

Employer Engagement Strategy 2023 - 2025

1. Introduction & Context

This strategy sets out the ways in which Petroc will work with the business community locally, regionally and nationally to ensure that we provide the best and most relevant services to boost innovation and productivity and to contribute to the skills development for our region. Outlined fully in Appendix 1 the strategy will:

- Deliver on the employer focused elements of the Petroc 2025 Strategy and associated Ways of Working
- Meet the requirements of The Skills and Post-16 Education Act 2022
- Deliver against the Local Skills Improvement Plan (LSIP); and
- Achieve a positive outcome against the Ofsted criteria.

2. Monitoring and KPI's

The success of Petroc's Employer Engagement strategy will be measured against the LSIP through the Annual Accountability Statement and the College's Key Performance Indicators - specifically the following Tier 1 KPIs:

Objective	Key Performance Target	Key Performance Indicators
2.i: To make a positive impact on the employment outcomes of all learners	To be ranked in the top 25 General FE colleges in England for successful destinations in a weighted composite ranking of FE and HE destinations	The proportion of 16-18 learners who succeed in progressing into education or employment; and The proportion of graduates of College degree programmes securing 'high skill employment'
2.ii: To develop the personal resilience, confidence, and skills of learners to enable them to thrive in a digital, international world	The number of Personal Development Awards achieved by 16-19 learners grows to 7500 per annum.	The number of Personal Development Awards achieved by 16-19 learners
3.i: To support the creation of new businesses through entrepreneur development and support services	The number of enterprises created increases to 150 per annum.	The number of enterprises created following contact with the College
3.ii: To deliver services to businesses and organisations that result in their application of innovation or the improvement of productivity	The number of organisations that have improved their productivity or business innovation exceeds 500 per annum	The number of organisations estimated to have received support that improved their business productivity or business innovation based on business responses to the Petroc Annual Employer Survey
4.i: To contribute strategically and operationally to the implementation of local and regional strategies and plans that build community, health and wellbeing and equitable prosperity	A Strategic and operational contribution is recognised by the Board as having been made in each year of the Strategy	Annual report, approved by the Board, detailing the contribution made by the organisation both strategically and operationally to local and regional plans
4.ii: To significantly increase the numbers of College learners and staff engaged in supporting community organisations	The number of staff and learner contributing increases by 30% over a baseline established by survey in 2020-21	The number of learners and staff who are involved in supporting community, public-sector and not-for-profit organisations

Tier 2 KPI's (lead indicators) will be set and monitored once the Strategy is approved

Rationale and Purpose of the Strategy

The overall aim of this strategy is to clearly articulate how Petroc will develop plans to understand and meet the specific skills needs of employers in our region and beyond and to contribute to the sustainability of the College.

In 2021 the Government set out its Skills Agenda in the **Skills for Jobs: Lifelong Learning for Opportunity and Growth** white paper in which the Government clearly articulates its desire to put employers at the heart of the post-16 skills and states it will *'Give employers a central role working with further education colleges, other providers and local stakeholders to develop new Local Skills Improvement Plans which shape technical skills provision so that it meets local labour market skills needs.'* This subsequently became **The Skills and Post-16 Education Act** which, as set out above, conferred some specific legal responsibilities on to colleges.

In order to achieve this, we will focus on ensuring (through Ofsted inspection and the accountability statement) that the business community contributes actively and meaningfully to the development of new skills training and learning, and the college will ensure that we demonstrably engage with and seek the support and advice of our business partners. This will show that the college recognises the intent of the individual and their employer on embarking on a programme and ensure that we deliver to that intent.

Petroc is operating in an increasingly competitive market which continues to experience significant challenges. This strategy also sets out a 'mind-set throughout all aspects of the college that ensures all colleagues across the organisation understand the importance of engaging positively and proactively with the employer, civic and community organisations across the regions.

Petroc's North and Tiverton campuses have a combined catchment area that covers a large share of Devon, stretching from the south-east border, through Mid Devon and along the northern area of the county, continuing into North Cornwall and West Somerset. However, we do have an even wider geographical reach, stretching from Taunton to Bude and from Axminster to Ilfracombe. Anchored in the North Devon UNESCO Biosphere and bordered by the Bristol Channel to the North, Exmoor to the East and Dartmoor to the Southwest; our catchment is characterised by high levels of rurality and low population density.

With some of the most challenging socio-economic conditions in the country our population has challenges of low wages, low aspiration and in many areas low skills.

Across the whole of our region, we have the highest proportion of businesses in the UK (76.3%) with no employees (UK Average 73.7%); and, at 73% the highest proportion of people working in Micro SME's and SME businesses in England (Wales and Northern Ireland are higher and the UK Average is just 60.8%) which brings with it unique challenges of being able to engage effectively with all parts of the business community and ensuring that we provide the right level of value for money and support in order to increase skills levels in an efficient and cost-effective way.

(Source National statistics, Business population estimates 2022 (6 October 2022, table 9)

These challenges include:

- Within our catchment there are few large Apprenticeship Levy payers and we will actively engage with each of these. However, this concentration is lower than in many of our adjoining areas and therefore we cannot rely wholly on this audience and will develop relationships and offerings to suit the whole of the business sector.
- The rural geography and poor infrastructure and public transport links pose a challenge to accessibility and wider engagement.
- The current local workforce has a lower percentage of people with higher qualifications (NVQ3 or above) than the region and national averages – the impact of this being lack of developed entrepreneurial talent and leadership leading to lower business growth and inability to attract inward investment although it does offer potential to Petroc to be the enabler of skills development.
- ONS data indicates that many young people leave the local area for work, not returning until their middle age. We will work with local businesses to retain and train and to attract ambitious people to the area by creating an environment recognised as a good place for developing careers or enterprises, not to downshift to and coast in.
- Earnings are considerably lower than national averages making it harder for local businesses to support training and development.
- An aging population and declining demographic amongst 16–18-year-olds in much of our region is having an impact on overall numbers of students, we will therefore work harder to recruit alternative learners.

3. Business sector profile

Our largest employers are in the Public Sector (Health, Local Authorities, Education); Pharmaceuticals (Perrigo, Accord), Manufacturing (Pall, TDK), and Aerospace (Eaton, Beran). We have a thriving Creative sector and big, if somewhat traditional, Tourism Farming and Hospitality Sectors. With a rapidly ageing population, the Caring Sector is seeing chronic labour shortages.

There are differences between the forecast growth sectors in our region and the national picture, we will, as a result, be mindful in our development of provision to meet the needs of the region but also acknowledge that we should provide provision for individuals who may train with us and then move away.

The sectors for commercial development focus across the college have been identified as:

- Health & Care;
- Engineering and Energy;
- Construction;
- ICT and Digital;
- Environment & Sustainability;
- Agritech and Advanced Manufacturing; and
- Leadership and Management.

In addition, we will ensure that we are cognisant of the wider regional priorities in order to ensure that we are aware of and capitalising on emergent and growing markets such as those related to the blue and green economies. The Celtic Array (Floating Offshore Wind), Clean Maritime Industries, Aquaculture, Agri-tech and Renewables and Carbon Capture are all potentially very large growth areas. Retrofitting an ageing housing stock to meet new carbon targets is also an expanding sector requiring new skills. These sectors may change, or be added to, as new opportunities arise.

4. Objectives

The objectives of Employer Engagement for the whole college are:

- To increase each year the number of business and organisations engaged with to ensure the skills landscape is understood fully
- To understand the needs of employers and adapt and develop our offering to meet them
- To embed employers within curriculum design (intent) and delivery (implementation), and evaluation of the impact thereof, across all curriculum provision and types
- To deliver an outstanding year-round service and quality of provision to meet the needs of the wider business community
- To build lasting relationships with employers in our target markets
- To enhance and maintain reputation through good relationships and customer service across all our stakeholder groups
- To ensure that all staff understand that stakeholder engagement is the responsibility of every member of Petroc staff
- To ensure a link between learners and employers and use and support our employer network to support careers Information advice and guidance such that we can support the Gatsby benchmarks for learner engagement with employers
- To prioritise services and support to employers with the greatest potential to provide high skill employment growth
- To embed entrepreneurship in all our curriculum and to prioritise working with entrepreneurs
- To audit every programme over a three-year period to ensure it responds to employer need and demand

5. Bringing the strategy to life

This engagement strategy will be brought to life through a range of ways of working:

Industry insight and knowledge exchange

Ensuring that we are aware of developments in the wider educational field as well as within our local area is vital. We will utilise our research skills, monitor media and other sources including the LSIP to inform decision making, this LMI will inform our business planning processes and ensure we have a broad base of provision that is fit for purpose.

Curriculum engagement - All curriculum staff will be, particularly through Scholarly Activity Days, actively involved in ensuring that they continue to maintain a good level of industry knowledge in order to ensure not only that curriculum delivery is up to date but that they are able to speak with authority and to be able to support careers information, advice and guidance. This will be achieved through staff spending time in industry for CPD, arranging academic visits for their students, encouraging guest speakers for their students, arranging round table discussions with employers and specific employer advisory groups for their subject areas. Currently [2022/2023 and 2023/2024] the ETF Industry Insights programme can fund the college for this; beyond 2023/2024 there is no certainty of this funding continuing.

Curriculum leaders and managers will actively involve employers in curriculum co-design and delivery, such that all programmes will be required to engage with and seek input from a range and variety partner employers (as appropriate to the curriculum area in question) on each of the following:

- (i) Curriculum INTENT – selection of qualifications and awarding organisations
- (ii) Curriculum IMPLEMENTATION – selection of optional units, sequencing of curriculum delivery, development of field-specific employability skills, structured employer ‘touch points’ throughout programme, work experience and industry

- placement
- (iii) Curriculum IMPACT – monitoring of learner destinations and progression to employment with partner employers, with post-qualification co-evaluation of impact of curriculum implementation in terms of development of skills required for successful employment (in turn feeding into following INTENT and IMPLEMENTATION cycles)

Local and regional requirements - Through close links with the local authorities, business organisations, regional organisations and key employers we will ensure that we understand the local requirements and influence decision making. Using Northern Devon Futures as a vehicle we must ensure that the Northern and Mid Devon voices are heard in regional fora.

Government Policy - We will monitor all government policy making and develop strategies to anticipate and meet changing needs. Utilising AoC Networks, Seminars, Webinars, Conferences, and media we will ensure that we are a trusted source of information and a powerful lobbying force for the Northern and Mid Devon Economies.

Emerging trends - We will actively monitor trends in learning across the UK and continuously improve our facilities and pedagogy to ensure that we are at the leading edge of Skills provision.

International employer relationships - We will develop strategic partnerships with international organisations (both educational and other) to provide international insights, work and placement opportunities and facilitate international partnerships on behalf of employers and organisations in our region.

Strategic Partnerships - Working with partners we will be able to develop our curriculum and commercial provision and become part of a wider regional offering. Looking to external funding opportunities we will explore commercial and curriculum opportunities that will support and bolster mainstream funded activity.

Commercial Partnerships - We will seek out partners where we can work commercially with, driving revenue through top quality delivery and consultancy. Utilising Knowledge Transfer Partnerships, Visiting Researchers, our Environmental Living Lab, the Cotie buildings, and our more traditional spaces, to develop a thriving business community on campus.

Supplier relationships - We will develop a range of strong relationships with key suppliers to negotiate preferential rates for purchasing. This is overseen by the procurement team but involves all colleagues in seeking sponsorships, endorsements and case-studies. We will ensure that, in our significant procurements, we seek to lever in training opportunities

Academic partnerships - We will continue to develop strong working relationships with colleges and universities regionally and nationally. We will support and encourage learning visits to other institutions and will develop relationships with other national and international partners to build our competence, our offering, and our reach.

Careers Advice and Guidance - Achieving Gatsby Benchmarks - The college is committed to ensuring that we provide a good level of support in relation to careers advice and guidance to all our learners. The College are using the Gatsby Benchmarking Compass tool in order to monitor and measure progress against these benchmarks and in order to set relevant actions for achieve these. The College aims to have achieved 100% against all 8 Benchmarks by 2025.

The College have a designated Careers Lead and a Careers Link Governor. Careers activity is embedded in all curriculum areas and Schemes of Work will be evaluated through the Quality Review cycle to ensure that we are ensuring we have an effective

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system in place. The Gatsby Benchmarks require good engagement with the employer network in our region and we are committed to ensuring that we engage with our employer base to ensure this is achieved.

Revenue growth

Focusing on the identified key sectors that are of strategic importance to our region the college will focus on developing provision to meet the needs of these sectors.

Apprenticeships - Delivering increasing numbers of appropriate learners on high-quality apprenticeships year on year will be a key measure of success for the organisation. The Business Development Team will support the curriculum teams and target both Levy and non-Levy paying organisations to promote relevant apprenticeships. Through evaluating the most relevant apprenticeship standards to meet the needs of our local and regional employers, the college will focus on delivering these to the highest quality.

Contracts and tenders - Contract and tendering frameworks will be monitored by the internal college 'Hopper' group to ensure that the college are aware of and seek to tender for relevant contracts. Curriculum will have a joint responsibility, through the Business Review (BRIE) and Business Development framework alongside the Business Development Team, for ensuring viability of a proposed project before any work on the tendering is carried out.

Civic & Community

The college has a separate Stakeholder Strategy which sets out how the College will work with stakeholders to deliver its mission. It is therefore vital that we articulate the objectives for engagement with stakeholders and create a clearly defined process for managing and monitoring our relationships with them.

- **Reputation management** - It is vital that the reputation of Petroc is maintained and enhanced at a high level. There must be a focus on portraying a strong and positive outward image for the college and building relationships to do this.
- **Influencing policy making** - Only by being part of the dialogue can Petroc hope to influence policy making. We will ensure that we attend and participate whenever we can.
- **Delivery for our funders** - Building strong links with funding organisations (wherever possible) is key to ensuring that we build our reputation and are able to be responsive to calls.
- **Contributing to the prosperity of our region** - Petroc has a broad remit in contributing to the prosperity of our region in supporting skills development of our community as well as being part of bringing inward investment into our area. We want to ensure that we are linked to all relevant parties to ensure we can play our part.
- **Leading innovation** - Petroc is in a unique position to focus on developing new and innovative concepts and ideas for our region and to bring a wide range of interested parties together. We want to be seen as a leader of innovation.

6. Implementing the Strategy: Employer Engagement activities

Led by the Vice Principal, (Finance, Resources and Regional Affairs), and Deputy Principal Education & Learners **engaging with employers will be seen as the responsibility of staff in all curriculum areas as well as those support staff who have a direct responsibility for business engagement** - these include the Business Engagement Team; Industry Placement Team; Apprenticeship Administration Team; Projects Team and others.

Events - The college will create a range of events at which employers will be invited to attend and contribute to discussions on curriculum. Curriculum areas will be actively involved in these events and occasions to discuss with employers. These events will happen in a timely way in order to ensure that we receive a good range of feedback from employers to improve ways of working with them. This should complement attendance at Employers own networking events such as the NDMA, NDMB, Chamber and other Employer Representative Body Groups.

Learner-facing events - There will be a series of *Sightlines to Careers* events throughout the academic year which will involve employers directly in activities that will develop the employability profiles of our learners. These will comprise both curriculum-specific events (tailored to the development of field-specific employability skills) and cross-college events (focusing on the development of broader employability skills).

Networking - The benefits of networking should not be underestimated even though they cannot be easily quantified. In order to build and reinforce our profile across the region, networking must be seen as an important activity. In addition, networking will help us to improve our understanding of current and future business needs and enable us to be responsive to these.

One to One Meetings - To really understand our employers and particularly our large and medium businesses it is important that we are engaged in a way that augments the account management role of the business engagement team (their current working practice overview is attached as an appendix to this strategy). We need to identify a senior lead (FM level or above; and for Large/Strategically Important Employers a CLT lead) who seeks to get under the skin of the business, fully cognisant with their strategy, ambitions, products and services so that we create/maintain a strategic partnership not just a skills supply chain partner.

Local Business Groups - The Vice Principal (Finance, Resources and Regional Affairs) will, with the Business Development Team take a lead in ensuring that there is a Petroc presence at the key local business groups and forums. Wherever practicable members of the Business Engagement team will attend on a regular basis in order to build relationships. The Business Development Managers will also monitor all local business events and ensure that we attend and participate wherever possible. The Business Development Team will be focused on providing an advisory function at these events and will seek opportunities to understand the needs of employers that are present and promote Petroc (Or signpost elsewhere if appropriate) and provide advice and support as necessary.

National Associations - Staff at all levels of Petroc will be encouraged to take an active part in their relevant national associations, and to, wherever possible, promote Petroc. The College Management Team and Business Engagement Team will take an active

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responsibility for ensuring that all the relevant bodies and associations are interacted with.

Sector associations - Many sectors have their own regional as well as national associations. We will ensure that we have links with all of the relevant regional sector associations and groups and forge good working relationships with them.

Regional business groups - As with local business groups – the regional groups are many and varied. It is the responsibility of the College Leadership Team and the Business Engagement Team to seek ways in which to put Petroc at the heart of regional discussion.

Stakeholder engagement

There are many different stakeholder groups that we need to ensure that we interact with. Who interacts with these individual groups needs to be clearly defined and actions and monitors put in place to ensure that they are being adequately covered. Full details of the ways in which stakeholders are identified, monitored and interacted with can be found in the Stakeholder Engagement Strategy.

Reputation Management

It is vital that the reputation of Petroc is maintained and enhanced at a high level. There must be a focus on portraying a strong and positive outward image for the college and building relationships to do this. The relationships with employers will be monitored through the use of an annual employer satisfaction survey.

Marketing and PR

Marketing and PR are a fundamental way in which to build and maintain a strong presence and reputation. The Marketing Strategy gives more detail of the ways in which the college will look to build reputation and increase market share.

7. Monitoring and Review

KPIs - The Employer Engagement Strategy will be delivered by the effective monitoring of the colleges Tier 1 KPIs as well as specific action plans.

CRM - Our aim (for employer engagement purposes) should be that we can reference seamlessly conversations and correspondence that have been had with the business, ensure that contacts and promises are followed up and that we can see the activity pattern of the employer's relationship with Petroc.

The Colleges new CRM will hold all Employer Engagement activity and regular reports will be produced and brought to the College Leadership Team (CLT). These activities will be monitored through the use of the college's CRM. The relevance and benefits of being part of the above organisations and associations will be monitored and evaluated.

It is critical that all colleagues that correspond or meet with employers record that activity on the CRM and that the CRM rapidly becomes part of our everyday activities. The ability to link to email and, in the future, Teams should allow relatively easy recording of correspondence but face to face and network contact will need to become part of our default working practice.

The College will, therefore, ensure that all engagements with employers by any member of staff will be recorded on the CRM and that all placement and work experiences are recorded and tracked on Grofar and all apprenticeship engagements and learning are recorded on OneFile to enable improvements in the quality of

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learning from experience and joined up college support for learning in the workplace.

Curriculum Design & Delivery

There is a clear accountability for Faculty Managers, led by their Directors and with the ultimate oversight of the Deputy Principal Education & Learners to ensure that:

- (i) All Schemes of Learning will evidence employer engagement at the levels of INTENT and IMPLEMENTATION,
- (ii) curriculum area SARs evidence the IMPACT of employer engagement, and
- (iii) curriculum area Quality Improvement Plans (QIPs) focus on any improvements that need to be made, as evidenced by impact measures, in employer engagement in both intent and implementation

Context

This Employer Engagement Strategy and its objectives are aligned with the College's **Petroc 2025 Strategy** and the five strategic aims and objectives:

- Create outstanding learner achievement in all areas
- Transform life chances and employment prospects for all
- Build community and prosperity within northern and mid Devon and the wider South West of England
- Boost productivity, innovation and agility of businesses and organisations
- Tackle the climate emergency

In addition our ability to develop strong levels of engagement and meet the objectives of this Strategy will be achieved through our **five ways of working**:

- Personalised and Customer Focused
- Agile and Entrepreneurial
- Digitally Able
- Achieving value for money
- Continuously learning and improving

Our strategy is clear that the college has a leading role to play in relation to regional place leadership and productivity:

- Finding, developing, and supporting entrepreneurs and micro-businesses,
- Creating business services to develop productivity and awareness of future economic needs, and
- Delivering and hosting regional events and leadership contributions to economic and business development locally.

The Skills and Post-16 Education Act was passed into law in 2022 with the ambition to help transform the skills and training landscape and level up opportunities across the country.

The Act seeks to embed employers in the heart of the skills system by placing a legal requirement on colleges and other providers to work with employers to develop skills plans, so that the training on offer meets the needs of local areas, and people no longer have to leave their home towns to find great jobs; skills to support the growing green economy will be prioritised to create a workforce for jobs now and in the future.

The legislation aims to help economic recovery and growth by making it easier for people to get the skills they need to secure well-paid jobs in industries with skills gaps, such as health and social care, engineering, digital, clean energy and manufacturing. It will also give more people the opportunity to get jobs in their local areas, by requiring employers and colleges to work together to identify the skills needed within communities.

Local skills improvement plans (LSIPs) will provide an agreed set of actionable priorities that employers, providers, and stakeholders in a local area can get behind to drive change and will place employers at the heart of local skills systems to facilitate direct and dynamic working arrangements between employers and providers. Employer representative bodies (ERB) have been designated to lead the development of LSIPs for all 38 areas of England; in the Heart of the South West the designated body is Devon and Plymouth Chamber of Commerce.

The act also introduced new powers to intervene when colleges are failing to deliver good outcomes for the communities they serve. **The annual accountability statement** is a new document that should be a relatively concise public statement of our key aims, targets and outcomes for the year ahead. It is an opportunity to highlight what elements of our offer constitute our main aims to meet skills needs in the coming year. It will set out a small

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number of outcome targets for areas of the curriculum that we are planning to change for the coming year.

Completion of an annual accountability statement is now a requirement of funding, and all further education provision at any level is in scope including apprenticeships and non-qualification bearing provision.

These targets will reflect how we contribute to priorities outlined in the LSIP and to the National Skills Priorities (areas with high volumes of vacancies which are expected to increase; long-term structural barriers to recruitment, retention, and progression issues; and are important in providing opportunities for employment in key growth areas such green jobs, creative industries and science and technology (including AI and quantum computing)). These are listed below.

- Construction
- Manufacturing
- Digital and Technology
- Health and Social Care
- Haulage and Logistics
- Engineering
- Science and Mathematics

We are asked to prioritise delivery, where practical, through a small number of high-quality programmes that have been co-designed with employers and have a strong track record of delivering good outcomes for learners. These programmes are:

- T levels,
- Apprenticeships,
- Free Courses for Jobs,
- Skills Bootcamps, and
- Higher Technical Qualifications (HTQs).

Ofsted

Since September 2022, Ofsted inspectors specifically evaluate the extent to which colleges contribute effectively towards meeting the skills needs of employers and other relevant stakeholders and the local, regional and national economy. This includes a sub-judgement on the college's contribution to meeting skills needs.

This sub-judgement is linked to and dependent on the quality of education and leadership and management key judgements. **As a sub-judgement, it will feed into the quality of education and leadership and management key judgements.**

Ofsted are clear that all providers should be contributing effectively to meeting the skills needs of employers and the local, regional and national economy through the range of programmes that they teach, the content and planning of that curriculum and their engagement and collaboration with employers and stakeholders.

When evaluating the **quality of education** in further education and skills providers, inspectors evaluate (among other things) whether the curriculum offers learners the knowledge and skills that reflect the needs of the local, regional, and national context, and whether the curriculum intent takes into account the needs of learners, employers and the local, regional and national economy, as necessary

When evaluating the impact of **leadership and management**, inspectors evaluate (among other things) whether leaders engage with their community and with employers to plan and support the education and training that

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learners get, and to meet the skills needs of the economy.

These evaluations will take into account not just skills needed immediately for employment, including for those already in employment, but also skills which are necessary to ensure students' progress towards employment, in necessary stages by means of further and higher education, training, work experience and increased personal independence at all levels.

Providers may contribute to regional and national skills needs, as well as local skills needs. Many providers have specialisms that meet those needs across one or more region, or meet national skills needs. Where colleges teach A-level and other qualifications where the students' next steps are likely to be into higher education, their focus is on meeting the skills needs of those students to progress to that next stage that will often lead, in due course, to employment outside of the locality or region. Consequently, Ofsted refer to skills needs as a whole.

Inspectors will arrive at one of the following judgements about the college's contribution to meeting skills needs:

The college makes:

- a **limited** contribution to meeting skills needs
- a **reasonable** contribution to meeting skills needs
- a **strong** contribution to meeting skills needs.

Sub-judgement criteria

The college will be considered to be making a **limited contribution** to meeting skills needs if Ofsted find that **one or more** of the following criteria applies to it:

- leaders and managers do not engage effectively enough with employers and other relevant stakeholders to understand the skills needs of the local, regional and national economy
- leaders and managers do not involve employers and other relevant stakeholders sufficiently in the design and implementation of the curriculum to prepare learners effectively for future education, employment or work
- leaders and managers are not sufficiently clear how they are contributing to skills needs
- leaders and managers do not ensure that the curriculum is planned and/or taught effectively, so learners and apprentices do not yet learn the skills they need

The college will be considered to be making a **reasonable contribution** to meeting skills needs if it is not meeting any of the limited contribution criteria but is not yet meeting all of the strong contribution criteria.

The college will be considered to be making a **strong contribution** to meeting skills needs if **all of the following criteria** apply:

- **leaders and managers engage very effectively with employers and other relevant stakeholders** to understand the skills needs of the local, regional and national economy, and plan their curriculum accordingly
- **leaders and managers involve employers and other relevant stakeholders very effectively in the design and implementation of the curriculum** to prepare students for future education, employment or work
- **leaders and managers are very clear how they contribute to skills needs**
- **leaders and managers ensure that the curriculum is planned and taught effectively**, so that learners and apprentices learn the skills they need

Inspectors will already draw much relevant information and evidence on this from the normal course of the full inspection but will draw further, more

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detailed evidence about colleges' contribution to meeting skills needs principally from:

- discussions and **meetings with the college's leaders** and managers (including curriculum managers)
- discussions and **meetings with stakeholders** of the college in respect of skills needs
- information from the college's own **plans, accountability agreement**, local skills improvement plan (**LSIP**), or similar agreements or plans in place from time to time (whether draft or published)
- information and data about skills needs from published sources (such as LEP plans and **Skills Advisory Panel** (SAP) plans)

All this is consistent with our **Curriculum Strategy** which was approved in December 2021 and states that:

As we introduce **T Levels** we will withdraw vocational programmes at Level 3. These programmes are widely recognised, and academic staff are confident with the delivery of these products. T levels are perceived as more challenging and therefore some staff may be nervous of their introduction. We will ensure all staff are supportive of T levels.

As part of the skills agenda, we are required to deliver a curriculum that meets the demands of the local business community. **Apprenticeships** are absolutely central to this. Technology and economic change have impacted upon employer requirements and there is greater demand for advanced and higher apprenticeships and reduced demand for intermediate.

Work based learning and work-based projects will be embedded into the core [HE] curriculum and all HE students will have the opportunity to participate in a paid internship or business enterprise activity. Using labour market intelligence and working with our partners at the University of Plymouth we will validate our existing qualifications as **HTQ's**. Where existing qualifications are unlikely to meet the requirements of HTQ's we will change through revalidation or replacement.

Skills Bootcamps are, as set out above. seen as a core provision by Government to meet local skills needs. Defined as focussed interventions of between 60 and 90 guided hours, and usually run over 10-12 weeks these are a relatively new addition to the formal portfolio. At the time of writing this strategy the college has successfully delivered one bootcamp (Agile Project Management) and has applied to run 13 more across a range of the National Skill Priority areas, each with a formal letter of support from an employer.

Free Courses for Jobs provides additional entitlement for Government Funded learning for adults at Level 3 on certain courses that are deemed High Value by Government. This entitlement only applies if they are 19 or over and do not already have a level 3 qualification; or already have a level 3 qualification or higher but earn below the National Living Wage annually (£20,319 from April 2023); or already have a level 3 qualification or higher but are unemployed. Whilst not explicitly a new programme the exemption from fees may be attractive to prospective employees or those looking to upskill.

While the College retains autonomy to deliver provision that meets the needs of our context, our objectives and targets give a clear indication of the scale of provision in subjects and programmes linked to National Skills Priorities in the coming academic year and the extent of growth compared with the current year.

The Employer Engagement Strategy, and subsequent action plans, will concentrate on supporting the achievement of the key deliverables within the College's strategic priorities, and the requirements of the LSIP and Ofsted for

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the following core target markets:

- 14–16-year-olds looking for post 16 education and training
- 16–19-year-old full-time learners, new and current
- 19+ adults looking to do part-time certificated, blended and/or recreational courses
- Adults accessing higher level qualifications, including degrees,
- Individuals looking to develop their career through an apprenticeship whether they be 16-18 year old's or adults and at Levels 2 to 6+
- Employers wishing to upskill their workforce.