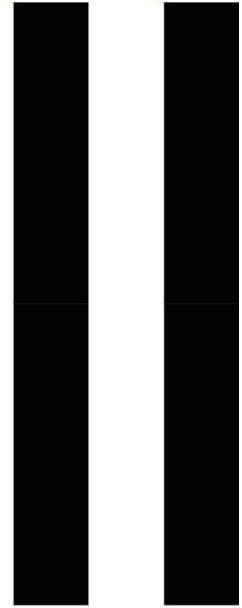
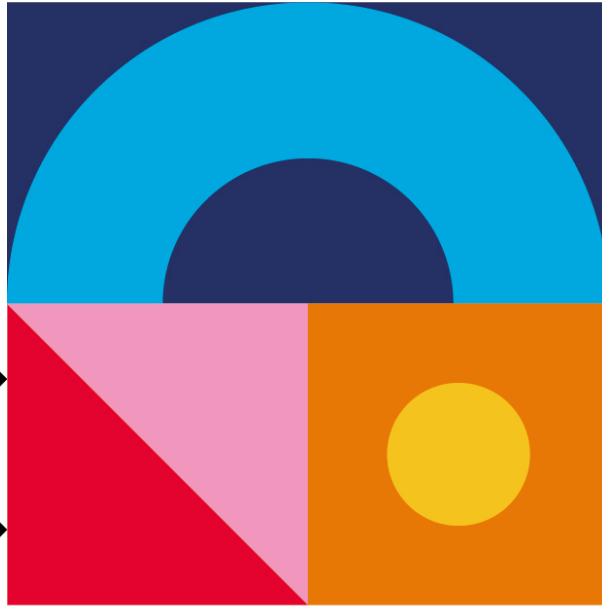
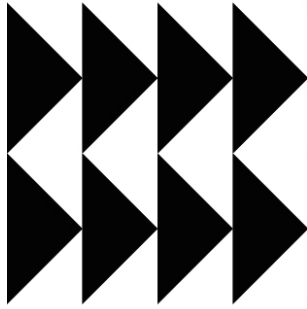
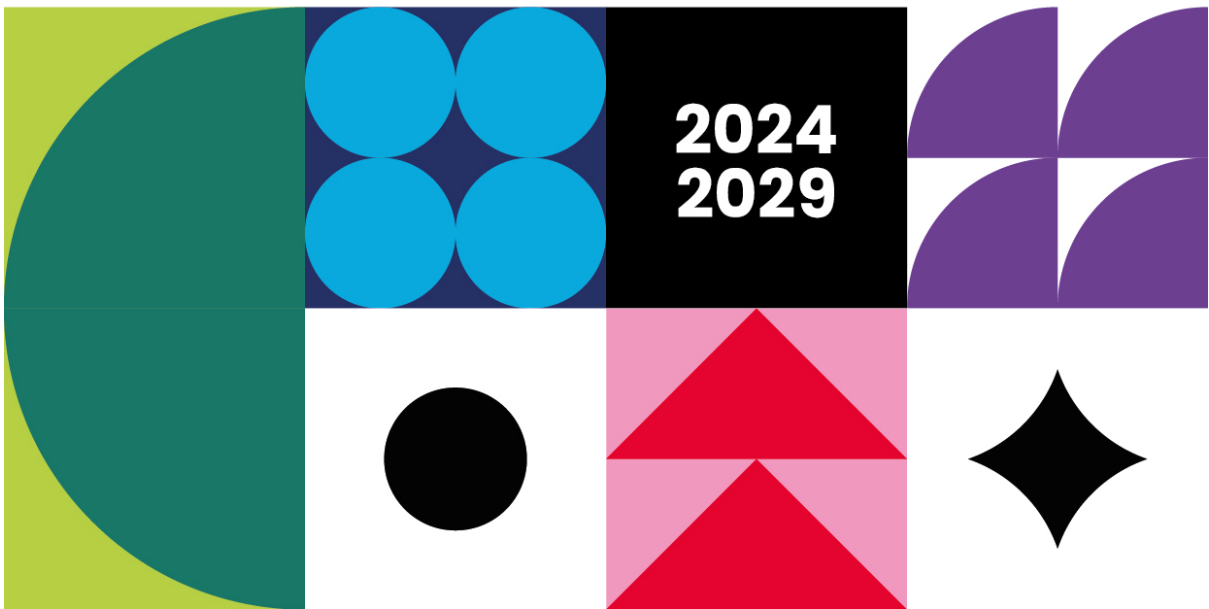


**HARLOW  
COLLEGE**



# **Harlow College Strategic Plan**



## Strategic Summary

We are committed to changing and transforming the lives of young people and adults in our community. We want all our learners to achieve their ambitions, contribute significantly to the productivity of the economy and have happy and purposeful lives. To support this, throughout our organisation we have a relentless focus on “More than Courses. Careers”.

We pride ourselves on our enterprising approach, developing in our learners the skills they need for our thriving innovation corridor.

At the core of our Strategy are 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

This document details our strategic intentions for the next 5 years and lays out the key principles behind our plan. Our shorter term aims, priorities and targets are outlined in our Annual Accountability Statement which is updated annually.

## Strategic Planning, Context and Place

Harlow College is recognised by Ofsted and others for providing good quality education to the West of Essex.

The College is situated in the heart of the UK's Innovation Corridor (UKIC), Britain's fastest growing region incorporating Cambridge, Essex, Hertfordshire and London. The corridor provides a national innovation and knowledge hub and a major location for knowledge-based jobs. With a population of 1.5m, Essex is a large and diverse county, located within the UK Innovation Corridor. It is within easy reach of London and Cambridge. Harlow is situated in the north west corner of Essex on the border with Hertfordshire and London. At the time of the 2021 Census, Harlow's population was 90,300, an increase of 13.9% since 2011. This increase was higher than the national average of 6.6% and is the 8<sup>th</sup> most densely populated of the 45 local authority areas in the East of England. Our second campus, Stansted Airport College, is located at London Stansted Airport in Uttlesford, a local government district in the north of the county. With a population of 91,300 in 2021, Uttlesford is a predominantly rural area.

The Essex economy is one of the country's largest with a £27.6bn gross value added, supporting 600,000 jobs and 75,000 businesses. It contains some of the most affluent but also most deprived areas of the country. With a GDP of £2.4bn, Harlow represents approximately 10% of this larger economy. Approximately 15 large employers are based in Harlow but its profile predominately consists of micro businesses, 88.7%, with 99.5% of its 3,235 businesses being classified as small or medium or micro enterprises.

Harlow has a significant skills disparity compared to the UK average, with only 38.9% of 16-64yr olds qualified to Level 3, compared to 61.5% nationally. This reduces to 24.7% qualified to at least NVQ Level 4 compared to 43.6% nationally. Of more significant concern is the high percentage of residents who have no qualifications, 8.6% compared to 6.6% nationally.

The unemployment rate in Harlow is 5.7% (December 2023), 2.4% higher than the year ending December 2022. Claimant count in March 2024 was 4.8%, an increase of 0.7% on March 2023. Of the 43,000 employees in Harlow, 34.9% work in wholesale and retail trade (8,000) and human health and social work activities (7,000). Other key employment sectors, accounting for 25.5% of the total workforce, are administrative and support service (4,500), education (4,000), professional, scientific and technical (3,500) and manufacturing (3,500).

Although there are a number of high-profile large employers in West Essex, the table below illustrates the large presence of small and micro-businesses. Harlow, as well as Essex overall, has a slightly larger proportion of micro-businesses than the regional average, with 88.7% of all businesses employing fewer than nine people and 99.5% of all businesses being in the SME category. Small businesses often require additional support to engage with the skills system and to provide opportunities such as apprenticeships.

Enterprises	Harlow (numbers)	Harlow (%)	East Region (%)
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
Total	3,235		

In their role as Employer Representative Body, the Essex Chambers of Commerce, have published the Greater Essex Local Skills Improvement Plan which identifies the sectors of importance to Essex, Southend-on-Sea and Thurrock, as well as priorities for how the local skills system could be improved, as follows:

<p><b>Skills priorities</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Soft skills and behaviours.</li> <li>• Basic English, Maths and ESOL (English for Speakers of Other Languages).</li> <li>• Digital skills and 'Digitech'.</li> <li>• Green skills.</li> <li>• Leadership and Management skills.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Skills system priorities</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Skills planning system for Essex.</li> <li>• System access and flexibility.</li> <li>• Information, Careers Advice and Guidance.</li> <li>• Tutor shortages and capacity of providers to respond.</li> <li>• Inclusive employment.</li> <li>• Barriers to engagement.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Essex Sectors and Technical Skills</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Advanced Manufacturing, Engineering &amp; Aviation.</li> <li>• AgriTech &amp; Food Tech.</li> <li>• Community &amp; Voluntary.</li> <li>• Construction.</li> <li>• Creative and Cultural.</li> <li>• DigiTech.</li> <li>• Education.</li> <li>• Health, Care &amp; Med Tech.</li> <li>• Professional Services.</li> <li>• Transport and Logistics.</li> </ul>
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Over the last 10 years, through our previous strategic plans and strategies, we have accomplished many achievements including:

- The establishment of Stansted Airport College and acting as the lead institution for the College Aviation Network.
- An ongoing recognition for innovation in digital technologies, including achievement of Apple Distinguished Status for a third time and becoming a recognised Apple Training Centre.

- The lead college for the Local Skills Improvement Fund, which follows on from the Strategic Development Fund. Within these two projects is an emphasis on partnership working across Greater Essex to support the Local Skills Improvement Plan.
- The development of an Electric and Hybrid Vehicle Training Centre and a Renewable Energy Centre complementing and building upon our work in the Harlow Advanced Manufacturing and Engineering Centre.
- The opening of our Institute of Technology, as part of a partnership across the South East.
- New facilities and curriculum to support our Health and Science students, including innovative partnerships with the NHS to improve pathways into both Health and Care.
- Successful establishment of the new T-Level curriculum.
- A strong focus on diversity and inclusion, including work with unemployed adults, high needs students, looked after children and ESOL learners.
- Ongoing good financial health and stability, allowing us to invest in people and resources.
- Continued and strong development of our employer-led curriculum and key partnerships with employers, including Stansted Airport, the Integrated Care Board, NHS England Princess Alexandra Hospital, Mitsubishi Electric and the Harlow and Gilston Garden Town development.
- A strong focus on pedagogy and professional development, supporting both our own staff and those across Essex and beyond.

We continue our commitment to ensuring that we change and transform the lives of young people and adults in our community. We want all 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.

In our next phase we will build on the key partnerships we have established with employers, businesses, community groups, schools, colleges and universities and look forward to achieving more successes for our students and the community we serve.

### **Our Five-Year Plan**

Our plan focuses on three priority sectors for growth in Essex and includes six cross-cutting themes. These sectors and themes align with the Essex Local Skills Improvement Plan.

- **Priority Sectors for Growth:**
  - Health Sciences;
  - Aviation, Transport, Logistics and Engineering;
  - Construction and Building Services.
  
- **Cross Cutting Themes:**
  - Career-led curriculum;
  - Soft skills and behaviours;
  - Excellent learning, teaching and assessment;
  - Digital skills;
  - Green skills;
  - People.

## **Delivering Our Strategy**

### **Career-Led curriculum**

Whilst all of our curriculum areas have a focus on ‘next steps’ and supporting students to progress to further study and/or employment, we recognise that there are key sectors which support local and regional growth. We will, therefore, specifically invest in:

- **Health Sciences:**

Creating a focused training academy linked to the NHS for Health Sciences and Social Care. This will build on the work we have already undertaken to develop industry standard resources, including simulated work environments, AR and VR. The work will be supported by key partners including the Integrated Care Board, the Essex Partnership University NHS Foundation Trust, Princess Alexandra Hospital and NHS England. In particular, we will develop new pathways in dental nursing, extending our technical occupational routes, apprenticeships and T-Levels. Our partnerships will provide meaningful work-related experience and industry placements to ensure the best outcomes for students. We will also focus on the benefits of being healthy in a wider sense for our entire student and staff body. This forms part of our approach to developing well-rounded people.

- **Aviation, Transport, Logistics and Engineering:**

Our focus will be on expanding our College at London Stansted Airport to extend the engineering curriculum to meet the licensing needs of employers based around the airport. In the longer term we are committed to creating a “green transport and logistics hub” – this focus on green transport will build on the success of our Electric and Hybrid Vehicle Training Centre. Our ambition is that Stansted Airport College will develop into a centre for the security and protected services curriculum. Finally, building on the work undertaken in our Stansted Academy with unemployed adults and our innovative enrichment pilot training programme, we want to widen access for underrepresented groups into aviation-based careers.

- **Construction and Building Services:**

The development of Harlow and Gilston Garden Town will provide excellent opportunities for employment. We want to establish a permanent base in the Gilston development, building on our previous successes of the Construction Skills Centre, to provide training and development opportunities in technical skills to support an expanding Harlow. We will extend our approach to Renewable Technologies and Retrofit Construction, further developing a SMART house using Modern Methods of Construction on campus. Our successful Construction and the Built Environment T-Level will be complemented by an apprenticeship route.

Our aspiration is to be recognised as a Centre for Technical Vocational Excellence in these three priority sectors.

Our curriculum teams will continue to review our offer through the use of data, such as labour market information, involvement of employers in curriculum design and delivery and the Super 6 Careers, ensuring that we are meeting the skills' needs to support growth in our area and that our students are able to make positive, strong progress.

- **Soft Skills and Behaviours:**

Integral to our career-led curriculum is the development of well-rounded individuals who are well prepared for their next steps in life. Employers report in the Local Skills Improvement Plan that young people do not always have the appropriate skills and behaviours to be ready for the workplace. We have developed a framework for improving soft skills in our students. We will embed this through:

- **Enrichment:**

Our enrichment programme is a key vehicle for the delivery of skills including communication, teamwork, creativity and problem solving. We will continue to dedicate Wednesday afternoons as part of our timetable to provide 16-19 year old students with access to wider experiences than offered on their main programme. Facilitating access for our students to these opportunities allows them to meet other people from across the College, to develop and refine wider hobbies and skills.

- **Enterprise and Competitions:**

We will work with World Skills to establish a competition programme which students across our College teams can access. Our aim is to provide opportunities for our students to compete in both regional and national finals. We will build on the success of other skills competitions, for example F1 in Schools and provide students with the opportunity to develop further skills such as resilience and independence.

- **Advocacy:**

We have a strong student voice, learner representative and ambassador programme which feeds into our Governing Body through our Student Governors. We will continue to ensure this is inclusive and representative. We will also actively build into our curriculum work to improve presentation and communication skills.

- **Employability:**

We will continue our work on our 'Super 6 Careers' strategy and the knowledge, skills and behaviours required for employment. To support the development of employability skills, we have a continued commitment to offering live briefs, work placements, industry placements and visiting speakers. Key industry partners and employers will be integrated into the course delivery in each of our priority sectors.

## **Excellent Learning, Teaching and Assessment**

Our Learning, Teaching and Assessment Strategy is integral to achieving our aims and priorities. It consists of ten key elements which support our goals:

- **4 Steps to Success** – we will use the 4 steps (Know, Show, Do, Improve) to build on students' prior knowledge, to provide support, ensure students are 'stretched and challenged' and to 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 continue to share good practice with colleagues within the College and across the sector.
- **Planned, Flexible and Responsive Curriculum** – we utilise a delivery model of unit days and half days to support deeper learning and skills development.
- **Evidence Based Teaching** – we will use teaching, learning and assessment which is fun, exciting and uses a variety of proven approaches to help our students learn and progress.
- **English and Maths** – critical English and Maths skills will be embedded into all of our daily practices.
- **Digital Learning is Our Norm** – we will make use of new technologies to improve teaching, learning and assessment practice to prepare students for their digital future.
- **Model the Workplace** – we will create an environment that prepares our students for their future, embedding the skills, knowledge and behaviours needed to be resilient, adapt and thrive. Activities such as live briefs, work experience and industrial placements, sat alongside our planned curriculum, will support this.

- **Encourage Community** – we aim to develop well rounded citizens who are environmentally conscious, tolerant and respectful. Access to a thriving enrichment programme will support their development of wider and personal skills.
- **Assessment and Feedback** – this will be engaging, regular, relevant and recorded, recognising achievement and setting challenging IMPROVE goals.
- **Future Destinations** – we are committed to broadening our students' experiences and developing ambitious aspirations to ensure the impact of our strategy on their careers and lives.

## Digital Skills

We are well recognised for our work to enhance digital skills. We were the first College in the UK to hold the Apple Distinguished International Kitemark and have maintained this. Technology is changing at a rapid pace and we understand the need to equip our learners with transferable and developmental skills. We will continue our investment in one-to-one devices for young people to ensure that no one is disadvantaged. Digital skills will be embedded in our adult programmes to give people the ability to navigate work and life. We also offer a specialist IT and Gaming curriculum, to help develop the technologists of the future.

Three specific areas of focus will be;

- **Augmented and Virtual Reality:**

Having begun work in this area, we can see real tangible benefits for students to experience AR/VR in “safe” simulated environments to practice real world scenarios. We will build on the successful work undertaken in the Health Sciences curriculum area to expand this approach across the College and our curriculum, investing in high quality resources to support learning.

- **Artificial Intelligence:**

We recognise that AI will become prevalent in society and understand the need to educate staff and students on its ethical use. We also know that it can be used as a powerful tool for learning and for improving business processes and whilst embracing the positive outcomes of AI, we know that this needs to be balanced with appropriate use. Our strategy will be to utilise it to smooth business processes, for example within student admissions or first line support. We will also explore methods for its use to reduce workload and in marking and assessment. We will always do this from an ethical standpoint.

- **Digital Assessment:**

We believe digital assessment will become more prevalent over the life of this Strategic Plan. We will therefore ensure that appropriate resources and CPD are in place to adapt our approaches as digital assessment grows. We have in place already strong foundations for assessment of learning digitally from our use of iPads and tools such as Padlet and Showbie, to document

assessment and feedback using vlogging tools. We are therefore confident we are well prepared for digital assessment advances.

### **Green Skills:**

The College is committed to the Carbon Reduction Road Map agreed by the Association of Colleges and we are currently part way through our implementation.

Our next phase is:

- **A Curriculum Review:**

Using the United Nations' sustainable development goals, focused on people, planet and prosperity, our curriculum teams will undertake a mapping exercise identifying how they can integrate these into their curriculum and its delivery. We will review this approach through our 'Power of 3' peer observation programme and walk-through process. We will embed and promote our approach over the five years of this plan.

- **Developing employer-led modules:**

We will build on the success of the Electric and Hybrid Vehicle Centre and Renewable Energy Centre to develop further modules for upskilling and reskilling as the advancement of green technologies becomes embedded in society.

- **Investment in our Estate:**

We have undertaken a decarbonisation survey supported by external consultants. Our next step is to develop a long and medium term plan for investment in green technologies across our campuses.

### **People:**

People are critical to the delivery of our strategic plan, both our staff and our external stakeholders, for the benefit of our students.

Our HR and a CPD Strategy will include:

- **Recruitment and Retention:**

We will continue to have a particular focus on hard to recruit disciplines and the development of a College apprenticeship programme.

- **Pay and Reward:**

We will work with partner associations to lobby for parity with school teacher pay and continue our good relationships locally with our unions to discuss fair pay. We will review our approach to well-being, staff awards and benefits schemes to ensure these are effective.

- **Equality, Diversity and Inclusion:**

We will gain the Investors in Diversity Standard, embedding the FREDIE (Fairness, Respect, Equality, Diversity, Inclusion and Engagement) principles as the backbone of our work.

- **CPD:**

We continue our commitment to CPD, including industrial updating as a key part of our approach, as well as investment in teacher training and development. We have set an aspiration to become the recognised centre for Greater Essex, supporting Technical Teacher Development, building on the successes achieved on our work on teacher development within the Local Skills Improvement Fund and the Strategic Development Fund.

Partnerships are critical to the delivery of our plan. Our focus is to ensure we have excellent links with external stakeholders including employers, educators, community and civic functions. Our methods for ensuring this are:

- The composition and skills of our Corporation.
- Representation on relevant external bodies, e.g. Skills Boards and Growth Boards.
- Active involvement in wider curriculum and industry networks, for example Essex Partnership Universities Health Trust.
- Facilitation and attendance at employer round tables.

### **Monitoring:**

The success of our plan relies on financial and organisational stability to give the best outcomes for our students and communities.

Every year, Key Performance Indicators will be set to monitor progress through the College's Quality Improvement and Curriculum Action Plan, Financial Plan and Strategy, Estates Strategy, HR Strategy and this Strategic Plan.