
LAKES APPROACH TO DELIVERING EXCELLENT TECHNICAL
AND VOCATIONAL DEGREE LEVEL EDUCATION

HIGHER EDUCATION STRATEGY

SEPTEMBER 2022 TO SEPTEMBER 2025

LAKES COLLEGE - OUR STORY

We are the main provider of Further and Higher Education in West Cumbria, serving primarily the boroughs of Allerdale and Copeland with a wide range of technical and vocational education, training and services. We have served our region for many decades, during which we have established an excellent reputation for our technical training, support and responsiveness, delivered from our modern, well-resourced campus and facilities.

We are very ambitious for the future, aiming to ensure the people, communities and employers of West Cumbria and beyond have ready access to a consistently excellent technical college. Our Beyond Good programme described in this document is driving our development to ensure we have the highest standards and expectations. We are committed to long term sustainability and financial health, positive environmental credentials, top class facilities, highly skilled and well supported staff, innovation, genuine collaboration and a broad offer from Levels 1 to 7 that is well suited to local needs and national priorities.

Our latest inspection in late 2017, confirmed judgements of Good for all aspects of provision.

WHAT WE DO

We reflect and respond to the needs of our service area and communities, meeting the training requirements of the broad cross-section of employers in our region. Nuclear and its wider supply chain is a significant sector for us. We are a founding member of the National College for Nuclear (NCfN) and host its Northern Hub on our campus, delivering nuclear-related courses and qualifications up to degree level. STEM subjects, Construction, Civils, and Health and Social Care are our main areas of provision, whilst we maintain a broad and deep offer to support our local economy and communities, including: the Arts, Computing and Business, Public Services and Sport, Catering, Education and Early Years. We are a significant HE provider locally, particularly within Engineering, Construction and the Sciences. We have introduced T levels into our offer, and intend to expand this provision in line with the national timeframe. Similarly we have developed a substantial Civil Engineering Training Centre to support and train the skills pipeline in this important sector.

“We are fully inclusive and believe in the potential of everyone.”



Our interests in the NCfN and expanding open learning have combined to increase our geographical reach in recent years. We have successfully grown our apprenticeship and degree apprenticeship offer, which now represents circa one third of our funded activity, reflecting our excellent work with employers locally. We engage in many value adding partnerships with employers, organisations and stakeholder groups across the region, including partnerships with hundreds of employers, the NHS, both borough councils, regional development groups, the Cumbria Colleges FE4 collaboration, professional and chartered bodies, local headteachers and schools forums, Cumbria Careers Hub, and various groups within Cumbria LEP.

We are a long-standing, well used and valuable community resource – we make a range of facilities available to local communities and employers, including our modern all weather pitch, sports hall and gym, and lecture theatre/ conference areas.

As a technical college we focus on employment and the workplace, developing the skills, experiences and qualifications that our learners need to access the workplace and develop careers. Progression to the highest level, into employment, and within careers are key drivers for us.

We are fully inclusive and believe in the potential of everyone. Our key markets are: full-time Study Programmes, Apprenticeships at all levels, Adult Learners across a wide range of courses and online, Higher Education including Degree Apprenticeships, and full cost commercial work. We also deliver within various contracts to support learning, upskilling, reskilling and employment e.g. the ESF supported Edge programme and DWP contracts. In recent years we typically have circa 4,000 learners of various types per annum. During academic year 2020/21 we were awarded the contract to lead on the Strategic Development Fund pilot granted to Cumbria, within which we are developing and enhancing new and innovative ways of further engaging with employers and industry.

CONTEXT AND BACKGROUND

Lakes College serves the largely rural and remote communities of Allerdale and Copeland in West Cumbria. This sparsely populated catchment includes areas of high deprivation, with a local economy heavily reliant on the Nuclear, Manufacturing, Health, Public Sector and Tourism sectors., characterised by a small number of large employers and a large number of small and micro businesses. It is an area with long standing HE participation “cold spots” and a labour market characterised by shortages of skilled staff qualified to L4 across many sectors. The demographic profile shows a long-standing pattern of an ageing population, with skills shortages and high average work force age. This position is exacerbated by a notable pattern of HE applicants leaving the area to take undergraduate programmes with very low levels of return for employment.

Several factors combine to support growth and development in high quality, employer-informed, vocational education and training at Higher Levels available to employers and residents in West Cumbria.

Lakes College currently has 413 higher education learners enrolled on courses covering a range of areas including Mechanical and Electrical Engineering, Nuclear Decommissioning & Science, Applied Chemistry, Civil Engineering, Teacher Education, Early Years & Child Care and Sports & Physical Education. A large number of our higher education learners are also registered on higher and degree level apprenticeships which evidence our commitment to employer engagement and responsiveness and indeed the development of knowledge, skills and behaviours to meet the needs of local, regional and national employers.

“Lakes College and the National College for Nuclear offer fantastic courses, they’ve got a great support network and I definitely would not have the career that I have today without them.”

Martyne Simpson, Bsc Decommissioning and Waste Management



Our first time pass rates on higher and degree level apprenticeships exceeds 95% with over 50% of our honours degree learners achieving first class degrees. Our ambition is to extend our provision to support and meet additional employer demand in Digital Skills, Leadership & Management, Health, Care & Support and the low carbon economy. Also, according to the 2022 LSIP Trailblazer report, a number of things within Cumbria are required to change to support skills development. These include:

- Collaboration between Employers & Providers
- System Navigation
- Aggregation & Co-ordination of Demand
- Growing & Expanding Provision
- Improving Flexibility & Modularity
- Career/Skills Progression

Our Higher Education Strategy has been designed to carefully consider these findings and to focus our Higher Education approach in supporting these requirements.

An interesting set of statistics which evolved from a survey presented within the LSIP report (see previous page), also demonstrated the variety of recent training requests against those fulfilled per sector. Such as:

	Training requests	Un-fulfilled requests
Visitor economy	29%	71%
Land based / Agri services	29%	71%
Health & Social Care	29.5%	70.5%
Construction	21.9%	78.1%
Advanced Manufacturing	27.5%	72.5%
Transport / Logistics	23.6%	76.4%
Nuclear Engineering	18.8%	81.2%

A rather sobering set of statistics relating to general skill and training requirements which some are reflected within higher education demand. Our strategy addresses a number of these including Visitor Economy (digital & management), Health & Social Care (higher technical and leadership & management), Construction, Advanced Manufacturing (including higher digital skills) and Nuclear Engineering.

HE AT LAKES COLLEGE

As the only Technical College within a 35-mile radius, the college has had a long standing HE offer, providing focused vocational and academic courses from Entry Level to Honours Degree Level across a range of discipline areas. This focus has provided a limited scope. In addition to the context summarised above, many employers now embrace the concept of higher and degree level apprenticeships to support their people and CPD strategies to enable them to meet various current and future challenges, including:

- nuclear new build
- the continuing and lengthy nuclear clean up and decommissioning requirements
- the new low carbon energy strategy and Green Sector Higher Technical Skills
- growth in the need for management of SMEs in tourism, care and public sectors as well as upskilling and cross skilling whilst in employment.

We understand the vital role that HE plays as a key driver for both economic growth, social progression and personal achievement. This HE Strategy sets out our intention to further develop and grow a high quality HE offer that supports employers and employment locally. This is based upon ambitious plans to enhance access and availability to vocational HE programmes to meet the needs of our local community and satisfy business demand. This higher education strategy is based upon a careful and considered understanding of employment conditions and demand for skilled technicians qualified to degree level. It closely aligns to the Cumbria Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) skills development plan, the recently piloted Local Skills Implementation Plan, and the national policy context driving vocational HE. It seeks to broaden the higher education curriculum base thus enabling local students and employers to address their higher education and skill requirements locally, here in West Cumbria.

Also historically, upon the completion of A-level's, some young people in West Cumbria have left the area to study University level courses outside of the County, primarily due to the lack of a broad, accessible, higher education provision. Often these talented graduates do not return to the area and a skill/talent base is lost. This strategy addresses this issue.

The strategy considers growth in priority curriculum areas, as evidenced by the research work undertaken by the Local Skills Improvement Plan (LSIP) Trailblazer for Cumbria Group. Such curriculum areas include:

- Process Engineering & Science
- Digital Coding & Computer Networking
- Nuclear Decommissioning & Clean-up
- Low Carbon and Green Energy Technology
- Power Engineering & Infrastructure
- Civil Engineering & Construction
- Health Care & Social Care
- Leadership and Management for SMEs (Tourism, Public Sector)
- Nuclear Science, Operations & Technology
- Project management
- Early Years and Education
- Automotive Maintenance Technology & Management

Excellence in delivering accessible, employment-focused Higher Education is central to the college's vision to be the organisation of choice for knowledge, skills and behavioural development for young people, adults and employers recognising our excellent, distinctive and innovative approaches in combining our vocational expertise and resources with our academic and higher education credentials.



LAKES COLLEGE HAS A VISION TO BE
AN AMBITIOUS
TECHNICAL COLLEGE
THAT ENHANCES THE
PROSPERITY AND PROSPECTS
OF OUR PEOPLE AND
COMMUNITIES

OUR MISSION & PURPOSE IS TO
ENABLE PEOPLE TO RECOGNISE,
DEVELOP AND FULFILL
THEIR POTENTIAL

OUR VALUES SUPPORT ALIGNMENT WITH GOALS AND PEOPLE

—READY—

- We are prepared, present and committed to our best
- We take responsibility for our own learning and improvement
- We all take responsibility to do the right thing

—RESPECTFUL—

- We deliver consistently high standards for all our customers
- We respect and value everyone's contribution and celebrate differences
- We respect our environment and the role we play in our community

—POTENTIAL—

- Be your best, support and inspire others to be their best
- We work together as one college
- We are productive, reflective and seek to improve
- We embrace opportunities to build resilience



OUR GUIDING PRINCIPLES

AMBITION

- To be agile, embracing change and innovation in all of our operations.
- We have high standards for ourselves and our learners and will always act and behave in a manner commensurate with those standards
- We are committed to delivering and hitting our targets

COMMUNITY

- We ensure our offer and services meet local, regional and national priorities, are closely tuned to Cumbria's economic needs and priorities, and enable as many people as possible to contribute to economic growth and share prosperity
- We recognise our role in serving our local community, providing community assets and access to skills development for all

SUSTAINABLE OPERATIONS

- We commit to ensure sustainability in all our operations: environmental good practice; growing and developing our staff teams; and managing finances and lean operations with digital processes and technology
- We encourage innovation, collaboration and reflection, leading to new ideas and improved methods
- We gather, evaluate and use data to drive improvements

ONE COLLEGE

- We act as one college in all we do, embracing and demonstrates our values of: Ready, Respect, Potential
- We expect everyone to take responsibility for key actions that affect learners and their learning, taking necessary action swiftly, thereby not leaving to others



Chris Nattress



Mike Priestley

“We fully recognise and embrace the vital role we play in our region and remain entirely committed to West Cumbria benefitting from a thriving, inclusive, successful and sustainable college.”

Chris Nattress, Principal

“The reach of our ‘one college’ ethos extends well into our local communities. By working closely with our employer base we are able to offer quality opportunities for our learners on their path to employment. It has been a pleasure to welcome our learners back on site and celebrate their many success stories, to see them engaged not just in their learning, but with the many local employers with whom we work. The commitment to the future prosperity of our local communities depends on such collaboration.”

Mike Priestley, Chair of Governors

WHAT ARE WE GOING TO DO TO DELIVER THIS STRATEGY?

(ACHIEVE THE FOLLOWING 9 STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES!)

SO1. Develop and promote a Lakes College Higher Education Identity that demonstrates the distinctive 'Lakes College way' based upon widening opportunities, employer informed and led, collaborative and deploying innovative delivery models of experiential learning using excellent resources

SO2. Grow the higher education offer and continue to develop sustainable, accessible higher education provision which reflects employment and skills needs. The provision increases progression pathways, enhances existing HE programmes, identifies and develops new provision and supports and encourages current further education practitioners to engage with higher education

SO3. Engage with employers and other stakeholders to ensure that all HE programmes meet the skill requirements and priorities of local and regional employer and skills demands, and provides graduates with work readiness skills, knowledge and behaviours directly relevant to industry

SO4. Recognise, value and reward all staff who teach, coach, mentor and support learning by providing opportunities for their continued personal and professional development such as recognition by the Higher Education Academy and Professional Bodies relevant to each individual's career or field of work. Support the HE provision with excellent resources and facilities based on industry practice.

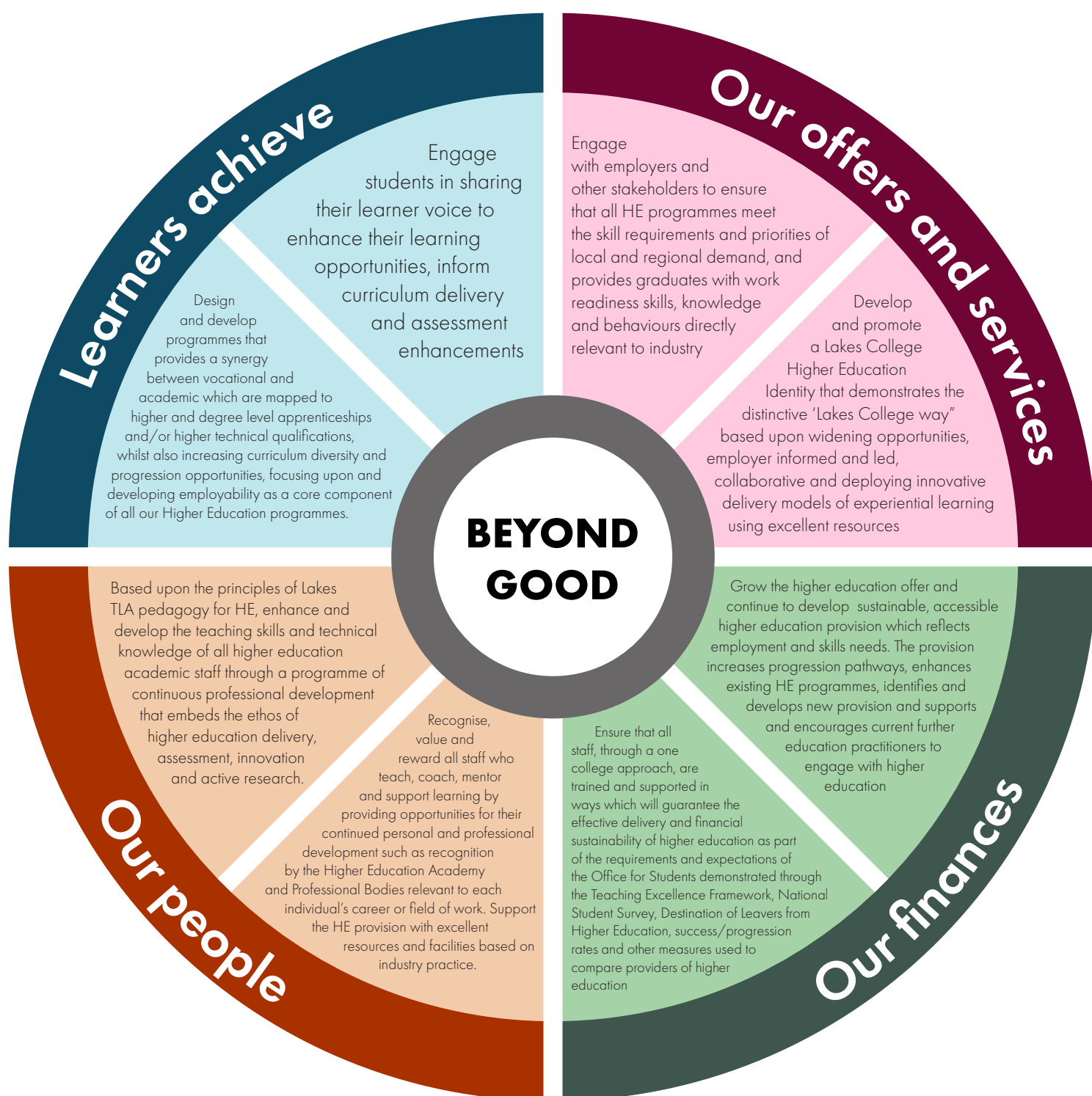
SO5. Based upon the principles of Lakes TLA pedagogy for Higher education, enhance and develop the teaching skills and technical knowledge of all higher education academic staff through a programme of continuous professional development that embeds the ethos of higher education delivery, assessment, innovation and active research.

SO6. Design and develop programmes that provides a synergy between vocational and academic which are mapped to higher and degree level apprenticeships and/or higher technical qualifications, whilst also increasing curriculum diversity and progression opportunities, focusing upon and developing employability as a core component of all our Higher Education programmes.

SO7. Engage students in sharing their learner voice to enhance their learning opportunities, inform curriculum delivery and assessment enhancements and vocational higher education programmes

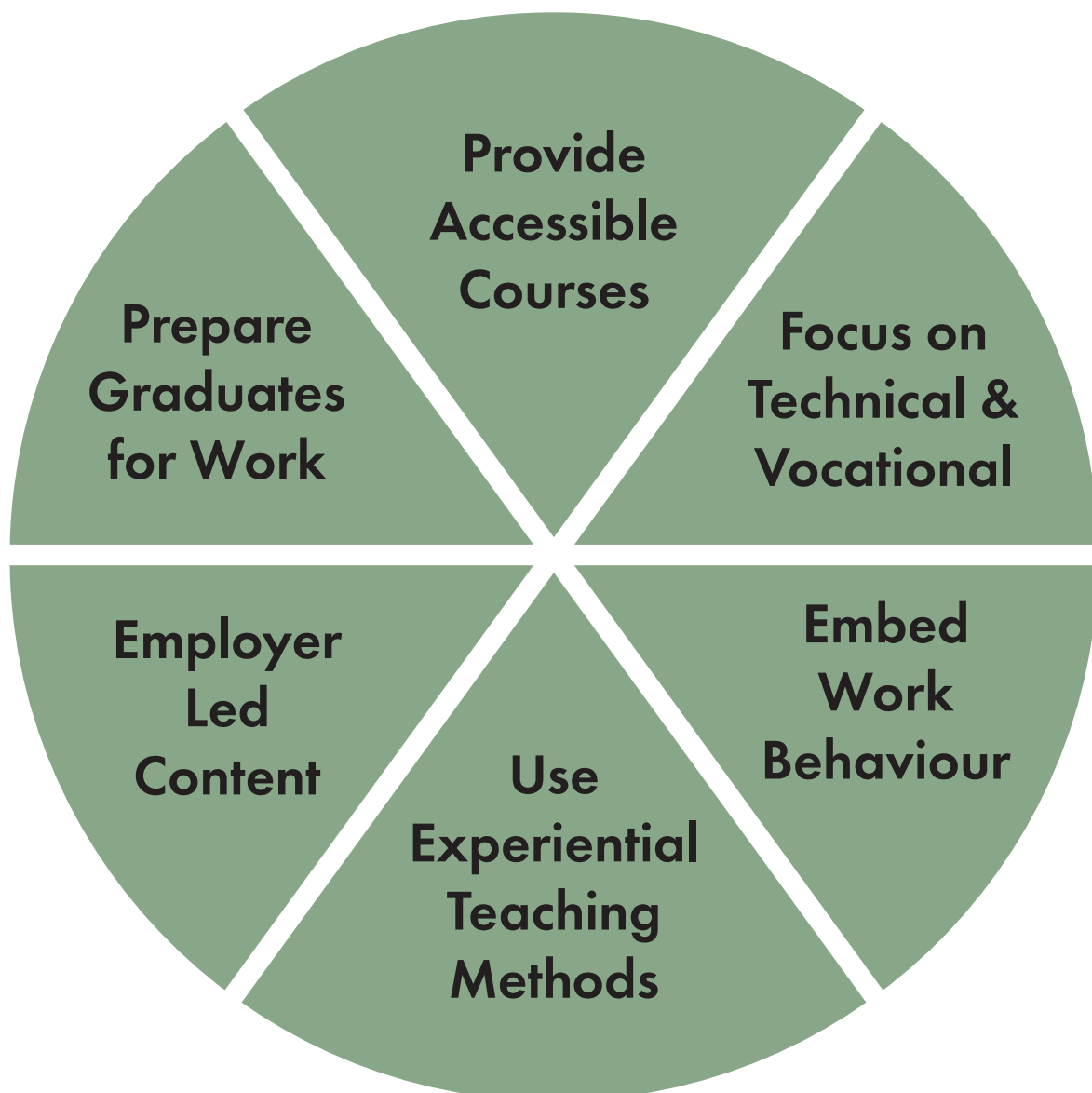
SO8. Ensure that all staff, through a one college approach, are trained and supported in ways which will guarantee the effective delivery and financial sustainability of higher education as part of the requirements and expectations of the Office for Students demonstrated through the Teaching Excellence Framework, National Student Survey, Destination of Leavers from Higher Education, success/progression rates and other measures used to compare providers of higher education.

SO9. Demonstrate our commitment and focus in delivering high quality technical and vocational higher education programmes



HOW ARE WE GOING TO TO DELIVER THIS HIGHER EDUCATION STRATEGY?

APPLY THESE SIX KEY THEMES OF LAKES COLLEGE HIGHER EDUCATION DELIVERY:



In order to ensure that all of our HE provision adheres to these six key themes, Lakes College is committed to the achievement of the Strategic Objectives (SOs), and each objective will be achieved by doing the following:

SO1. Developing and promoting a Lakes College Higher Education Identity

- Design and develop a higher education brand through online, social media and recognisable Lakes College HE material – key messages: accessible, employer-led, high quality, linked directly to employment
- Use programme of forums/conferences to bring together employers, learners and the college to consider and address skill gaps at levels 4 to 7, reflecting local needs for Higher Level Technicians and Apprentices
- Create curriculum that produces a talent pool of work ready employees with work behaviours enabling local study to the highest levels
- Create flexible and hybrid higher education provision which widens opportunities
- Develop a designated, distinctive higher education centre based around the employer hub and NCfN building

SO2. Grow higher education across Lakes College

- Development of a range of bridging programmes at level 3 for providing enhanced progression opportunities to higher education across the college for both part time and full time learners, and apprentices
- Offer modular based short courses as professional development opportunities (using existing HE standalone modules).
- Design higher education programmes that have a flexible delivery model to support widening opportunities.
- Design higher education programmes to enable Lakes College to utilise new funding models to support student's access to higher education.
- Use LMI and employer engagement to design, develop and validate programmes to provide higher education opportunities and progression at levels 4 to 6 in curriculum areas such as Computer Science (Coding and Networking), Leadership & Management (option pathways), Care Home & Elderly Support (professional recognition opportunity), Quantity Surveying, BA Teaching & Education and Automotive Technician.
- Design, develop and validate bespoke higher education progression programmes mapped to T-level provision such as Level 4 and Level 6 Construction Site Management apprenticeships.

SO3. Engaging with employers & other stakeholders

- Create a framework for Higher Education employer liaison which will include curriculum action groups with a focus on demand and need for current and future requirements in addition to course enhancements.
- Each higher education course (or group of related courses) will have an industrial liaison group to support curriculum development and potentially support delivery through associate lecturers.
- Higher education course leaders to take a role within the Lakes College employer hub.
- Employers to be invited to a programme of education forum.
- Develop programmes of study including FT provision that maps to KSB competences and standards and employer/ industry needs
- The Dean of Higher Education will liaise with the Office for Students to ensure compliance to all regulations and consider amendments to HE KPIs where appropriate

SO4. Recognise, value and reward staff

- Develop a Lakes College Higher Education CPD Academy coordinated by a Higher Education CPD Lead, to include sharing of good and best practice
- Use the Higher Education Academy (HEA) as the professional framework for all higher education delivery staff with various levels of practitioner recognition; FHEA, SFHEA and PFHEA.
- Support the development of staff towards HEA recognition and qualifications through the Lakes College Higher Education CPD Academy.
- Develop and agree appropriate support for staff to promote, incentivise and grow cross college higher education.

SO5. Enhance and develop teaching skills and technical knowledge

- Encourage active research and industrial based projects with employers.
- Develop a higher education observation process and model linked to the HEA framework
- Engage, support and mentor Associate Lecturers and utilise for industrial updating.
- Produce and publish in collaboration with partner HEI's, on a triannual basis, a Lakes College Higher Education journal including staff CPD activities, recognised innovative and good practice activities and student published dissertation papers.
- All higher education practitioners to utilise CPD events held and offered by partner HEI's.
- Engage with funded research pedagogy projects with the ETF and SET where appropriate
- Undertake CPD and good practice sharing with the apprenticeship coaching model for all higher/degree level apprenticeships

SO6. Design and develop programmes that provides a synergy between vocational and academic

- Pursue recognition and collaboration with professional bodies for all higher education courses providing national quality kite marks demonstrating relevance and intent.
- Develop collaborative partnerships with a range of HEI's to secure the best validation/ | franchise arrangement for specific curriculum areas and provide enhanced opportunities for students on graduation.
- Design all higher education courses with a theme of vocational/academic synergy mapped to higher/degree level apprenticeship standards where appropriate which supports both part time and full time provision.
- Maximise levy funding opportunities for employers through the integration of higher education qualifications and apprenticeship standards where appropriate
- Utilise experiential learning approaches in elements of all higher education programmes to embed industrial behaviour and employer required work readiness behaviours.



SO7. Engage students in methods of sharing their learner voice

- Continue to support and promote the high level Lakes College Higher Education Student/Staff Liaison Meetings.
- Ensure that all higher education courses have at least one student representative to attend the high level and course level HE Student/Staff Liaison Meetings who will be provided with CPD to maximise the experience.
- Commission course level student/staff liaison meetings as an agenda item on the course review meetings.
- Commission module evaluation questionnaires (MEQ's), online, at the end of each semester and analyse the student feedback and include as an agenda item within each course review meeting.
- Liaise with the higher education student mentor in terms of maximising the student voice through one to one meetings, National Student Survey (NSS) completion and MEQ's.
- Request that the National Union of Students (NUS) consider an operation within Lakes College West Cumbria.

SO8. Ensure that all staff, not just those directly involved in teaching, learning and assessment, are trained and supported in ways which will guarantee the effective delivery of higher education

- Provide all business staff associated with administering higher education with relevant and appropriate CPD commensurate with maximising support for higher education delivery.
- Involve all business staff associated with administering higher education within programme review meetings and higher education forums.
- Relevant business staff associated with administering higher education to attend CPD events with partner HEI's

SO9. Demonstrate our commitment and focus in delivering high quality technical and vocational higher education programmes

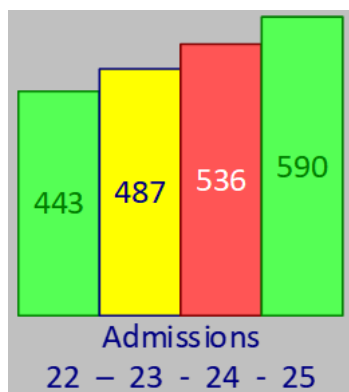
- Quality Management and Continuous Improvement is essential to the success of the Lakes College Higher Education Strategy.
- All nine of the strategic objectives will be tested and continuously validated through a defined higher education quality review cycle whilst also meeting challenging key performance indicators to ensure that all learners have maximum opportunities to meet their potential.
- Key performance indicators will not only be identified to meet and exceed the benchmarks set by the Office for Students but to also demonstrate the impact of the Lakes College Higher Education provision on the needs of learners, employers and local, regional and potentially national economy. These key performance indicators will include targets such

as:

- Admissions & growth through marketing & new provision
- Attendance
- Continuous progress
- Student voice and satisfaction rates
- Retention
- Achievement
- Graduate progression to further study or employment

WHAT AN OUTSTANDING HIGHER EDUCATION PROVISION WILL LOOK LIKE AS A RESULT OF THIS STRATEGY?

- a) A higher education provision that meets both local and regional demand
- b) A higher education provision that maximises funding opportunities for both the student, employer and local economy
- c) A higher education provision that minimises the requirements of students to leave West Cumbria to study for a degree level qualification
- d) A higher education provision that has flexible delivery models to support a wide range of student needs in terms of access and content.



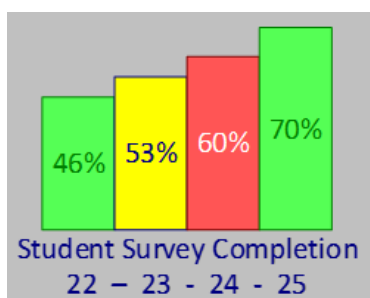
These will be demonstrated by an annual admissions growth of 10%.

- e) A higher education provision that is delivered and serviced by a team of higher education specialists. This will be demonstrated by the achievement of the following KPI targets:
 - An annual attendance rate of 95%
 - An annual continuation rate of 90%+
 - An achievement rate of merit/2nd class and above of 80%.
 - An achievement rate for top grades of 50%.
- f) A higher education provision that provides both local and regional industry with work ready graduates

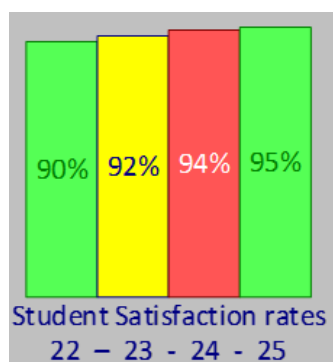


- g) A higher education provision that listens to the needs of students, employers and its local economy to adapt and change to improve.

This will be demonstrated by the achievement of the following KPI targets:



An annual increase in the engagement of students in the completion of surveys and MEQ's



An annual increase in student satisfaction rates

- An employer satisfaction rate of 95%
- A progression to employment on graduation rate of 90%+

Our HE strategy with its associated KPI's is ambitious and challenging but is designed to drive forward a wide ranging, diverse and thriving higher education provision that will meet the local and regional employer needs, whilst also supporting economic growth. This is the first stage of a three year and subsequently two-year strategic model that lays the foundations towards potential degree awarding powers and HEI status.

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