

Skills and Enterprise Strategy 2030

Learners Come First



Your College, Your Future

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Skills and Enterprise Strategy 2030

Learners Come First

Foreword

Welcome to Borders College's Skills and Enterprise Strategy for 2025-2030. It is designed to support the outcomes set out in **Vision 2030**, our statement of ambition.

At Borders College, our mission is to provide the highest quality learning experience and outcomes, to support business and drive economic growth in the Scottish Borders. Our **Vision 2030** clearly states that our learners are central to our purpose, and this Skills and Enterprise Strategy clearly defines how we will ensure that their experience and outcomes are the best they can be and that they are enabled to move on to positive destinations.

We can only succeed in our ambitions by bringing people together, guided by our shared values and sense of purpose.

Vision 2030 has stated that Borders College is:

- Respectful;
- Responsible; and
- People-Centred.

Enabling people to succeed means all of us living by those values and this Strategy sets out how we will work together to make Borders College a place where everyone can succeed. I look forward to working with our team to ensure that is realised.



Pete Smith, Principal and CEO



Introduction

Borders College **Vision 2030**, “Your College Your Future” is our statement of ambition, setting out what we want to achieve for the Scottish Borders by 2030. This Skills and Enterprise Strategy is one of six key supporting strategies and will be pivotal in ensuring our ambitions are realised.

Our College has a long-standing commitment to delivering high-quality learning experiences while also supporting businesses to equip learners with the skills, knowledge and behaviours they need to succeed. This Strategy builds on that foundation, setting a clear direction for the coming years; specifically, it describes our approach to achieving three strategic outcomes for our region:

- 1. Improved learner outcomes** – More learners will be supported to achieve their learning outcomes and achieve positive destinations.
- 2. Sustainable curriculum that meets the needs of our region** – Our curriculum priorities will clearly reflect regional needs, with clear learning pathways supported by a sustainable resource plan.

3. Increased support to regional businesses – We will demonstrate increased engagement with businesses across our region, with a focus on supporting innovation and growing commercial opportunities.

We recognise that every learner journey is different and can depend on several factors. An individual’s learning journey should be positive, offer progression, meet their aspirations and have a destination that is important to them. We will ensure that our support is flexible and responsive to learner need.

Similarly, we understand that business need differs across sectors and according to scale. We will ensure our programmes of learning are designed to meet the needs of the regional economy and that we are agile in our delivery.

But we do not see our provision for individuals and businesses as being separate. Our integrated Single Delivery Model ensures that we maximise responsiveness across all our programmes of learning and that no group is seen as more important than any other.

Our Regional Board and our staff team are fully committed to our learners and their success. We are certified as a “Great Place to Work” and, with student satisfaction rates at 98%, we are and will continue to be ‘A great place to learn’.

Your College, Your Future

We are the largest provider of Modern Apprenticeships in the region, supporting over 650 individuals annually, with 289 directly contracted starts in 2024-25.

Regional Context

Borders College plays a pivotal role in the delivery of skills and learning in the Scottish Borders. As the largest provider of tertiary education in the Region, in 2024-25 we enrolled 1,143 full-time and 2,965 part-time students. We are also the largest provider of Modern Apprenticeships in the Region, with 289 starts in 2024-25.

In recent years we have experienced strengthening demand, leading to increased student numbers. At the same time, we have improved both our success and satisfaction rates. For 2024-25, this translated to:

- 5% improvement in student outcomes across all modes of delivery, and remaining above-sector averages in all modes of delivery
- 7% improvement in outcomes for students attending our 'Schools Academy' programmes for students also attending secondary schools across the Scottish Borders
- Over 16% improvement in outcomes for 'Care Experienced Students'
- Overall Student satisfaction rate of 98%.

Over 20% of our full time enrolments are Higher Education students, and we work closely with University partners to ensure clear progression routes.

We also pride ourselves in being an inclusive college. We have robust processes and amazing staff to support our most vulnerable students.

As the designated Regional College for the Scottish Borders, our curriculum offer still primarily reflects the needs of the Region and is based on market intelligence gained from our partnerships with industry sectors and schools, and in utilising our Regional Skills Assessments to shape our future offer to meet anticipated changes. We recognise the ever-changing economic landscape and we will invest in our staff and prepare our students to support businesses and the Borders economy for the next five years and beyond.

Our Skills Delivery Model

Students are the centre of everything we do at Borders College. Our staff and board are fully committed to their individual growth and success. We continually work with key stakeholders to ensure a 'partnership' approach to delivery, with a focus on quality, digital enhancement, real life work experience environments, opportunities for progression (employment or further/higher education), pathways that offer qualifications and skills, aligning our delivery to regional need and government priorities.

For Borders College students progressing to employment after completing their qualification, our aim is to ensure they are work- and workplace-ready. In addition to their vocational skills, they have the confidence capacity and capability to make an immediate and effective contribution to their employer's business and to add value from their first day in the job.

We also work with our Students' Association to seek their views and feedback on all aspects of their learning journey.

Our College has a rich background of leadership and skills delivery in sustainable practices and we pride ourselves on embedding an ethos of sustainability in all our activities.

Recognising the diversity of experience of our learners, we take a "trauma-informed" approach to our learning and support models.

Throughout our planning, we ensure our decisions are data-driven. Our robust planning ensures that our offer aligns to regional need, and maximises progression opportunities and potential economic growth.

Our engagement with South of Scotland Enterprise and our Regional Economic partnership ensures we are forward-thinking, and able to plan for and support major inward investment opportunities for the Region.

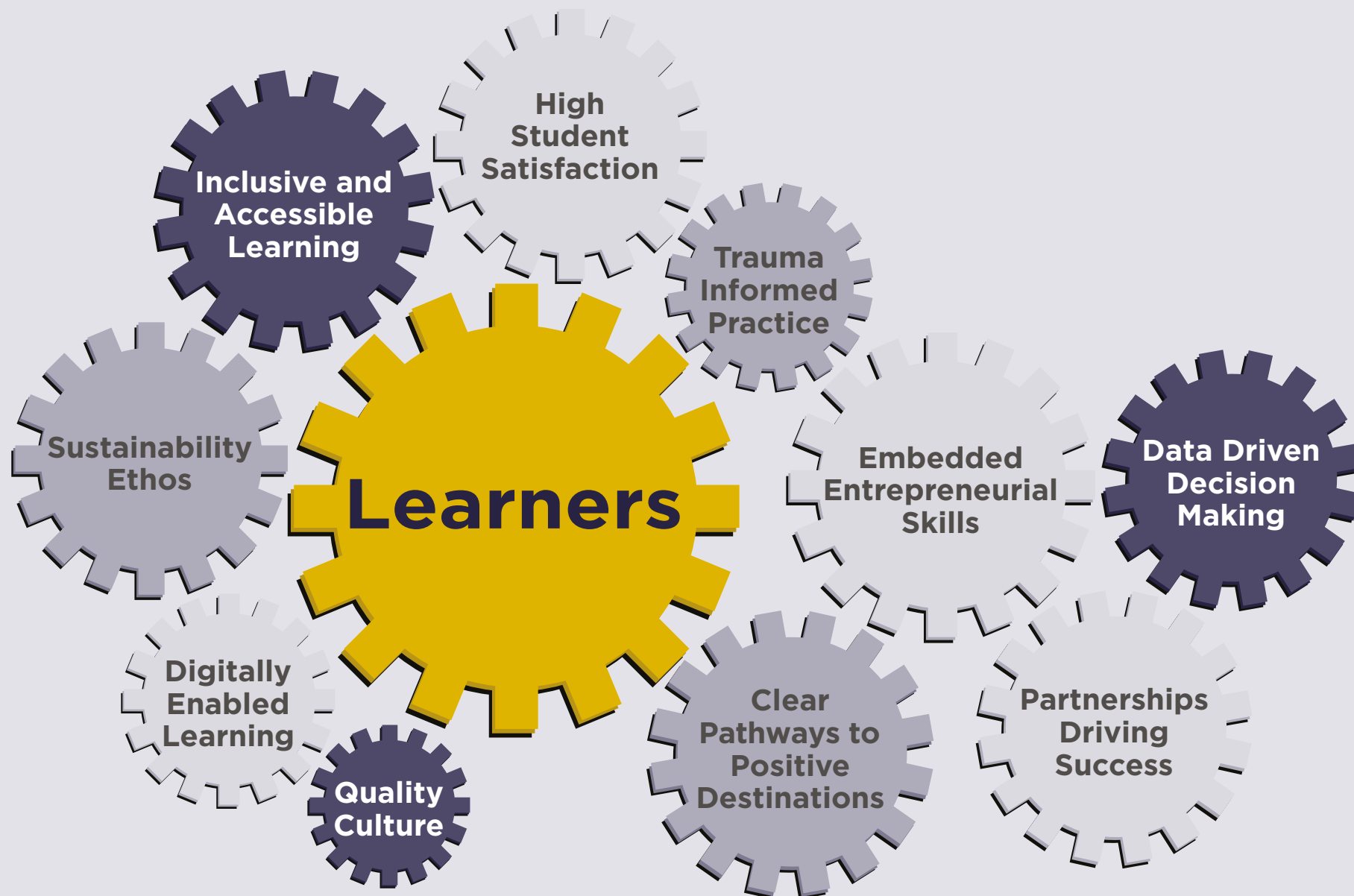
Over the next five years, our holistic approach to skills delivery will ensure we meet the needs of all of our learners, and will enrich their College experience. Our lecturing and professional services teams will have the tools they need to develop and deliver our curriculum to support changing regional need, while ensuring our learners remain at the centre of our thinking. This will deliver improved learner success and satisfaction, increased business engagement and commercial activity, and greater coherence in our learner pathways.

“

The Schools Academy Partnership between SBC and Borders College reflects a shared commitment to delivering rich curriculum opportunities for young people. It stands as a powerful example of what can be achieved through genuine collaboration and innovation. By reimagining the school week and creating a dedicated Friday to College-led learning experience, our young people have flourished. Together we are aligning school and college learning to inspire ambition, develop real-world skills and achieve industry-recognised qualifications, creating clear pathways to future study and employment in the Borders and beyond.”

Catherine Thomson, Quality Improvement Manager, Scottish Borders Council

Our Holistic Approach to Skills Planning and Delivery



“

Working with Borders College has been an extremely positive experience for the Adult Social Care Department of Scottish Borders Council. The collaboration has strengthened communication and created a real sense of partnership. The delivery of Social Services & Healthcare Qualifications has had a significant impact – not only on the professional growth of our staff but also on the quality of care and support provided to our service users. Borders College has been

consistently supportive in facilitating awards and modern apprenticeships, ensuring candidates receive tailored assistance to meet their individual learning needs. The flexibility and responsiveness of the assessors has been outstanding, enabling us to overcome challenges and maintain high standards throughout the process.

Regular monthly feedback meetings have been invaluable. These sessions provide updates on the

progress of each application and detailed reports from assessors on current students. Any concerns or issues are highlighted promptly, allowing me to communicate effectively with managers so that additional support can be put in place for candidates when needed. This proactive approach has made a real difference to staff confidence and competence, and ultimately to the people we support.”

Mark Chandler, Practice Mentor – Learning and Development Team
Adult Social Care, Scottish Borders Council



“

SDS and Borders College have a strong working partnership that ensures learners receive the right support at the right time. Open communication between College staff and SDS advisers enables timely support for learners as their needs arise. This is further reinforced through an annual Partnership Agreement, which helps plan and coordinate support throughout the year. Our partnership is an excellent example of effective collaboration in practice Skills Development Scotland.”

”



Developing Enterprise

Borders College plays a pivotal role in the delivery of skills for the region. Working in partnership with over 500 businesses on an annual basis, we recognise having a skilled workforce is key for our region to prosper and flourish. With almost 80% of our students being part-time, it is vital for us to respond in a timely manner and ensure our business portfolio offer impacts positively to regional need and priorities. Our partnership approach has seen considerable success:

- We are the 5th largest provider of Modern Apprenticeships in Scotland
- We are the best performing regional college in Scotland for Modern Apprenticeships, with a success rate over 83%



At Matthew Lee Joinery Ltd, we are proud to see our employees developing their skills through the excellent training and education at Borders College for over 10 years now. Investing in apprenticeships not only strengthens our business, but also builds confident, capable tradespeople for the future. ”

- Annually, we deliver to almost 1,000 people in employment to gain a qualification in their career journey
- Annually, we support over 500 employers in addressing their training and upskilling needs

As we look to continue working with our partners, there are a number of drivers that must shape our engagement:

- UK and Scottish Government strategies
- Skills Development Scotland Regional Skills Assessment
- Transition to a net-zero economy
- Inward Investment Opportunities
- Local Labour Market Intelligence
- Borderlands Inclusive Growth Deal and Edinburgh and South East Scotland City Region Deal

The key to the success of our partnership journey with our business partners will be a deeper engagement model across our curriculum development and delivery teams, and we look forward to successful joint working to our mutual benefit.

While the College rightly focuses on providing skills and knowledge that employers want and that meet the needs of the Borders Region, we also want to encourage a culture of enterprise at the College that empowers students to set up their own business, work for themselves and contribute to the economic growth and productivity of the Borders Region. A number of our vocational courses specifically develop enterprise and entrepreneurship and promote self-employment as a realistic and achievable alternative career route. Our Start Up Centre creates a safe space for those would-be entrepreneurs to test their ideas, develop their business plans, and provides support and signposting to business services that ensures any new business set up by a Borders College Graduate has the best possible chance to develop and succeed.

Over the next five years, we will increase the numbers of businesses we directly engage with, and will develop deeper relationships. This will enable us to build a richer understanding of need, and ultimately increase our upskilling and reskilling delivery to support economic growth.

The Scottish Borders as a Destination for Business

The Scottish Borders

• **Skilled workforce**
Economic growth

Co-creation,
co-development
and co-delivery of
courses that
promote upskilling

Experienced staff
to deliver bespoke
training required
for our employed
students

Responsive to
regional need

Employer
satisfaction rates
at 90% and above

PARTNERSHIPS



99%

of students say staff encourage students to take responsibility for their learning.

4,100

students enrolled at Borders College in 2024-25.

92%

of students believe all students at the College are treated equally and fairly by staff.

“

Achieving my qualification has given me the opportunity to develop my skills and progress in my job. Doing so has also allowed me to gain the confidence to pursue a qualification as a ‘mature student’ and hopefully make my family proud.”

Laura,
SCQF Level 7, Management

We will agree annual KPIs that will enable the following improvements to performance over the period of this Strategy:

How We Will Measure Our Success

- Our student success rates will improve by 1% per annum, and remain in the top eight performing colleges in Scotland
- Our student satisfaction rate will be maintained at a minimum of 95%
- Our full-time higher education enrolments will increase by 10% annually to reach a total of at least 250 by 2027-28, and will be maintained thereafter
- Our employer satisfaction rate will increase from a baseline of 90% in 2025-26 to at least 95% in 2028-29, and will be maintained thereafter
- Our commercial activity will increase by at least 2% year-on-year
- The number of our full-time courses incorporating entrepreneurial activity will increase from 10% in 2025-26 to at least 25% by 2028-29, and will be maintained thereafter





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Credits

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Borders College and
NC Art and Design students.

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