



THE SIXTH FORM COLLEGE COLCHESTER

ANNUAL ACCOUNTABILITY STATEMENT 2023

1. Purpose

Mission, Vision and Ethos

The College's mission is to provide suitably qualified 16 to 19 year olds wishing to pursue full time academic general education in the Colchester area with a supportive and inclusive environment, in which they are able to acquire the necessary qualifications, talents and skills vital for success in adult life.

Our vision is to be the first choice for these students and to deliver to them the highest level of quality educational experience, the broadest possible curriculum, and the strongest pastoral and enrichment support that is possible within the resources available.

Our vision and mission together set the ethos of our College. We believe them to be both aspirational and achievable. Our ethos establishes the standard of excellence in the student experience we provide. It also creates the working environment for members of staff. We value the quality, expertise and commitment of our teachers. We value the contribution our students make to our College community. We share pride in their achievements and outcomes.

Strategic Plan

The College's 2022/23 to 2025/26 Strategic Plan sets out five key strategic aims which are regularly reviewed by managers and the governing body:

1. To provide outstanding teaching and learning in all subjects
2. To support our students to achieve their best results and prepare them for successful progression to higher education or employment
3. To provide a physical environment that supports excellence in learning and teaching
4. To maintain effective governance, leadership and management of our College
5. To provide an environment that fosters equality, diversity and inclusion, in support of our College and wider community

Curriculum Intent

For 2022/23, the College's curriculum intent is:

To provide an outstanding quality of education experience to all students by sustaining improvements and the positive changes, adjustments and adaptations from the Covid-related periods into the long-run:

- (a) Embrace the additional funded 40 hours per year of learning per student allocated by Government as a means of enhancing the breadth, depth and quality of the learning experience.
- (b) Monitor and review the curriculum, including non-qualification provision and activities, to ensure it meets the needs and expectations of all students and other stakeholders, offers appropriate challenge and progression opportunities and is manageable, viable and affordable. Also recognising the impact of the pandemic on young people's prior academic experience, performance and achievements.

Curriculum

The Sixth Form College Colchester is an incorporated sixth form college operating on a single campus situated in Colchester city centre. The College specialises in providing high quality full-time, general academic education programmes of study for 16-19-year olds, combined with excellent pastoral and safeguarding care, personal development opportunities and a very large range of wider opportunities which prepare them for life as active citizens in modern Britain. We encourage our students to set their sights high and we expect them to study demanding academic programmes and to engage in a broad range of activities to develop their skills for higher level study and employment.

The College currently has approximately 3200 students aged 16-19 on full-time level 3 academic A-level programmes of study (and a small cohort of approximately 65 students on level 2 academic programme of study). The College does not provide any adult education or vocational qualifications or training.

In 2022/23 the College provides all students with a full-time programme of study, at the centre of which is personal development and pastoral care, supported by the Tutorial programme, and by participation in a very wide range of Additional Studies and extra-curricular activities.

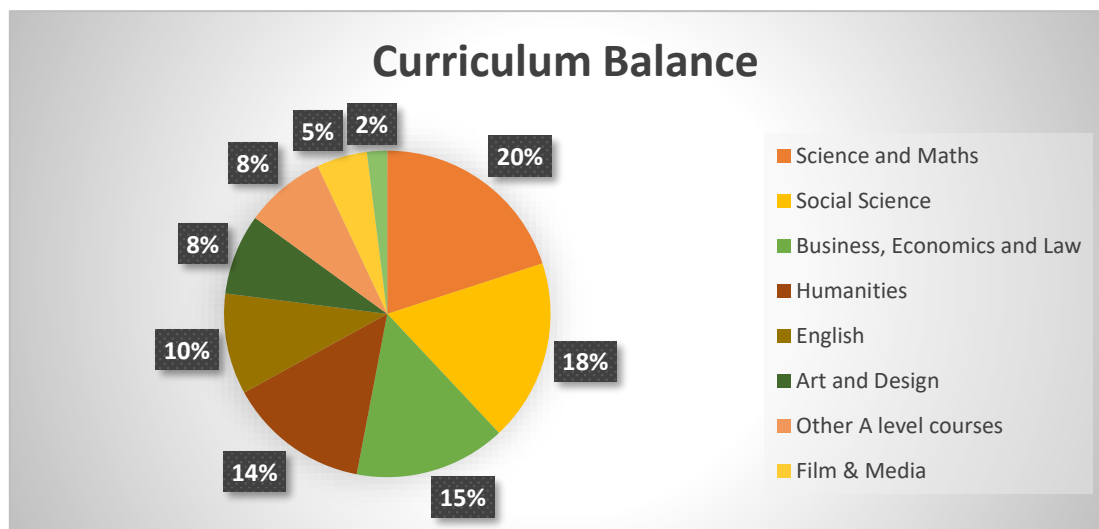
Every student in the College is a member of a Tutor Group and participates in the College's Tutorial Programme, which takes place during timetabled Tutorial lessons once a week. The Tutorial Programme has been developed to meet the needs of students in preparing them for the worlds of Higher Education and/or employment and life beyond College. The programme enables engagement in various issues and skills, which will be of value to the student in order to prepare them for playing a full and active part in society, including keeping themselves safe, awareness of and responding to radicalisation and online safety and developing a wider understanding of key issues such as mental health awareness. A central part of the programme is the opportunity to review progress and conduct action planning on a 1:1 basis with a Personal Tutor. Students' contributions to the tutorial programme are very welcome, including comments on its success in covering topics which they feel are relevant to them. A number of tutorials contain student-created activities or resources.

The College offers two academic routes:

- **A Level Programme**, usually a two-year academic programme where the majority of students study 3 A Levels. (A minority study 4 A levels, or a combination – usually two A levels and one Small Alternative Academic Qualification). All students enrol on at least 4 courses, with the 4th course being either qualification-based or an additional or complementary study option, depending upon their ability, aspirations and interests. 98% of students at the College follow this programme.

- **Advanced Foundation Programme**, a one-year academic programme which offers students with academic potential the opportunity to do further work at GCSE or level 2, usually with a view in the following year to progressing onto an A-Level programme of study, level 3 courses at other institutions or employment-related training. The Additional Studies and Extra-Curricular Activities Programme is available for all AFP students. 2% of students follow this programme.

The College remains one of the largest specialist 16-18 Sixth Form Colleges and A level providers in the country and the relative size of the College enables the achievement of economies of scale as providing students with excellent choice of courses and combinations. The College also achieves strong economies of coherence from its focus on just two programmes of study (A level and a smaller Level 2 'resit' programme), both with very clear intent. The quality of education plans in place provide a clear focus for very good student outcomes.



The College offers a very wide range of over 50 academic A level or equivalent subjects, including a number that would otherwise not be available to students in the North Essex and South Suffolk area, outside of the independent or super-selective sector. Examples include A level Italian, German, Medieval History, Early Modern History, Resistant Materials, Philosophy, Classical Civilisation, Geology and Environmental Science.

The College currently offers eight Level 3 non-A level academic subjects, all classified by the DfE as “Small Alternative Academic Qualifications”, which take a more applied approach, with a heavier emphasis than A levels on modular, rather than terminal, assessment through coursework and controlled assessments as well as public examinations. A number of students, especially those who are from families where post-16 study is not the norm, feel more supported by the continual, modular assessment rather than the ‘high stakes’ final exam of most A level courses.

2. Context and Place

The Sixth Form College Colchester

The Sixth Form College Colchester was established in 1987 to provide 16-18 continuing general education for Colchester. The College was initially established by Essex County Council, and followed a re-organisation of 11-18 education in Colchester which was designed to improve levels of post 16-18 educational participation and achievement in Colchester and increase the participation levels in Higher Education - which at that stage were all low compared to other similar towns in the South East

and East of England. The Sixth Form College was to provide 16-18 academic general education, alongside Colchester Institute, an HE and General FE college providing 16-19 applied and vocational provision. The aim was for the two Colleges to provide a tertiary system for the town and surrounding area.

The College continues to operate its longstanding collaborative tertiary system with Colchester Institute, which provides exclusively applied, skills and vocational curricula and programmes of study for 16-19-year olds. The College's curriculum offering is therefore designed to avoid any overlap with programmes offered at Colchester Institute. Regular meetings between the Principals of both institutions and other collaborations ensure that this remains the case.

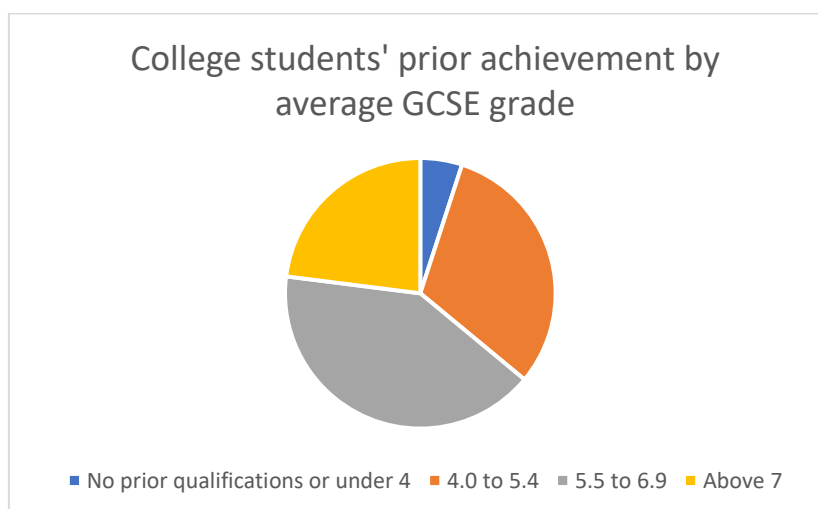
The College maintains a clearly understood local and sub regional identity market niche with a strong reputation for providing a high-quality, inclusive and supportive academic general education sixth form experience.

Colchester and the Local Area Educational Landscape

This College is the primary academic General Education provider (i.e. A level programmes of study) for Colchester and much of the wider area of South Suffolk and North Essex. The College has no significant direct 'competition' as a large A level provider within Colchester or the local area; the nearest colleges with comparable provision are in Ipswich (25 miles to the North); Cambridge (58 miles to the West) and Southend on Sea (37 miles to the South), the former two in different counties.

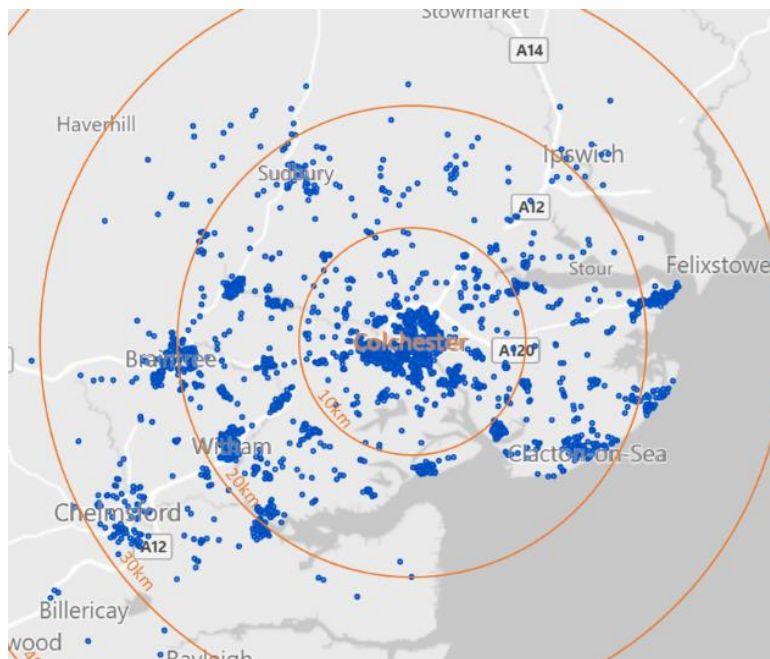
As part of the re-organisation of Colchester schools which led to the establishment of the Sixth Form College in 1987, the three local schools which had post-16 provision were converted to 11-16, with their students progressing at 16 to either the Sixth Form College or Colchester Institute, as appropriate. In keeping with this arrangement, most Colchester schools still do not have their own sixth form provision, with the exception of three schools, two of which are super-selective grammar schools which are far less likely to encourage applications from or enrol 16-year olds with mental health, safeguarding or learning support issues and have very low proportions of students from socio-economically disadvantaged backgrounds.

In this context, it is essential to meeting the local skills need that the College remains as inclusive as possible both in its entry criteria and in other respects, in order that local young people have access to high quality academic education.



College Intake

The College draws students from a wide geographical area; the heat map below shows the spread of home addresses of current students.



Students enrolling in September 2022 came from 107 different secondary schools, although the majority (87%) came from 25 schools in Colchester and the wider local area.

Data shows that Colchester is growing at a faster rate than the rest of Essex. There is a sharp and sustained (15 year trend) increase in 16-18 age cohort demography including locally (commenced in 2020 and continues until at least the early 2030s). There are also further and continuing large scale programmes of housebuilding underway/scheduled in the local area – including a 7,000 home Garden Village on the eastern fringe of Colchester, which will create a further increase in the future local population. Students from two new local secondary schools will enrol at College in September 2023 and September 2024 respectively.

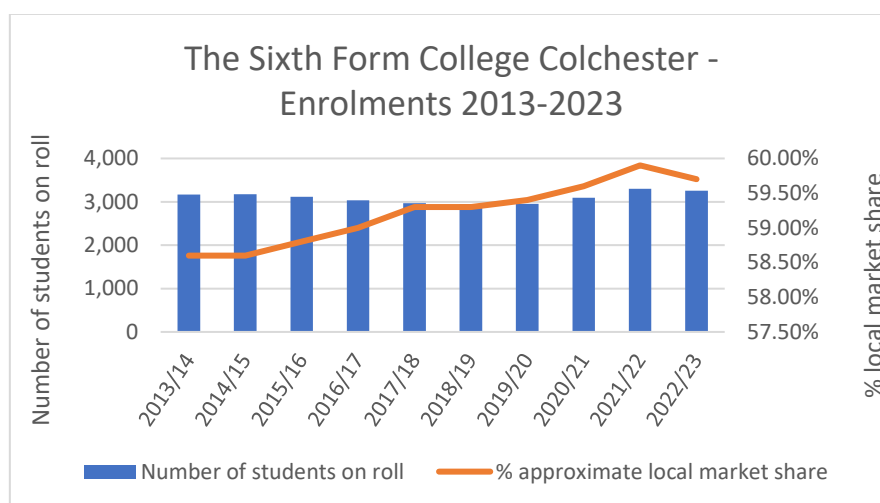
For students from Colchester 11-16 schools (40% of current students), the College was their ‘natural’ destination for post-16 academic education. In line with the College’s mission, all Colchester students who were suitably qualified were offered a place.

42% of current students came from an 11-18 school and therefore had the option to remain at their school sixth form but chose to come to the College, reflecting the College’s strong reputation and broad curriculum offering.

The College enrolls significant numbers of students from the wider local area. Apart from Colchester, the heat map shows strong concentrations of recruitment from towns 20km away -Braintree, Witham, Tiptree and Chelmsford to the SW and coastal towns like Clacton-On-Sea, Frinton and Harwich. Many of these areas have lower than average HE participation rates. As well as being from a wide

geographical area, College students are from a cross section of backgrounds. The College population as a whole sits just above the median in the Index of Multiple Deprivation, with 20% of the College students living in small areas which are in the 30% most deprived in the country and 36% of students from the 30% least deprived.

Local data is used to plan the curriculum to ensure that it is relevant to the student population. This includes Essex County Council data regarding student demographics in the local schools. The College has experienced an increase in the local market share for 16-18 provision (and more specifically for 16-18 general education) in the last 8 years – which data suggests will be continued or maintained for the foreseeable future.



The graph above shows trends in College enrolments over the last ten years, measured against the approximate local ‘market share’, demonstrating that even where enrolments have fallen in a given year due to a demographic dip (i.e. fewer school leavers in the local area), the College’s ‘market share’ has continued to rise.

The College has for many years been oversubscribed and for the last two years has been at capacity. Given the very significant real terms reductions in funding since 2010, there are only extremely limited opportunities to grow the College (even if significant government funding were available for capital building projects, there are no major development opportunities within our single compact city centre site, which is bound on two sides by a Roman wall, and no readily identifiable nearby sites which could host further provision).

Consequently, in order to meet its mission and vision, the College continues to offer only A-level programmes of study at Level 3. As a Sixth Form College with a core focus on Level 3 Programmes of Study, the College’s contribution to meeting the local, regional and national skills needs is manifestly different to a General Further Education College and therefore harder to quantify and track.

Applicants to the College are asked on the application form to outline their proposed career. An overwhelming majority (over 90% of those who express a view) aspire to progress to university after College. A primary focus of the College is therefore to help them and their parents meet this aspiration of undergraduate study. Approximately 75% of College students will progress to University either directly after their A levels or within a year.

The majority of College students come from families where the parents did not go to university (56%) and a higher than average number of students from areas with the lowest HE participation rates (35%).

Given this, the College is focused not only on delivering high quality education to ensure that students gain the grades to access their chosen university course, but also to promote a culture of progression to university.

The 2022 HESA data highlighted the very high levels of success of our former students in HE – considerably above national benchmarks – and this has indeed been the case for 5 consecutive years. The College clearly provides students with the skills to enable them to be very successful in HE. Clearly, given that the vast majority of students intend to apply to university, it is essential that the College teaches and promotes skills in order to empower students to be successful undergraduates – and employable once they take on graduate jobs after graduation as the managers and leaders of the future.

The College sits within the Essex Local Skills Improvement Plan (LSIP) and has collaborated with Essex Chambers of Commerce in the development of the Plan. The College’s action plan in response to the LSIP priorities is below. The College also sits within the South East Local Enterprise Partnership (SELEP).

Essex has approximately 67,000 employers, the vast majority of which (90%) are Micro businesses employing under 10 people. This means that there are no ‘Large’ private sector employer stakeholders for the College to engage with - the largest employers in the Colchester area are all public sector institutions: The University of Essex, Colchester Hospital and Colchester Institute. The larger employers in Essex are not located close to Colchester - Stansted airport to the East and Ford in the South, for example.

Opportunities for significant external stakeholder input into academic courses are extremely limited. The College does not offer vocational education or training and therefore does not provide sector specific training or skills for industry. There is no opportunity to vary the core curriculum content at A level, although all academic departments have industry stakeholders which inform latest practice and awareness among staff and students of core skills and career pathways.

Essex County Council’s Essex Skills Plan identifies 195,000 employment vacancies in Essex in the year to May 2022, with the top skills sought including communications, management, customer service, planning, leadership, teaching and problem solving – most of which are also essential to success at A level and HE.

3. Approach to Developing the Annual Accountability Statement

The College has a strong, established curriculum offering, the core of which has not changed for many years. It is clear from a range of feedback (for example, the strong level of recruitment, student achievement, student satisfaction, HE destinations and HE performance of College students) that the College curriculum is of a high quality and is fit for purpose.

Where courses become unfit for purpose (e.g. they are no longer Ofqual approved or they do not offer a progression opportunity) they are no longer offered at the College and replaced if possible.

Around the margins, changes are made to the core curriculum to meet the needs, interests and aspirations of students or in response to government curriculum reforms. Knowledge and information around national curriculum offerings derives from our wider networks including the Sixth Form College’s Association, the CENBASE network of Sixth Form Colleges, FEDEC (the Federation of Eastern Region Colleges) as well as partnership with key stakeholders.

Key External Stakeholders:

- Essex County Council
- Colchester City Council
- ESFA Territorial Team
- 30 Partner Schools
- Colchester Institute
- Employers

Engagement with Other Providers:

- A large range of HE providers but a particularly close relationship with University of Essex
- Sixth Form Colleges' Association
- Central and Eastern College Network of Sixth Form Colleges
- FEDEC
- FE Commissioners Office
- Colchester Headteachers Forum
- Essex County Council Sixth Sense Forum
- Greater Essex Careers Enterprise Hub
- Essex County Council Preparing for Adulthood team
- Colchester Teacher Training Consortium (CTTC)
- North Essex Teacher Training (NETT)
- North Essex "Feel Well" multi-agency group

Recent engagement with employers and charities regarding curriculum offer and design includes:

- Stokes Sauces – industry mentoring for Food Science and Technology student project work
- Tuskar Trust – National charity with Colchester and College links via its founder Dermot O'Leary – funded media work experience opportunities to a number of students.
- RAMA (Refugee, Asylum Seeker and Migrant Action) – Colchester-based Refugee liaison and lobby group
- Arts Council England – ArtsMark Gold Award
- STEM – Platinum Science Award
- North East Essex Co-Operative Academy (NEECA)
- Make Happen
- Prettygate Infant/Junior School, Colchester – collaborate in the delivery of College Coaching Sport and Physical Education L2 and L3 Additional Study.
- Essex and Suffolk NHS trust – placements for aspiring doctors and vets on the Medics Additional Study
- Colchester General Hospital – placements offered to all year 1 Health and Social Care students.
- CLIP (Music Technology for Young People)

4. Contribution to National, Regional and Local Priorities

SECTION ONE:

Use the Essex Local Skills Improvement Plan (LSIP) to help shape Curriculum planning and delivery.

A. The Essex LSIP identifies 10 key industry sectors and their needs and priorities.

Although the nature of the College curriculum means that we do not deliver sector-specific training, a number of the sectors ally closely either with the skills being delivered to students at College or the sectors which students at this College often aspire to work in (either after College or, eventually, after graduation). These include:

- **Professional Services**
- **Creative and Cultural**
- **Health**
- **Education**
- **Community and Voluntary Sector**

Professional Services – by the nature of the qualifications they will have obtained by the end of their course (and, for the majority of students, after they graduate), College students will become the managers and leaders of tomorrow. Alongside their academic achievements, the soft skills (see below) and cultural capital developed through College activities will be invaluable.

Creative and Cultural – The College offers a very broad range of creative courses as part of its programmes of study and additional studies. 227 students progressed to Higher Education courses relevant to this sector in September 2022. (23% of the total cohort who had HE offers)

- The Essex LSIP comments on the need either for creatives to have business skills or for business professionals to work in the sector. The College offers accredited personal finance literacy qualifications at Level 2 and Level 3 (taken by approximately 400 students annually).
- Promote opportunities in the sector to all students, not just those on creative courses.

Health and Medicine – Approximately 10% of College students who progress to HE do so in courses related to Health and Medicine. 60 College students progressed to HE courses specifically relevant to Healthcare or Medicine in September 2022, with a further 38 progressing to degrees in medical science e.g. neuroscience. The College's Medics programme provides a peer network of aspiring medics who are supported by specialist staff. For the first time since the pandemic, in 2023 Health and Social Care students will undertake a week placement on wards at Colchester Hospital.

Education: 23 students progressed to HE courses in Education or relevant qualifications, with many more likely to progress to teaching and other careers in education having completed their undergraduate degrees. College facilitates the post-16 element of for approximately 75 Trainee Teachers from Colchester Teacher Training Consortium (CTTC) and North Essex Teacher Training (NETT)

and Ormiston and Keele SCITT (OAKS). 25 students a year participate in the Pre-Teaching programme for aspiring teachers. The College’s graduate training scheme employs and trains approximately five graduate teachers each year.

B. The Essex Local Skills Improvement Plan identifies 5 priority crosscutting skills required by employers:

- 1. Soft Skills**
- 2. Digital Skills**
- 3. Green Skills**
- 4. Leadership and Presenting**
- 5. Basic English/ESOL**

1. Soft Skills and Leadership/Presenting

Essex LSIP: “New entrants, existing and returning employees often lack appropriate soft skills and behaviours for work and often do not understand what is expected of them. Employers have identified that individuals either lack or have poorly developed skills and behaviours in a range of areas including listening, speaking and presenting problem solving, creativity, staying positive, aiming high, and teamwork.

Many Essex businesses identified a lack of leadership and management skills in their organisations at all levels. With an aging workforce and higher than normal staff turnover there is a need to train, support and develop all aspects of leadership and management. Most identified a specific gap for new entrants and existing employees who are making their first step into supervisory roles.”

Although the nature of the academic curriculum offered at the College means that we do not offer sector specific training, almost all of the soft skill requirements identified in the Essex LSIP are essential characteristics of a successful A level student. Similarly, the nature of the qualifications offered at College and the fact that most students will eventually be graduates means that many students from College will be fulfilling leadership and management roles in the future, either locally, regionally or nationally.

Objectives for 2023/24

- To make a formal assessment of the frequent opportunities for College students to develop soft and leadership skills, either in the delivery of academic courses or in pastoral provision and additionality.
- To ensure that opportunities to develop soft and leadership skills are embedded in all areas.
- To engage with initiatives to build soft and leadership skills which arise from proposals made in the Essex LSIP e.g. an online “be ready to work in Essex” package.

<p>2. Digital Skills / Digitech</p> <p>Essex LSIP: <i>“Baseline digital skills have become a near-universal requirement for employment and are insufficiently developed across the workforce. Generic digital skills such as Microsoft Office and other productivity software tools are commonly required in jobs across all skills levels and are often fundamental to entering the labour market. The curriculum does not often cover these skills in detail, instead focussing on equally valuable, but more specialist digital skills like coding and cyber security. There needs to be a provision for generic digital skills also. Furthermore, with the advancement of Artificial Intelligence (AI) workplace digital skills are likely to become much more advanced. There is a difference between the everyday digital skills needed to order food etc, compared to more advanced workplace skills like the use of apps, technical support etc.”</i></p>	<p>Generic digital skills such as Microsoft Office and other productivity software tools are commonly required in jobs across all skills levels and are often fundamental to entering the labour market.</p> <p>Information Learning Technology (ILT) Lead Practitioner appointed for Sept 2022. Priorities identified for teaching and learning including supporting student digital literacy at course level and teaching skills needed to be successful at course level, on into University, an apprenticeship or work</p> <p>All students have frequent opportunities to engage with a range of general digital skills with relevance to employment</p> <p>Objectives for 2023/24</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Supporting staff digital literacy across a variety of platforms • Cross College approach to raising awareness of the use of A.I. • To promote student digital literacy through the Tutorial programme in topics such as personal use of social media, cyber security and conspiracy theories. • To offer students more formal training in general IT skills such as Excel and Microsoft Office to those not using it as part of their programme of study, both in specific sessions offered and by taking opportunities as they arise during curriculum delivery, likely to be a ‘Digital Skills Academy’ programme. • To actively promote and foreground the above opportunities to students as desirable skills for personal development and employability
<p>3. ESOL/Basic English</p> <p>Essex LSIP: <i>“Businesses have identified that new entrants, existing and returning employees often lack basic English and maths skills that they need in work. Often, this is linked directly to how these skills are applied day to day in work and the issue can be exacerbated where English is not an individual’s first language.”</i></p> <p>Asking providers to offer essential skills up to Level 2 in English and mathematics is also a National Priority identified by the DfE.</p>	<p>Almost all College students will already have competency in English Language as they will have achieved at least a 5 in a relevant (i.e. ‘written’) GCSE.</p> <p>Where a student does not have GCSE English Language grade 4, they are enrolled in it at College until they have passed. Such students also take Functional Skills Level 2 English.</p> <p>All students without GCSE Maths take either the GCSE or Functional Skills Maths at L1 or Entry Level, ensuring all students have provision to acquire basic Maths skills.</p> <p>Small group specialist ESOL tuition support is provided where required.</p> <p>College students and staff work with a small group of refugee families to develop language competence and social skills.</p>

<p>4. Green Skills</p> <p>Essex LSIP: <i>“The transition to a low carbon economy will require the re-skilling and upskilling for existing members of the workforce with training in green skills. New entrants and returners will also need an educational understanding of green skills. Green skills are knowledge, experience, values, attitudes and abilities that support carbon reduction and resource efficiency to increase climate resilience and enhance natural assets. Green skills are relevant to all sectors in the economy.”</i></p>	<p>The College has an active Environment Committee of students supported by staff undertaking College wide activities promoting environmental awareness, fundraising and other associated activities such as the conservation group working parties.</p> <p>The College’s environmental-related curriculum offering is strong with 247 candidates for A level Environmental Science or Earth Sciences (with a further 187 enrolments on A level Geography).</p> <p>Objectives for 2023/24</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The College was very disappointed to be unsuccessful with its November 2022 ESFA 16-18 Capacity Fund bid which would enabled us to move Environmental Science and Earth Science into new specialist accommodation 11 classroom general purpose teaching block. Environmental Science and Earth Sciences both have strong and growing enrolments, reflecting increasing student interest in environmental and ‘green’ issues. The College will make further bids for capital funding if opportunities present themselves. • Sustainability Coordinators appointed for Summer 2022 with a remit to improve student and staff awareness of environmental, climate and carbon issues and to promote of skills and employment opportunities related to these, as well as collaborative work with a range of relevant external agencies. To deliver a programme of Carbon Literacy to all students via the Tutorial Programme during 2023/24 as well as regular digital bulletins published. • To integrate into all courses opportunities for discussion and promotion of employment opportunities and skills development arising from individual curriculum areas. • To work with local partners to ensure best practice in delivery of the low carbon agenda. (Essex University, Colchester Institute and College City Council)
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<p>C. The Essex Local Skills Improvement Plan identifies 6 ‘Systems Priorities’ for Essex Skills. These are:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Lack of Flexibility in the System 2. Information, Careers Advice and Guidance 3. Tutor Shortages and capacity of providers to respond 4. Inclusive Employment 5. Barriers to Engagement 6. Skills Planning System for Essex <p>A number of these need to be addressed at strategic countywide level. Nevertheless, the College can respond to a number of them:</p>

<p>1. Lack of flexibility in the system</p> <p>Essex LSIP: <i>“Employers and providers have fed-back that there is a lack of flexibility in an over-bureaucratic education system, which blocks it from meeting industry’s changing needs. Within many new and emerging skills areas, there is a desire to use qualifications and funding in a more adaptable way.”</i></p>	<p>The “ability to break larger qualifications into smaller pieces” is popular with many employers, such as “completing individual units of qualifications at a time (unitisation), bite-size qualifications, online and hybrid delivery models.” The College’s Core Curriculum [A levels] and the restrictions placed on its delivery by funding requirements means that most of these initiatives cannot be implemented.</p> <p>The College does offer a number of ‘bite size’ qualifications as Additional Studies as a part of students’ academic programmes of study, including Lessons in Financial Education L2, Certificate and Diploma in Financial Studies L3, Extended Project Qualification, Coaching Sport & Physical Activity L2 and L3, Functional Skills Entry Level, L1 and L2. These options are frequently reviewed and opportunities to offer similar, funded courses are taken where practical.</p>
<p>2. Information, Careers Advice and Guidance</p> <p>Essex LSIP: <i>“To ensure that appropriately skilled labour is available to industry, it is vital that careers advice and guidance is of high quality and consistent across all levels of the education system throughout the whole county. Employers have fed-back their concerns over the current system. They are primarily, pre-16, but post-16 and Adults would also benefit from improvements to the system. The system still doesn’t appear to value vocational pathways (including apprenticeships) as a credible alternative to university. With new emerging sectors and skills there is a general lack of awareness of specific roles and career paths. Many employers do talk proactively about engagement with local schools and colleges for visits, industry talks, careers fairs, work experience and work placement opportunities. Furthermore, there is a need to fully engage prime influencers, teachers, parents and care-givers, in new and emerging vocational sectors so they are able to support young people make fully-informed career decisions.”</i></p>	<p>The College has a stable Careers programme and provision. The Careers department works with local careers and HE providers such as the Greater Essex Careers Enterprise Hub and with careers leads in partner schools.</p> <p>For two days in June we host a dedicated Progression event with students off-timetable in order to engage with a very large programme of external speakers from local and national businesses, careers and apprenticeship and HE providers. As part of this event, a large careers and progression engagement event is held (a similar one is held in February) with all HE providers and a range of local businesses invited.</p> <p>Sessions on careers planning, employability skills and ‘soft skills’ for adulthood are embedded through the tutorial programme.</p> <p>Please see section 2 C below: To make employability a whole College focus for 2023/2024 including to improve provision for alternative career pathways e.g. apprenticeships</p>

<p>3. Tutor shortages and capacity of providers to respond</p> <p><i>Essex LSIP: “Colleges and Training Providers all feed back that they struggle to employ and retain high quality staff. This issue is more pronounced in skills shortage areas / emerging sectors where there are extreme tutor and assessor shortages. Additionally, with the fast pace of change in industry, it is becoming increasingly difficult for providers to ensure that tutors and assessors are up-to-date with existing practices and emerging technologies. When dealing with new and emerging skills priorities, many providers cite a lack of capacity to respond as a fundamental barrier. Such issues are varied, but most providers describe a lack of staff capacity to develop and teach new provision, general space constraints, a lack of capital investment in new technology and the ability to support very small group sizes in new subject areas.”</i></p>	<p>The College has not, to date, struggled to employ and retain high quality teaching staff for our general education provision (we do not offer vocational or technical provision) even in “hard to recruit” areas.</p> <p>Nevertheless, recruitment has become more difficult and the College notes with caution the increasing cost of living, real terms pay decreases and other factors which are causing a recruitment crisis in parts of the sector.</p> <p>In addition, the College has faced continuing cuts in terms of resources per student from 2010 meaning that the amount of funding per student is now approximately 50% in real terms lower than 2010 levels. The FE sector also receives relatively disadvantageous resourcing compared to school sixth forms and other post-16 providers e.g. academies who do not therefore pay VAT or Council Tax.</p> <p>The College has for many years been oversubscribed and is currently operating at capacity. Given the very significant real terms reductions in funding since 2010, there are only extremely limited opportunities to grow the College (even if significant government capital funding were available for building projects, there are no major development opportunities within our single compact city centre site, which is bound on two sides by a Roman wall, and no readily identifiable nearby sites which could host further provision).</p>
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SECTION TWO:

Further College targets to meet local, regional and national priorities

<p>A. To continue to provide an exceptional pathway to higher education for students of all backgrounds.</p>	<p>Approximately 75% of College students successfully enrol on university courses each year, the majority at their first choice institution. HESA data indicates that College’s students’ rate of achievement of First or Upper Second Class degrees at Russell Group universities is higher than all sectors, including Independent sector. College student achievement at all institutions is 6% higher than students from the state sector and retention is 2% higher. Participation rates from the College’s students from low HE participation postcodes and, especially, students whose parents do not have HE qualifications are higher than all sectors – showing the College’s role as a force for social mobility.</p>
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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To increase the proportion of students applying to Russell Group and Sutton 30 universities 	<p>Specific feedback from our stakeholders at Essex University supports this. For example, former College students secured first class degrees at a rate of between 7% and 20% higher than all other students every year over the past three years.</p> <p>A number of teacher-led groups provide specialist guidance and a supportive peer network and interview experience for shared interest groups – including Medics, Lawyers, Oxbridge Applicants. There is also dedicated support for the UCAS process via the pastoral system.</p> <p>While College students have a good rate of enrolment at Russell Group and Sutton 30 institutions (approximately 17% and 19% respectively of the College cohort who went to university in 2022), this figure could be improved, especially amongst students from POLAR 1 postcodes. It should be noted that the most likely HE destination area for College students is the East (36% in 2022) which has prestigious universities such as UEA and the University of Essex but no Sutton 30 or Russell group university, with the exception of Cambridge.</p> <p>To encourage students to be more ambitious by</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More actively promoting bursaries and other widening participation schemes • Information, presentations and workshops from stakeholders. • To provide increased information and support regarding moving away from home – financial, practical and emotional.
<p>B. To continue to provide the broadest possible curriculum, enabling students to progress to their chosen HE course or employment route.</p>	<p>The College remains one of the largest specialist 16-18 Sixth Form Colleges and A level providers in the country and the relative size of the College enables the achievement of economies of scale such as providing students with an excellent choice of courses and combinations. The College also achieves strong economies of coherence from its focus on just two programmes of study (A level and a smaller Level 2 ‘resit’ programme), both with very clear intent. The quality of education plans in place provide a clear focus for very good student outcomes.</p> <p>The College offers a very wide range of over 50 academic A level or equivalent subjects, including a number that would otherwise not be available to students in the North Essex and South Suffolk area, outside of the independent or super-selective sector. Examples include A level Italian, German, Medieval History, Early Modern History, Resistant Materials, Philosophy, Classical Civilisation, Geology and Environmental Science.</p>

	<p>The DfE has identified 7 sectors as National Priorities. While the College curriculum does not provide sector specific training, we offer a number of A level subjects within the scope of four of the sectors:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Digital and Technology • Health and Social Care • Engineering • Science and Mathematics <p>Approximately 55% of College students take an A level from at least one of these groups and 38% of students take at least two A levels from these groups. [The National Priorities do not include Social Sciences, Arts, Humanities, Languages etc, although A levels in these subjects may well be very useful to those eventually employed in the Priority Areas.] In summer 2022, 26% of students progressed to degrees, apprenticeships or employment in the DfE National Priority Areas.</p>
<p>C. To make employability a whole College focus for 2023/2024</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Including to improve provision for alternative career pathways e.g. apprenticeships. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identifying the personal (soft) and academic skills that make our students successful at university as indicated by HESA data (as opposed to getting and meeting their offers) • Teaching departments to audit their work and set targets in departmental QIP. • Teaching departments to foster links with external ‘stakeholders’ including local business to give input into Curriculum planning and delivery • Whole College target on employability in College QIP • Employability and Personal Development a cross-College Curriculum Review Target for 2023/24 • Skills Governor Appointed • Lead Practitioner for Employability and Personal Development appointed. Action plan drawn up • Targeting students who have indicated they will not apply to university with information and opportunities such as an Apprenticeship Workshop Day organised by external providers
<p>D. Improve awareness/visibility amongst students of opportunities for skills development</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To embed and integrate foregrounding and promotion of skills – including soft skills and transferrable skills – where opportunities have arisen - in classroom activity, displays, materials etc. • Implement a central skills/employability record for each student to log their skills journey, both curricular and extra-curricular, using an external software platform • Lead Practitioners appointed – three specifically cover student skills development: Employability Personal Development, ILT and Student Resilience.

<p>E. Increase student engagement with ‘Additionality’, in order to develop employability, transferrable skills and cultural capital?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All students to have compulsory additionality (re: 40 hours) to broaden skills development and gain ‘cultural capital’. Other opportunities for this include a very broad range of visiting speakers and workshops, and many trips and visits. • Promote ILT for employment in subject areas (e.g. use of email and Teams) • Promote visiting speakers more visibly and consistently – including outside of specific subject areas. Seek more formal feedback from students on speakers and events.
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5. Corporation Statement

On behalf of the Corporation of The Sixth Form College Colchester, it is hereby confirmed that the College plan as set out above reflects an agreed statement of purpose, aims and objectives as approved by the Corporation at their meeting on 22nd May 2023.

The plan will be published on the College’s website annually and can be accessed from the following link:

Michael Atherton
Chair of Governors

Ian MacNaughton
Principal