

ADULT & EMPLOYER SKILLS STRATEGY 2009 – 2012

1. Executive summary

The strategy for college growth and responsiveness requires to be developed in line with a range of externalities that are driving the future of the sector in terms of adult provision. These include changes to and prioritisation of government funding and targeted growth; responding to the skills gaps identified within the college's delivery areas; innovating new services and solutions in response to industry developments; working collaboratively with key partners and stakeholders to ensure the college is at the centre of business activity; and finally to further its commercial business to provide the future sustainability of the college's income base.

The college has in place an evolving structure and culture to respond the national, regional and local agendas outlined in this document and has a proven track record of high quality responsive delivery especially within the employer activity provided. But to be successful in its ambitions, the college must ensure continuous improvement and development is embedded in all activity.

Five strategic aims have been identified to compliment and support the college's overall mission & purposes statement [Appendix A], which underpin the responsive strategy required for successful employer and adult learner delivery:

1. Provide learning opportunities that match the needs of Employers and Adults and helps address the government's sector skills priorities
2. To place less reliance upon public funded money by growing commercial training & development opportunities
3. To increase the offer to employers/ employees and widen participation by working collaboratively
4. To raise levels of the quality of training and education in order to provide outstanding employer satisfaction
5. To operate efficiently and effectively and provide the maximum contribution to the college whilst maintaining a high quality service delivery

SMART targets and key performance indicators relating to these aims are outlined in detail within the college's 3 year Strategic Plan [which is updated annually]

2. Positional Statement: Macro and micro influences

2.1 Macro [national & regional]

2.1.1 Skills for Growth, the national skills strategy published in November 2009, outlines 6 key themes to address and narrow the skills gap nationally against the global market place and deliver the government's skills growth goals:-

- Promoting skills for economic recovery – participation in HE or completion of an advanced apprenticeship or equivalent technician – level course by the age of 30
- Expanding apprenticeships to build a new technician class supported by scholarship funds
- Responding to businesses and key sectors – by providing match funded training and the introduction of new National Skills Academies
- Equipping adults for future jobs – expansion of Skills accounts as access to and improving information about training; provide employment-focused skills training for the unemployed and those facing redundancy.
- Raising business investment in workforce productivity – giving employees the right to request time to train; promoting skills and apprenticeships through public procurement; championing skills utilisation and leadership & management skills
- Improving training at the heart of a simpler system – simpler funding and monitoring arrangements for best providers and reducing the number of skills agencies by over 30 which provides a new role for Regional Development Agencies. Providers will have the discretion to flexibly manage their employer and adult responsive budgets to meet national priorities in the context of local needs

The above is intended to be delivered through a range of short term economic recovery solutions to allow for the economy to come out of the downturn in a stronger position and to maximise productivity by effective utilisation of existing skills; and in the longer term prosperity measures include identifying sectors of strategic national importance and developing / retaining skills in these areas to drive productivity and growth. The target levels of workforce skills attainment are:-

BIS November 2009 "Skills for Growth" targets for workforce development	Current level	2011 Target	2020 Ambition
Qualified to at least L2	71%	79%	90%
Qualified to at least L3	51%	56%	68%
Qualified to at least L4+	31%	34%	At least 40%
Literacy & numeracy skills			95%

Source: Department for Business Innovation & Skills: "Skills for Growth" The National Skills Strategy, November 2009

To support these targets the following headline support initiatives have been announced:-

Timeframe	Initiative
2009 – 2011	Additional 35,000 advanced and higher apprenticeship places
2009 – 2012	20,000 apprenticeship places through Government procurement contracts
From 2010	Apprenticeship scholarships fund £1,000 for the 1,000 of the best apprentices seeking HE. Employer Apprenticeship grants of up to £2500 limited to 5000 applications and available up to end March 2010
April 2010	11m employees [including part time] working in businesses with > 250 employees to have the right to request time to train providing they have been with their current employer for > 26 weeks [following the Macleod Review published in July 2009 which reviewed potential benefits of employee engagement] To be extended to all employees from April 2011
August 2010	Train to Gain national investment to increase overall by £58million in 2010/11 but funding per learner to fall with the exception of Skills for Life; first full level 2 and first full level 3 for 19 – 25 year olds
End 2010	QCF to be fully populated
2010 – 2011	£16m available for National Skills Academy programmes
2011	Increase to 1,500 the number of institutions accessible through skills accounts
To be confirmed	Joint Investment Scheme Fund of up to £50m [matched by employers] targeting priority sectors

Source: Department for Business Innovation & Skills: "Skills for Growth" The National Skills Strategy, November 2009

Associated with the drive for attainment of higher skills delivery is the requirement for further economy, efficiency and effectiveness as a result of government funding changes to ensure priority areas and initiatives including above are supported.

2.1.2 From April 2010, The Skills Funding Agency will be responsible for allocating fund to, and managing the relationship with the college for all adult provision. This will include delivering national programmes such as Train to Gain, pre employment training relating to redundancy and Apprenticeships [all ages] supported by initiatives such as the new Apprenticeship grants for 16-17 year olds. The agency will support a demand led system supporting work based learning responding to employer need, progressing towards a skills account system reflecting the entitlements of individual learners and encouraging learners to be more responsible for their own training.

2.1.3 The integrated Business Link service forms a vital link with the college to enable a business needs service to be delivered. This will enable companies accessing Train to Gain or other government business

support products to engage with support to identify how the skills of their workforce can be best utilised to achieve business growth objectives and where additional training will have the most impact. This is particularly important to ensure that the potential of women in the workplace is fully realised. Similarly, skilled managers help develop more innovative business strategies which help the economy and also drive up demand for skills creating a virtuous circle. Further integration of the Train to Gain Leadership and Management Advisory Service for small and medium businesses into Business Link will assist this process supported by new funding opportunities.

2.1.4 Regional Development Agencies working in partnership with the Sector Skills Councils, local authority leaders and sub-regional bodies, will take responsibility for producing regional skills strategies that will articulate employer demand and more closely align skills priorities. SEEDA's [South East England Development Agency] new focus for the South East of England from April 2010 will therefore be to support programmes through strategic advice and expertise for businesses that are based on innovation, high growth and productivity improvements. Their strategy includes maximising inward investment, international trade, innovation and growth for the area's high value sectors identified as:-

- Environmental technologies
- Advanced engineering and marine
- Aerospace and defence
- Life sciences and health technologies
- ICT and digital media
- Financial services

Their priority will be to support areas where the most impact can be achieved [including the 8 Diamonds for Investment & Growth] plus initiatives to support a low carbon economy. Major investments identified over the next 18 months likely to require skills support include:-

- 200 construction jobs and subsequent new manufacturing and automotive employment opportunities with McLaren
- Capital build programmes progressing in 2010/11 reliant on construction skills
- Redevelopment of transport systems
- Offshore and land based wind farm construction
- 2012 Olympics support structure: up-skilling in retail, tourism and hospitality sectors

2.1.5 Requirement of the Government to encourage recruitment of overseas workers to support the economy which may impact upon levels of national unemployment; language training and other associated social / economic changes that could influence future requirements linked to the skills agenda

2.2 Micro [local – pan Sussex]

2.2.1 West Sussex County Council: Skills Action Plan – the framework issued in April 2008 for the next 3 years [2008-2011] and in consultation with partners, including the college, intends to bring a wide range of education & skills priorities together. It builds on existing strategies and plans and directly contributes to key targets including those of the Regional Economic Strategy and Local Area Agreements as well as all related national policy such as the Leitch Review of skills. Entry level skills required for employment in West Sussex are rising across all sectors and in most occupational areas entry level is generally accepted as being level 3 and above.

West Sussex, especially along the coastal strip, contains too many people whose skills and qualifications are below this level so the plan is in response to the up-skilling requirements of the area with a focus upon:-

- High value-added, knowledge intensive industries who hold the key to future growth
- Further diversification of existing industries e.g. Health & Social Care, by supporting opportunities for women, apprenticeships and those from ethnic minorities
- Developing skills both outside employment and within by engendering a learning culture for all citizens

The vision for West Sussex is to create a socially and economically competitive future where all individuals are motivated to obtain the qualifications and skills that will enable them to participate fully in productive employment, and where businesses have access to the skills for productivity, innovation and growth. This will be a challenge in light of the current economic climate but aims to be facilitated through a range of links including:-

- The new social enterprise
- Adur Skills Centre
- University Centre in Crawley
- Exploration of opportunities for coordination e.g. employer engagement functions

2.2.2 Worthing & Adur Chamber of Commerce as a strategic partner of the college provides a direct link to the voice of local businesses and related activities and skills agendas of associated public organisations.

2.2.3 Adur & Worthing Councils have both recognised the need to protect and regenerate the local coastal economy. They have staff and elected councillors dedicated to this regeneration task with particular emphasis on priority areas and improvement of the skills base. The Councils also regard the partnership with the college, alongside other organisations, as a key part of this activity and are working closely with the college at senior level in helping to facilitate its development plans. Adur and Worthing councils work in partnership with the Worthing Economic

Development & Regeneration Partnership of which the college is an active member

2.2.4 The Coastal West Sussex forum comprises representatives of all West Sussex coastal local authorities, regional and government agencies and all education and skills provider together with business representatives. The college is an active participant in this groundbreaking forum.

2.2.5 Arun Business Partnership linked to Arun District Council of which the college is an active partner also provides opportunities for the college to engage with business activities and promotions. The Economic Development Department at the council supports a strong and cohesive approach to up-skilling the local workforce; a key target identified within its Economic Strategy.

2.2.6 Job Centre Plus through the Department of Work and Pensions provides pre employment training and support opportunities through a range of Local Partnership Agreements for those who are long term or newly unemployed. Currently there is an emphasis upon 18 – 24 year olds who have been unemployed for at least 10 months and a range of commissioning opportunities has arisen during 2009 for delivery into 2012. The college currently has a direct contract for the long term unemployed and is partnering with other organisations in respect of training delivery to the newly unemployed and associated initiatives in West Sussex.

2.2.7 The competitive market place includes public and private sector training organisations, locally and national based, and it is imperative the college understands the offers available through its competitors in order to respond and gain a competitive advantage. Additionally, partnership opportunities should be sought wherever possible to mitigate risk and increase market share.

2.2.8 To support 2.2.1 – 2.2.5 above, the collection and analysis of Local Market Intelligence to shape current and future curriculum offer requires to be undertaken. Engagement with Sector Skills Councils is also essential and dedicated members of the college, predominantly the Specialist Skills Coordinators [refer to 3.2 below] have been appointed as a prime source of contact to ensure all current and future industry requirements can be responded to.

3. Improved services for employers and learners

- 3.1 Dedicated employer facing areas [Business Development and the Apprenticeship team] are a key feature of the current college structure and provide a conduit to all employer related activity. This has recently been expanded to incorporate all partnership activity relating to employer and adult responsive provision together with the response to redundancy delivery
- 3.2 The role of the Specialist Skills Coordinator was introduced to develop specialist knowledge and expertise in aiding broader economic regeneration. This ensures full engagement and understanding of specific sector skills areas from market intelligence through to curriculum design and delivery and allows expansion of the client base and reach i.e. outside of local area. The posts also have the remit to secure contracts with large private enterprises and public sector organisations both funded and full cost recovery.
Currently four posts are in place supporting Health & Social Care; Business Management & Professional; Skills for Life & ESOL; Music, Theatre & Performance curriculum areas. It is intended for all 7 curriculum areas to have a Specialist Skills Coordinator by the end of academic year 2010/11.
- 3.3 Recognition of performance management through the achievement of TQS [supporting Framework for Excellence performance requirements: increase in employer volume; satisfaction; income] is a key strategic objective of the college. This is a whole college approach.
- 3.4 The introduction during 2009/10 of a Business Policy Deployment Toolkit which provides full integration of employer and adult responsive delivery also allows identification of developmental requirements in addition to the regular performance management disciplines to support achievement of targets and quality outcomes.
The development of a performance dashboard [visual on line measurement of actual achievements against targets] will further enhance this process
- 3.5 Building upon the college's customer service protocols, a Business Excellence Model is to be developed in order to instil a culture of excellence by bringing consistency to management styles, access to good practices and driving innovation to achieve improving results.

4. Main Aims / Key Strategic Drivers

4.1 Responding imaginatively to Government initiatives for 19+ learners

Strategic aim: Provide learning opportunities that match the needs of Employers and Adults and helps address the government's sector skills priorities

4.1.1 Planning and embedding Leitch requirements by developing a fully demand led and flexible offer and focussing upon skills and employability at levels 2 & 3 with progression to higher levels, particularly Foundation Degrees

4.1.2 Encouraging employer participation within curriculum design

4.1.3 Training in Leadership and Management skills to bring business skills to a competitive level and ensure managers can develop clear policies for making effective use of skills already in their workforce

4.1.4 To make full use of the QCF flexibility in the design and delivery of the college's modular pick & mix offer ensuring this meets industry / employer requirements with an expectation that they [the employer] will contribute at least 50% of the cost of delivery

4.1.5 Provide a Work skills development cross college resource allowing integration of all associated services which will also allow the embedding of 16 – 18 year old enterprise into core qualifications. To include a new Job matching service strengthening the college's current careers advisory service and building upon nationally available models i.e. the National Apprenticeship Service. This will offer learners the chance to "Qualify with a Business" i.e. leave college with both a qualification and ready to run a self employed business and be "work ready" i.e. hold the qualities and competencies a future employer requires.

4.1.6 Delivery of a portfolio of non accredited opportunities for individual personal development within a range of sector skills areas thereby providing progression routes into further certificated training and / or employment

4.1.7 Developing sustainable relations with the community and voluntary sectors to ensure the college is at the heart of the local community and is positioned to respond to their needs through the delivery of courses, qualifications and learning activities

The following approaches will be adopted to mobilise both funded and non funded individual post 19 programmes:

4.1.8 Apprenticeships

Build upon the high success and level of employer support by ensuring the wider availability of high quality and multi-level apprenticeship frameworks for all occupations and in all sectors for which they have value within the local and regional areas.

Maximise the opportunity to deliver public sector funded apprenticeships [new money]

Increasing the volume for 16-18 frameworks, as this is the main area of growth in terms of funding which is “recession proof”, by looking at opportunities for both the learner and business and meeting the aspirations of 1 in 5 young people wishing to become apprentices

Progression for 19 -30 advanced technical level 3 into higher education

Develop 19+ progression from Train to Gain NVQs especially for large employers and public sector

The role of the Framework Coordinators is instrumental in delivering above.

4.1.9 Train to Gain

Funding for repeat qualifications and previous marketing of “free” qualifications will no longer be relevant to the majority of new learners

Priority is for employees who do not yet have qualifications at level 2 and 3 plus Skills for Life within certain age ranges and sectors

Smart targeted marketing will be required and improving the progression of current learners to higher levels in order to increase distance travelled whilst simultaneously maintaining the relationship with current employers.

4.1.10 Response to redundancy

Communication and joint working with JCP West Sussex Coastal Cluster to develop integrated employment and skills to support the following programmes [subject to funding availability: direct or through partnership arrangements]

- At risk or newly unemployed
- Young persons guarantee 18-24 year olds approaching 12 months unemployment
- Flexible New Deal

4.1.11 Full time and long part-time funded / non- funded Further Education 19+

Focus on training programmes that offer the biggest skills gain for individuals rather than activity that assess existing skills and meet the government’s 9 priorities:-

- Full level 2
- Full level 3
- Full level 4
- Foundation Learning

- Skills for Life [approved & non-approved]
- Learners with Learning Difficulties & Disabilities
- Trade Union studies
- Initial Teacher Training

In light of the demand for increased fee contributions from both learners and employers, increase the volume of training that depends on matched funding.

Transfer provision to full cost recovery that contributes least to the Government's strategic priorities [refer to 4.2. below]

4.1.12 19+ Skills for Life and ESOL

To work with individuals with the most need in line with the priorities identified in the Leitch review by delivering required SfL targets through the range of the [restricted] available funded provision especially for those within community based organisations and hard to reach learners. Seek additional funding to support ESOL provision through strategic partnership working

To continue to work closely with West Sussex County Council in support of "The New Approach to ESOL" to ensure priority students are identified county wide in order to equip them with the functional skills required for daily living and preparation for the workplace

4.1.13 Non Accredited First Steps Learning & Individual Personal Development

To provide co-funded short course provision to support adult learner's personal development that may lead to future employment opportunities or progression onto further training and self improvement

4.1.14 Individual Skills Accounts

To be offered to all adults who access publicly funded training as a vehicle to "purchase" their entitlement. High performance by colleges will result in more places being offered than would otherwise be the case. Learner demand will therefore play a greater role in shaping the market. There will be a requirement to work closely with the new adult advancement and careers service and become increasingly customer focussed by offering further choices.

4.2 Creating additional income streams

Strategic aim: to place less reliance upon public funded money by growing commercial training & development opportunities

4.2.1 Full cost recovery

To further increase the portfolio of workshops and qualifications in response to industry requirements and to support innovative ideas.
To transfer currently government funded low priority courses to full cost solutions promoting the value of business investment

4.2.2 Price sensitivity of market place

As a result of reduced government support funding, review and agree a fee policy with the expectation of a high employer / learner contribution of 50%+ for co-funded provision

The government has commissioned an independent review of fee collection to take place in 2010 to ensure robust strategies in place and the college will be required to meet these stringent requirements.

Any new marketing strategy incorporating new fee requirements will need to take into account the price sensitivity of each client base and the propensity to seek alternative providers / solutions.

4.2.3 Unique selling proposition

To support the promotion of 4.2.1 and 4.2.2 above, the college needs to consider how to distinguish itself from the competition by identifying its unique qualities e.g. sector specialism opportunities; range of vocational progression pathways; high quality apprenticeship delivery; added value employer support. These can only be short term as if successful will be copied by others. Therefore continuous assessment and development is required to ensure the USP can evolve and adapt.

4.2.4 Hyphenation

To keep development costs of new training solutions to employers and adult learners to a minimum, the application of hyphenation should be adopted whereby modules or elements of existing provision are rearranged and brought together to develop a brand new / unique offer. This is particularly relevant for company bespoke arrangements and full cost delivery. The development of the QCF will also support this type of arrangement.

4.2.5 Tender tracking

To continuously review opportunities to bid for additional work outside of the traditional government procurement arrangements in line with the pool of expertise and talent within the college identified from departmental skills matrices

4.3 Relationship building with sector and business communities

Strategic aim: to increase the offer to employers/ employees and widen participation by working collaboratively

4.3.1 Sector Skills Councils & industry standards: development & innovation

4.3.2 Further development of business networks; attendance / membership of local forums [i.e. South Coast Design Forum]
Continuation of strategic partnership agreement with Worthing & Adur Chamber of Commerce

4.3.3 Build upon the current profile of the college by celebrating success

4.3.4 Engagement with new partners / maintenance of existing high quality partnerships including those who can support the college with its widening participation agenda and delivery of community based research projects and assignments

4.3.5 Linking and supporting the college's Higher Education strategy through:

- Expansion of part time courses with employer matched funding
- Progression from advanced apprenticeships to Foundation degrees
- Development work and creation of additional learner numbers relating to the Centre for Work and Learning Project co funded by employers

4.3.6 Key account management facilitated through the roles of Business Training Advisors and Specialist Skills Coordinators to strategically develop alliances with major employers in the region. To create offers of coordinated partnerships that deliver a comprehensive, all embracing, training solution of the highest quality and value

4.4 Quality Assurance

Strategic aim: to raise levels of the quality of training and education in order to provide outstanding employer satisfaction

4.4.1 To be one of the top providers in the South East region through the adoption of continuous improvement delivering success rates above the national benchmark comparator for all adult learner courses and in all Subject Sector Areas [SSAs]

4.4.2 Achievement of the Training Quality Standard to provide evidence of the adoption of a robust quality improvement tool for measuring and reporting the quality of services delivered to employers, including

feedback mechanisms to monitor and analyse employer satisfaction and impact of delivery.

- 4.4.3 Identifying barriers to progress through flexible Information, Advice and Guidance and optimising upon the availability of additional learning support to achieve positive outcomes for adult learners who may otherwise fail to achieve.
- 4.4.4 Continuous review of expertise and experience of delivery staff through the Skills Matrix analysis and Appraisal system supported by continuous professional development including industry updating, to ensure the college maintains a high level of industry and vocational educational staff resource
- 4.4.5 Continuous improvement of the partnership management arrangements for all college sub contractors to ensure robust quality assurance are reviewed on a regular basis and take account of evolving requirements and legislation

4.5 Optimal business development model

Strategic aim: to operate efficiently and effectively and provide the maximum contribution to the college whilst maintaining a high quality service delivery

- 4.5.1 To seek at least 50% contribution to the college on all employer and adult responsive provision through the discipline of carefully costed solutions and maximising learner numbers
- 4.5.2 Continuous employer engagement and participation in respect of curriculum and training development to ensure value and desired outcomes can be achieved and measured
- 4.5.3 To adopt a delivery and growth strategy which predominantly builds upon the current client base and existing portfolio of products and services [updated and re-badged as detailed in 4.2.5] to reduce marketing and development costs.
- 4.5.4 To continuously exceed current customer expectations who as a result recommend the college to their clients and contacts

5. Enablers

5.1 Supportive Marketing & Promotion

Riding on back of national campaigns i.e. Apprenticeship week; Adult skills week

Emphasising value for money co-funded / full cost provision as government funding contracts

College wide usage of employer CRM "Portfolio"

Development of cross college communication strategy

5.2. Partnership working

To support the generation of new commercial and educational business opportunities and to be truly responsive by offering a full range of training solutions to employers.

Maintaining an effective and professional contracts management service

Relationship building with Skills Funding Agency account manager

Collaborative arrangements with other providers / institutions including FE Sussex

Developing sustainable relationships with community and voluntary sector organisations

5.3 Structure of Delivery

Strategic and operational management of responsive provision to be clearly defined in terms of employer and adult learners including management of partner activity, to ensure maximum benefit can be achieved at minimal cost and correlation between different modes of delivery can be explored and optimised upon.

Data reporting requirements to support monthly, termly, annual and ad hoc funding / audit returns to be scoped and resourced with clear roles and responsibilities.

6. Identified risks and barriers to achieving strategic goals / outcomes

- Lack of development of short, medium and longer term responsive solutions
- Insufficient staff with appropriate industry expertise offering flexible and innovative training
- Insufficient expertise within "sales force" teams & individuals to enable new income streams to be increased and expanded upon
- Inability to charge appropriate fee levels as a result of the price sensitivity of the market place and aggressive pricing strategies adopted by competitors
- Inability to increase class sizes to gain economies of scale and reduce costs of delivery
- Non achievement of the Training Quality Standard placing commissioning and expansion opportunities at risk

- Inaccurate data collection and reporting systems required to provide performance assurance to funding bodies resulting in clawback of contracted funds
- Volatility of funding streams
- Securing a range of quality, agile and respected partners who are financially robust

The college's Risk register which is reviewed and updated on a monthly basis takes account of the above identified risks and outlines how these will be mitigated.

Anne Feldberg
Business Development Manager

Appendix A

College Mission & Purposes [extract] Statement

Subject to funding the college will:

Adult Learners (excluding Higher Education and non-vocational):-

- Continue to offer courses which support entry and re-entry to education and training for people who lack the skills and qualifications to progress
- Consider innovative partnership arrangements with community and voluntary sector organisations as well as direct delivery by ourselves as a way of making opportunities to learn accessible to a wider public

Employer Responsive Learners:-

- Expand our apprenticeship programme to become the major provider of work based training in the LSC Sussex area
- Establish a range of commercial services and training courses responsive to local and national needs
- Expand our learning and assessment services in the work place and off site
- Continue to offer a wide range of work-focused qualifications at NVQ levels 1-4 or equivalent