



**HARLOW  
COLLEGE**

# **Strategic Plan & Skills Statement**

**2019/2024**

Approved by Corporation: 20 October 2022

More than Courses.  
Careers



## Strategic Summary

We are committed to ensuring that we change and transform the lives of young people and adults in our community. We want all of our learners to achieve their ambitions, contribute significantly to the productivity of the economy and have happy and purposeful lives. We have a relentless focus on “More than courses. Careers”.

Our next phase builds on key partnerships we have established with employers, business, civic, community groups, schools, colleges and universities – we pride ourselves on our enterprising approach, ensuring that we develop the skills needed for our thriving innovation corridor.

At the core of our Strategy we have recently updated our values and mission:

**S: Students** at the heart

**T: Teamwork** - work together, achieve together

**A: Be Ambitious**, Build Futures

**R: Respect** each other, share similarities and celebrate differences

Our Skills statement alongside our plan demonstrates our commitment to supporting students into careers, hence our mission/strapline:

- More than course. Careers.

We have shaped our plan around the following intentions:

- Career-led curriculum – developing through our partnerships the technical, academic, digital, employability, maths and English skills required to be successful in the next steps in life. Offering a strong pastoral support programme with personal development and well-being at its heart.
- Quality of Education – continuing our drive to be excellent, providing high quality learning, teaching and assessment, with digital technologies effectively embedded. Equipping our students with transferable learning skills that means they are well equipped for a rapidly changing world.
- Resources – Shaping our learning spaces to mirror the workplace, investing in our infrastructure, technologies and partnerships to grow and diversify. Ensuring our staff have cutting-edge industry skills and access to a high quality CPD programme. Maintaining our financial stability to enable investment in our approach to ultimately benefit students.

## Strategic Planning Context

Harlow College is recognised by Ofsted and others for providing good quality education to the West of Essex. This document outlines our strategic intentions for the next 5 years and lays out the key principles for our Strategic Plan. This update also includes any changes we may have made due to the impact of Covid-19 on our activities.

We have achieved a lot in the past 5 years, and are now ready to move into our next phase of development. Key achievements include:

- The development of the Harlow Advanced Manufacturing Centre
- The building and opening of a new College at Stansted Airport
- Achievement of Apple Distinguished Status for a third time, a recognition for innovation in learning and teaching technologies, as an Edtech demonstrator
- Recognition as a Maths Centre for Excellence, 1 of 21 national centres
- Achievement of two Good Ofsted grades
- A lead college in Greater Essex, focusing on the Further Education Professional Development Grant and Strategic Development Fund
- A key player in the Local Skills Improvement Plan, partnering with the Chamber of Commerce
- A new partnership within our LEP area for an Institute of Technology
- Establishment of the new T-level curriculum
- A strong focus on diversity and inclusion, including work with the unemployed, high needs students, looked after children and ESOL learners
- Ongoing Good Financial Health from a position of Satisfactory at the start of the period
- Continued development of our employer-led curriculum and key partnerships with new employers, including Stansted Airport, the UK Health Security Agency (formerly Public Health England), Princess Alexandra Hospital and the Garden Town development
- A strong response to the Covid-19 pandemic, switching learning online and supporting our students to be as successful as possible in the changing circumstances, and a continued focus on filling knowledge gaps for our students

We continue our commitment to ensuring that we change and transform the lives of young people and adults in our community. We want all of our learners to achieve their ambitions, contribute significantly to the productivity of the economy and have happy and purposeful lives.

Our next phase builds on key partnerships we have established with employers, business, community groups, schools, colleges and universities – we pride ourselves on our enterprising approach, ensuring that we develop the skills needed for our thriving innovation corridor. We know that the Covid-19 pandemic has impacted the young people, adults and employers that we work with, therefore we will need to review our approaches.

## Skills Needs Statement

The following section details how the College supports the labour market and covers examples that are both local, sub-regional and national. It provides a flavour of our partnerships, although each curriculum team has further examples of work in practice.

2,574  
**Number of 16-19 learners**

464  
**Number of Apprentices**

1,229  
**Number of adult learners**

313,372  
**Population of West Essex**

£6.5bn  
**Gross Value Added of West Essex**

£28.9k  
**Average wage, below national average**

<b>Top Growing Industries</b>		
Construction	Transportation & Storage	Human Health and Social Work Activities

<b>% Priority Sectors of Economic Importance to Greater Essex</b>				
Construction and Retrofit	Clean Energy	Advanced Manufacturing and Engineering	Digi-tech	Life-Sciences

<b>Enterprises</b>	<b>Harlow (numbers)</b>	<b>Harlow (%)</b>	<b>East Region (%)</b>
Micro 0-9	2,870	88.7	90.1
Small (10-49)	295	9.1	8.1
Medium (50 to 249)	55	1.7	1.5
Large (250+)	15	0.5	0.4
<b>Total</b>	<b>3,235</b>		

Embedded within our culture is the understanding that we must successfully engage with employers for the benefit of our learners, our partners and the local economy. We currently work with over 300 local employers including but not limited to delivering to apprenticeships in many key sectors.

Integral to our career-led curriculum are the close working relationships and collaboration we have with our employers. We understand the importance continued and effective engagement plays in the success of supporting our learners to realise their potential. Annual curriculum reviews using economic indicators, LMI and feedback from employers result in programmes relevant to current and future skills needs. Our sector specific employer forums facilitate the co-creation of programmes to meet employer needs. Long-term partnerships, established with many employers underlines their satisfaction with the quality of our provision and demonstrates the high confidence employers place in us to meet their business needs.

Alongside apprenticeships and other training opportunities we offer a range of services to employers to support their recruitment needs and utilise expertise across many industrial sectors and occupational, carrying out detailed skills and training needs analyses, identifying organisational recruitment needs, the skills required for roles and potential routes for recruitment.

More recently, as lead for the Greater Essex Strategic Development Fund programme we are driving a change in approach to employer engagement across Greater Essex with greater collaboration amongst training providers to transition towards an employer-led skills system that adapts to employers' needs and develops technical skills programmes aligned to local skills opportunities.

**Key Skills Partners:**

<b>Employers</b>	<b>Community</b>
Manchester Airport Group Princess Alexandra Hospital UK Health Security Agency Airport-based employers Employer Advisory Boards (Engineering established, with Sustainable Energy and Health and Science being developed.) DWP Jobcentre Plus HTS Raytheon Strategic Development Fund Transport Employment and Skills Taskforce DfT	UK Community Renewal Fund National Citizenship Service Department for Work and Pensions Jobcentre Plus ESOL community adult provision In the Making West Essex Mind Phoenix Centre Essex Book Fair Community events Community placements Charities – e.g. Rainbow Services, Young Concern Trust, Mind in West Essex etc.
<b>Education</b>	<b>Civic</b>
Primary Schools – Harlow Education Consortium Secondary Schools – West Essex Association of Headteachers and Uttlesford 14 – 19 Heads Group Other FE providers – Federation of Essex Colleges and AoC East Universities – Anglia Ruskin University and University of Hertfordshire South East Institute of Technology Harlow District Council Skills Forum Essex Provider Network Mindful Education JISC Apple Distinguished School Centre for Excellence in Maths Strategic Development Fund lead for Greater Essex	Harlow District Council Harlow Growth Board Harlow and Gilston Garden Town Essex County Council South East Local Enterprise Partnership Uttlesford District Council UK Innovation Corridor DWP Jobcentre Plus National Careers Service Essex Chambers of Commerce CBI APPG Aviation

**Employer Case Study – Manchester Airport Group:**

The fastest growing airport in the UK, catering for 23 million passengers per annum, London Stansted Airport is one the most strategically important employers in the East of England. We have over a number of years developed a strong and positive relationship and continue to work together on a number of regionally important projects. One of the most successful outcomes from this partnership has been the opening of Stansted Airport College, the UK's first on-site professional training and skills centre. Funded by the SELEP Local Growth Fund and Essex County Council the on-airport further education facility is addressing the growing skills gaps in engineering and customer service, which together with the Stansted Airport Employability and Skills Academy, who specialise in short aviation and employability training for adults looking for work at the airport are developing a talent pool and

pipeline of employees for the airport to support their growth, now and in the future. Collaboration with the airport and their business partners is 360° in nature, we are often humbled by the support and commitment offered to enrich our curriculum and the experience of our learners. Our Stansted Airport College Advisory Panel includes representatives from across our civic, education, employer and community partners and meets quarterly to provide strategic oversight of the curriculum and quality of provision at Stansted Airport College and to guide future development.

### **Community Case Study – UK Community Renewal Fund:**

As an institution embedded in our local community we constantly search for opportunities to support the people and places around us. In 2021 the number of residents aged 16-64 in Harlow qualified to at least L3 was 22.6% below the national rate. Through the UK Community Renewal Fund we saw an opportunity to pilot a project focussed on widening participation and increasing higher levels of achievement to address this alarming disparity. We created a project providing direct financial support to economically inactive, unemployed and employed adults interested in developing their skills, prioritising recruitment and engagement on those made unemployed or redundant due to Covid-19. The project is funding a training voucher scheme in which participants have access to high quality IAG sessions. Training vouchers are available to support the costs of any tuition fees for training to support career progression, making accessible a wide range of training courses that are often unavailable to individuals seeking funded training opportunities. The project continues to December 2022, results have been encouraging, demand for IAG sessions has been excellent and to date more than 60 local residents have enrolled on L3 training that without the support provided by the project they would have been unable to do.

### **Education Case Study – Institute of Technology:**

A project bringing together FE and HE institutions with employers and anchor institutions across the SELEP region, the South East Institute of Technology is dedicated to widening the opportunities available to learners of all ages, to create, with employers, specialist provision to improve the technical skills needed by the local workforce. Working in partnership with regionally important employers such as London Stansted Airport, the UK Health Security Agency and Princess Alexandra Hospital NHS our planned provision will focus on curriculum pathways in Engineering and Manufacturing, Health and Science, Construction, Logistics and Transport and IT & Digital. The project will support the next phase of economic growth within Harlow and the wider West Essex area including the £400M relocation of UKHSA to Harlow, the £600M new hospital project and the growth of the Harlow Enterprise Zone, including the £200m Kao Data Campus, with its wider digital technology requirements. The opportunities this project will provide to widen participation, develop the future workforce and support the growth of our local economy are promising.

### **Civic Case Study – Essex County Council:**

We have an excellent relationship with our local authority, Essex County Council, we are collaborating with them on a pilot project in Harlow to support the transition from fuel-based vehicles to electric vehicles. The project, selected as a case study of best practice by the Local Government Association will develop a new Electric Vehicle Centre at the College which will provide upskilling courses for local Automotive Technicians to develop the skills and knowledge required to maintain and repair electric vehicles. Alongside this, community learning workshops will provide local electric vehicle owners and enthusiasts opportunities to understand more about their vehicle including safety awareness. The UK Government's approach to driving the transition from fuel-based vehicles to electric vehicles is showing definite signs of success with record sales of electric vehicles in 2021. Harlow District Council have anticipated that by 2030 there could be between approximately 6,000 and 14,000 battery electric vehicles in Harlow. With this increase in demand for Electric vehicles there is subsequently a growing need for appropriately trained technicians to carry-out repairs and servicing to these vehicles. The Harlow College – Electric Vehicle Centre will address this growing need and upskill local employees

with Electric Vehicle repair and maintenance qualifications.

### **Civic Case Study – HAMEC:**

Listening to employers and developing curriculum to address skills needs has been integral to our strategy is not a new concept to us. In 2015, commissioned by Essex County Council, the Science, Engineering and Manufacturing Technologies Alliance carried out a feasibility study to explore the creation of an Advanced Manufacturing and Engineering Centre in Essex. SEMTA concluded there was strong support for an employer-led model delivering manufacturing and engineering skills across the Harlow area. Whilst local employers appreciated and valued the training the College provided, it did not meet the full extent of their training needs, the employers voiced a need for a wider breadth and depth of training in key technical areas with clear progression pathways that enabled students to gain higher qualifications. Through collaboration with SEMTA, employers, local government and the local enterprise partnership funding was provided to create the Harlow Advanced Manufacturing and Engineering Centre (HAMEC). The centre has been a huge success and has transformed the delivery of engineering and operational maintenance training developing skills directly related to the needs and demands of employers.

## Career-led Curriculum

- Our curriculum planning will focus on the maintenance and development of the 'Not just courses. Careers' approach, in particular partnerships with key employers including Stansted Airport, PHE, Princess Alexander Hospital and any development linked to the Garden Towns.
- Our students, whatever their age, background or mode of study will have access to a career-led curriculum that develops more than a qualification and allows them to successfully progress to their next stage.
- The College's curriculum will be designed with clear pathways for learners to enter the system at every level and succeed. This will be increasingly important as we identify lost learning from the Covid-19 pandemic, embrace curriculum reform (for example T-levels) and review our partnerships with employers.
- We will build on our successful Learning, Teaching and Assessment Strategy to ensure that students are equipped with the digital skills, industry skills, and the English and mathematics skills required to be successful.
- We will develop our students to be independent learners and thinkers, equipping them with the flexibility and resilience they will require for an unknown future. We will use digital technologies to equip them for a changing world, in particular the 4<sup>th</sup> Industrial Revolution and rapid technological changes.
- Our students will need the skills to be active citizens, understanding and changing habits, in terms of sustainability, low carbon technologies and health. We will build these, alongside, our digital approach into the curriculum, as well as, College policies and procedures.
- We are committed to the Carbon Reduction Roadmap from the Association of Colleges and as such are putting in place Carbon Literacy champions through the Carbon Literacy Trust Programme.
- We are working across Greater Essex with the Chamber of Commerce, as part of the Strategic Development Fund and Local Skills Improvement plans to develop sector-based employer boards to inform our curriculum. As well as working with large employers, like Stansted Airport, we will also ensure small and medium sized enterprises have a voice. National and global trends will be considered, as well as, the local economy. We have partnered with Essex Based colleges to have a coherent voice and approach.
- We will continue to work with employers and community partners, to develop pre-apprenticeship programmes for young people and adults.
- Our curriculum will be designed to meet industry standards and wherever possible provide students and apprentices with the professional status required in their sector.
- We will develop our technical provision, including new T-levels and progression pathways to Levels 4 and 5, reviewing our Higher Education Strategy and ensuring we have a sustainable model for the future. We have been successful in bidding for a new Institute for Technology (IoT) with South Essex College and colleges within our LEP.



- We will continue our regional work with job centres supporting adults back to work in a flexible and pro-active way. However, we are also shifting the balance of this work to in-work training with the current post-pandemic low unemployment rates. We are also committed to life-long learning and ensuring that our response to the Skills Bill is strong, providing good opportunities to retrain and up-skill.

## Quality of Education and Experience

We want everyone to reach their full potential and receive a good quality education, to do this we will:

- Set aspirational targets that ensure the highest outcomes in terms of achievement, progress, value added and destinations.
- Build on our successful Ofsted Inspection of 2019, with the aim of being Outstanding under the new Education Inspection Framework
- Establish and embed the practice of our Maths Centre for Excellence, developing a strong network of other colleges and an action research-led approach to educational improvement
- Be seen as a regional centre of excellence for the delivery of technical education, in particular focusing on our partnerships with key employers in the region and launching an IoT
- Be recognised through the achievement of awards, and celebrate success, for example, the maintenance of Apple Distinguished School status

To do this, we have involved staff in discussing how this translates in practice. They have identified the following 10 key elements to our implementation of outstanding Teaching, Learning and Assessment (TLA):

- **4 Steps to success** – we will use the 4 steps (Know, Show, Do, Improve) to build on prior knowledge; provide support; ensure stretch and challenge; and demonstrate clear progress.
- **Collaboration and communication** – our teams will meet regularly (at least once per week) to plan, communicate, and share ideas. We will also share good practice with colleagues within the College and across the sector.
- **Planned, flexible and responsive curriculum** – using a delivery model of unit days and half days for deeper learning and skills development.
- **Evidence based teaching** – we will use TLA which is fun, exciting and uses a variety of proven approaches to help people learn and progress.
- **English and Maths** – embedding critical English and Maths skills into all of our daily practice.
- **Digital learning is our norm** – we will use new technologies to improve teaching, learning and assessment practice and prepare students for their digital future.

- **Model the workplace** – preparing our students for their future, embedding the skills, knowledge & behaviour needed to be resilient; adapt; and thrive. We will use live briefs; work experience; and industrial placements alongside as part of our planned curriculum.
- **Encourage community** – we will develop well rounded global citizens who are environmentally conscious; tolerant; and respectful.
- **Assessment and feedback** – this will be engaging, regular, relevant and recorded, recognising achievement and setting challenging IMPROVE goals.
- **Future destinations** – broadening our students' experiences and developing ambitious aspirations to ensure impact of our strategy on careers and lives.

## Resources

The biggest challenge is to manage the investment in the College infrastructure whilst responding to a challenging policy and funding environment from Government.

Our priorities will be to:

- Achieve continued 'Good' financial health and meet our bank covenants, in order for us to invest in our curriculum, resources and staff
- To improve the efficiency of the curriculum whilst offering high quality outcomes, with a focus on managing group sizes and staffing to ensure value for money alongside effectiveness
- To manage the increasing cost-base as effectively as possible, reviewing processes and procedures to ensure we are getting best value for money, including reviewing approaches to sustainability across our buildings and infrastructure as part of the Carbon Reduction Roadmap
- To manage the complexity of the apprenticeship levy, continuing to secure new business from employers
- To secure project based work that complements existing provision and allows us to best meet the needs of the labour market
- To review and develop a sustainable funding model for the delivery of the Adult Education Budget, Higher Education and Level 4 and 5 work with a focus on higher level technical skills
- We will work to develop pathways for industry professionals into teaching, providing a 'scaffolded' system of development and training, bidding for funds to support new teachers where available and introducing a new applicant tracking system.
- A commitment to work with our unions to ensure staff pay awards are planned into our budgeting and measures are put in place to ensure we meet thresholds recommended as part of the
- To invest in our staff through continued support for professional development, digital development and our well-being programmes

- The further rejuvenation of our estate, including capital funds as part of the IoT and undertaking a campus “master planning” exercise to ensure we have shovel ready projects focused on areas of growth and refurbishment
- Consolidation of our previous strategy, including embedding of HAMEC with a Skills Advisory panel, work on Sustainable Construction, , partnerships with UKHSA and Stansted Airport College
- Continued investment in new technologies to support the development of digital skills