Employer Engagement Strategy 2016-2020

October 2016
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1.0 Vision

1.1 The College is a responsive institution which aims:

- To meet the needs of local businesses and employers in developing their own skills and those of their workforce to support the development of our regional and national economy.

And

- To ensure that the curriculum offer of the college is relevant, appropriate, current and in line with demand from employers and labour market information.

2.0 Introduction and Context

2.1 In its Strategic Plan 2016 – 2020, the College has identified five Strategic Goals, relating to:

- Respond to the needs of our region
- Deliver successful outcomes for all learners
- Provide a high quality College experience
- Grow our business
- Build Sustainability

Each Strategic Goal has associated Objectives which the College aims to achieve.

2.2 To support the achievement of the Strategic Goals, the College has agreed a set of ten Strategies relating to:

- Learning and Teaching
- Learner Engagement
- Employer Engagement
- HR and Organisational Development
- ISLT
- Finance
- Procurement
- Estates
- Marketing and Communication
- Access and Inclusion
2.3 The College has benefited from its investment in estates with a modern learning environment for all students. The main Scottish Borders Campus, in Galashiels, is shared with Heriot-Watt University’s School of Textiles and Design. The modernised estate has good access to ICT resources, interactive technology, virtual learning environment and library facilities. The Campus provides a useful resource for local businesses and employers for education and training purposes in addition to conference facilities, meeting space and networking events.

2.4 The campus in Hawick has been rebranded as the Business Development Centre and provides excellent training facilities for businesses and employers.

2.5 Although individual strategies are not linked to any one Goal, but are intended to support the Strategy as a Whole, the Employer Engagement Strategy links to a number of outcomes and objectives within the Strategic Goals and contributes to the Key Strategic Indicators:

Goal 1  Respond to the needs of the region:
• Understand partners and stakeholders through meaningful dialogue and become an innovative and reliable partner delivering priority outcomes for our region
• Develop and deliver provision to meet national and local priorities, particularly through initiatives to Develop the Young Workforce, and widen access to education and reduce inequalities
• Support economic development and business growth through engagement with employers through the delivery of recognised workforce qualifications and bespoke effective knowledge transfer activities
• Support our communities to build capacity, increase opportunity and reduce inequality
• Deliver efficient and successful learner journeys through a modern, relevant and coherent curriculum which provides appropriate pathways to positive destinations
Goal 2  Deliver successful outcomes for all learners:
- Develop a range of employability skills for all learners to support success and progression
- Deliver innovative and engaging teaching which enables and supports effective learning

Goal 3  Provide a high quality College experience:
- Create a well-supported, highly valued and confident workforce
- Energise approaches to quality improvement for learning and teaching and business support services

Goal 4  Grow our business:
- Build on our positive local and national reputation
- Build a systematic approach to market research
- Build on our niche markets and specialist products
- Develop new markets and opportunities from Borders Railway
- Build our commercial portfolio to increase non-S FC funding streams

Goal 5  Build sustainability:
- Increase commercial income to allow for financial headroom and future investment.

3.0 Strategy Themes and Objectives

This strategy provides the direction to both Scottish Funding Council (SFC) funded courses and non-SFC funded provision.

In supporting the Strategic Goals, the College has identified five themes within this strategy. They are:

3.1 Relationships with Business/Employers

The College will:

3.1.1 Develop relationships with existing businesses and employers to raise awareness of the full range of opportunities available to them.
3.1.2 Develop internal relationships to create a coherent and organisational approach to Employer Engagement leading to greater opportunities for students and maximising commercial opportunities.
3.1.3 Build on existing and new partnerships including the Community Planning Partnership, South of Scotland Skills Agency, Developing the Young Workforce Industry Board and other industry led groups to understand current and future workforce requirements among all partners.
3.1.4 Ensure all programme areas utilise the market research data available from SDS including Regional Skills Assessments and sector specific Skills Investment Plans when planning the curriculum.

3.1.5 Develop a schedule of Industry Advisory Boards across all programme areas which shape the curriculum and the development of learning and teaching strategies.

3.1.6 Prioritise sectors of strategic importance and particularly those sectors highlighted within the College Outcome Agreement.

3.2 Employability

The College will:

3.2.1 Further develop our use of destination tracking to promote the wide range of positive destinations available, and to inform curriculum design.

3.2.2 Develop policies aimed at developing employability and entrepreneurship, particularly in the area of career management skills.

3.2.3 Develop and deliver an Employability and Work Experience Policy that includes college wide measures of success in employability.

3.2.4 Fully embed the Education Scotland’s Work Placement Standard.

3.2.5 Work with local employers and businesses to promote Modern Apprenticeships and support workforce development in our region through the offer of training and development opportunities for employees and apprentices.

3.2.6 Work with local employers and Community Planning Partners to improve opportunities for those learners who experience additional barriers to sustainable employment.

3.2.7 Develop and deliver new partnerships with key regional employers and for those sectors not currently engaging within the region.

3.3 Profile and Publicity

The College will:

3.3.1 Develop our market research capability to inform product development and sales plans to increase commercial income.

3.3.2 Proactively market existing products and opportunities to businesses and employers using a range of tools including print material, website and social media, network events and other employer engagement activities.
3.3.3 Promote good news stories, case studies and products and services through a planned and coherent marketing plan for employer engagement.

3.3.4 Promote work placement opportunities and benefits to local businesses and employers.

3.3.5 Liaise with schools and the local authority to create a shared understanding of work placement requirements within the senior phase.

3.3.6 Jointly plan and host a bi-annual region wide conference on the theme of Developing the Young Workforce with Scottish Borders Council and the Borders DYW Industry Group to ensure the college meets the recommendations of the DYW Implementation Plan.

3.4 Curriculum and Product Development

The College will:

3.4.1 Review our existing curriculum and portfolio of products regularly and update them to ensure they meet the needs of Businesses and Employers, particularly for STEM related subjects.

3.4.2 Implement the Gender Equality Action Plan, particularly relating to STEM subject areas.

3.4.3 Develop e-learning products to ensure Businesses can have access to more flexible approaches to learning.

3.4.4 Improve the system and processes which support the development of new products from inception through market identification to the market.

3.4.5 Monitor contract websites for appropriate bidding and development opportunities.

3.4.6 Monitor Scottish Government initiatives, priorities and opportunities to support the development and delivery of products to businesses and employers.

3.5 Use of Campuses and Estates

The College will:

3.5.1 Optimise the use of college campuses, particularly the Hawick Centre for Business Development, to support business development in our region and to generate commercial income from our existing resources.

3.5.2 Promote our campuses as a regional resource for events and business activity to meet the needs of our local economy and community.
4.0 Responsibilities

4.1 The Regional Board is responsible for setting the strategy.

4.2 The Vice Principal - Curriculum and the Vice Principal - Finance and Resources are responsible for achieving the aims of the strategy.

4.3 The Senior Management Team is responsible for setting and ensuring the implementation of the strategy.

4.4 The Heads of Faculty and Support Service Managers are responsible for implementing the strategy. They will use this strategy to inform their Self-evaluation and Annual Development Planning and will report on progress toward the objectives.

4.5 The Managers, Programme Leaders and Lecturers, Student Support Service Staff and students are responsible for delivering the objectives of the strategy.

5.0 Monitoring and Review

5.1 The Curriculum and Quality Committee will monitor progress annually.

5.2 The Senior Management Team will monitor and review progress through self-evaluation reports. It will make recommendations for adjustment to the Regional Board where appropriate.

6.0 Related Documents

6.1 Strategic Plan 2016 – 2020

6.2 Equalities, Diversity and Inclusion Policy

6.3 Essential Skills Policy

6.4 Work Experience Policy