 2

Secure the future of our organisation in a fast-changing sector through careful and appropriate income diversification and growth.



Over the past 6 months we have:

Quality and Curriculum

- Completed and submitted Annual Accountability Statement which details curriculum strategy for each of our schools, and aligns with Greater Birmingham and Solihull chamber, WMCA and LSIP priorities.

Partnerships and Outreach

- Been selected to lead West Midlands and Warwickshire Local Skills Improvement Fund (LSIF), to ensure Solihull is at the forefront of regional plans for collaboration and investment towards improving regional skills.
- Partnered with new businesses and there are new partnerships in the pipeline e.g with Birmingham Children's Trust and Solihull Council on Social Work programmes.
- Started to develop our first marketing and communications strategy.

Finance and Resources

- Set ambitious targets for income diversification and growth through a re-focused, robust business planning process, accompanied by closely monitored growth implementation plans at school level.

People and Culture

- Created and started to deliver a new programme for middle managers, focussing on achieving growth through project management.

Priorities for the next 6 months:

- Strengthen curriculum strategy for adults and work-based learning, particularly considering the LSIP/LSIF collaborations.
- Refine and strengthen the Marketing and Communications strategy to ensure it aligns with growth ambitions, and targets an increase in market share for our 16-18 provision.
- Grow student numbers, apprenticeships and adult income.
- Achieve the growth targets that we have set for enrolments on each provision type.
- Ensure that internal progression has improved, securing the 16-18 target enrolments for each curriculum area.

Strategic Ambition 3

Create a high-performing culture that attracts and retains the best people, is fully inclusive, and produces a happy and proud workforce.



Over the past 6 months we have:

People and Culture

- Maintained terms and conditions that continue to be some of the best in the region and nationally.
- Participated, as one of ten Colleges nationally, in the Leaders Unlocked Programme for Racial Justice. The College was commended for our students' contribution to the Project.
- Affiliated with the Black Leadership Group and developed a new set of Equality Objectives.
- Embedded the College's Values following their review in line with the review of the Strategic Plan.
- As early adopters of the ETF Professional standards in Leadership and Management, incorporated them into appraisal and CPD processes.
- Developed a process where staff can share their ideas and innovations.
- Continued to champion diversity and inclusion from the most senior level through a Governors' special interest group, embedded ED&I as a 'golden thread' throughout the strategic plan, and by recognising when staff demonstrate these values.
- Designed and started to deliver leadership at aspiring, middle and senior levels through a mixture of internal and external training sessions, mentoring and sponsorship opportunities.
- Maintained a staff turnover which is below sector average (11.21% compared to 17.8% nationally).
- Spent £200K on Staff development in 2022/23 - 56 staff have undertaken long courses.
- Led on a regional 'BAME future leaders' project and have two staff on the pilot cohort of this programme.

Reputation

- Enhanced our reputation nationally through the success of our Student Executive President, awarded the Newcomer of the Year prize at the NAMSS annual conference.
- Played a significant part in the Colleges West Midlands Racial Equality Project, leading/joint-leading two of the five workstreams (Diversifying the FE workforce and Developing Future Leaders).
- Launched the fifth cohort of staff on the internal Aspiring Leaders programme.
- Provided support to other Colleges through the AoC College Collective programme (Marketing, Additional Support, Cyber and IT, Finance).
- Entered several external awards, such as Kings Award, Chamber Awards, National Apprenticeship awards, to celebrate excellence and build our reputation.

Priorities for the next 6 months:

- Launch our wellbeing strategy.
- Remeasure our culture through the launch of an organisational culture inventory™, acting on feedback.
- Continue to work on cross college communication, developing goals, and seeking feedback on its effectiveness.
- Continue to move towards a culture where people take responsibility for their own performance and compliance, and the quality of their work.
- Clearly define a process for talent management and succession planning.
- Drive the EDI action plan and objectives to ensure it achieves measurable impact.

Strategic Ambition 4

Deliver a considered but ambitious programme of investment underpinned by financial stability

Over the past 6 months we have:

Finance and Resources

- Obtained Corporation approval for an investment Plan for summer works including refectory refurbishments on all three campuses, Health & Care T-Level suite and Lesson Capture room. Works have been tendered and are underway.
- Submitted a bid to DfE for Animal Care T-Level capital funding.
- Completed F block refurbishment and the demolition of surplus buildings on the Stratford-upon-Avon campus with landscaping works in progress which means all of our estate is considered ESFA condition B or above.
- Launched the Digital Elevation project on staff development day in March 23, the results are currently being evaluated to inform next steps.
- Spent £200K on Staff development in 2022/23 and 56 staff have undertaken long courses.
- Completed business planning for 2023/24. A new reporting format has been implemented to make planning data more transparent for Heads of School and simpler to update.
- Undertaken sensitivity analysis and scenario planning to model the pay award for 2022/23 and future years and to inform the budget and financial plans for 2023/24.



Strategic Ambition 5

Be net zero by 2030.

Over the past 6 months we have:

Quality and Curriculum

- Developed a new sustainability tutorial which has been rolled out across all schools.

Partnerships and Outreach

- Become the lead College in the Colleges West Midlands collaborative 'Towards Net Zero' workstream.

People and Culture

- Appointed 60 Green Champions (Staff and Students) who are actively engaging in initiatives on campus.

Finance and Resources

- Established our Head of Sustainability role (in post since Sept 2022).
- Attained Governor approval for Our Sustainability Strategy (Climate Change) which sets out a clear plan for meeting 2030 Net Zero target, in May 2023.
- Established our Carbon Footprint for Scope 1 and 2 emissions providing our 2022/23 baseline.
- Ensured that all tendered procurement exercises now include sustainability evaluation criteria.
- Developed clear goals and targets for our existing waste management and catering service contractors to improve environmental performance in the new financial year.



Priorities for the next 6 months:

- Monitor actual student numbers and budgets to ensure growth and contributions are achieved.
- Complete summer works and develop a longer-term plan for campus investment.
- Evaluate the Digital Elevation surveys and create an action plan which will form the basis of an updated Information and Learning Technology Strategy.
- Complete landscaping works at Stratford-upon-Avon Campus.

Priorities for the next 6 months:

- Progress the District Heat Network with SMBC.
- Complete the Building Management System (BMS) overhaul.
- Re-launch the green travel survey and promote alternatives to single-use ICE car journeys (commuting and business travel).
- Implement the Electric Vehicle charging infrastructure.
- Complete building energy audit and decarbonisation surveys to explore potential for improved energy efficiency, LED lighting upgrades and PV solar energy solutions.
- Undertake a room scheduling and space optimisation project to establish opportunities to 'shut down' areas of the buildings.
- Ensure waste and recycling collection service enhancements to reduce overall waste tonnages and increase recycling and reuse.

Building Our Reputation Regionally and Nationally

Celebrating staff, student and college success at regional and national level

- Rachel Arnold, English teacher and teaching & learning coach presented at the AoC English and Maths conference on 'Tackling a failure mindset' in February 2023.
- Rebecca Gater, Principal and Chief Executive invited to be a panel member by the FE Commissioner at the 'Just One Thing' event for CEOs, Chairs and Governance professionals in London, February 2023.
- Mary Younan, Dean of Higher Education and Research presented at the AoC Higher Education conference on 'Developing an HE ethos in an FE setting' in March 2023.
- HTQ Cyber Security student, Chloe Caine, invited to speak at the House of Commons in May 2023 to Secretary of State and Ministers on the benefits of continuing Higher Education study in FE.
- Rebecca Gater, Principal and Chief Executive presented at the Black Leadership Group conference in June 2023 on the regional project she is leading to develop BAME future leaders.
- Rachel Arnold, English teacher and teaching & learning coach presented at FE Research Meet at Coleg Sir Gar on 'Bridging the empathy gap' in June 2023.
- Three trailblazing students from the College have been recruited as Commissioners for Leaders Unlocked (LU), an award-winning social enterprise focused on working with organisations to ensure they include and platform young people from underrepresented groups in their operational decision making, thus enabling them to have a say on issues that affect their lives.
- Solihull College and University Centre was voted by peers to lead the West Midlands and Warwickshire Local Skills Improvement Fund (LSIF); a collaboration between FE colleges and Independent Training Providers across the region attracting up to £10.6m funding over two years.
- The college has hosted a number of high-profile visitors: Gillian Keegan MP, Secretary of State for Education; Saqib Bhatti MP MBE, Chair of Conservative Party; Andy Street, Mayor of the West Midlands; Dr Katerina Kolyva, CEO of the Education and Training Foundation – raising the college's profile on a national scale.
- The College played host to the College Marketing Network's national conference in November. At the associated awards evening, the marketing team were delighted to be awarded the gold award for social and digital media impact. Sean Howitt, Head of Marketing & Communications, has delivered keynote speeches to the AoC Marketing & Communications Conference and The Further Education Marketing Conference.

- The following students are excelling in the Worldskills UK competition, and progressed to the National Qualifier Round having won local and regional heats:

Learner Name	World skills Competition
Iman Yaqoob	Network Infrastructure Technician
Brandon Wilkes	Mechatronics
Cameron Gallamore	Mechatronics
Harry Dunn	Mechatronics
Jonathan Flynn	Mechatronics
Paula Lewis-Robinson	Hairdressing
Jessica Nicholson	Hairdressing
Kelly Boyd	Hairdressing
Susu Willington	Beauty Therapist
Marsilda Plaku	Beauty Therapy Practitioner
Abigail Turnbull	Beauty Therapy Practitioner



INSPIRING

Motivating others to excel
We recognise and celebrate achievement, and empower staff and learners to exceed their perceived potential.



INNOVATIVE

Transforming our ideas
We seek continuous improvement, and use innovation to adapt to change.



COLLABORATIVE

Working together to achieve shared goals
We operate as one team, valuing the contribution each of us makes.



CARING

Making a difference
We care about the wellbeing of our staff, learners and communities by trusting, listening to, engaging with and supporting each other.



RESPONSIBLE

Making things happen
We are open, honest, and take full responsibility, individually and collectively, for our decisions, actions, performance and results.



RESPECTFUL

Welcoming others into our college community
We celebrate difference and diversity. We value others and recognise that their thoughts and feelings are as important as our own.





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