

Statement of Vision, Purpose and Aims Our Response to an Evolving Landscape

The evolving landscape heralds the potential for increased autonomy and freedom from bureaucracy. This does not come without a price and we accept that we need to operate more efficiently and effectively for the benefit of our learners.

In doing so, we will keep true to our vision and aims and will continue to provide the very best learner experience for all our students.

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Now is our opportunity to demonstrate our ability to be innovative and responsive to the challenges that lie ahead and to build upon our strengths and reputation as a successful college which cares about its community and its learners.

Our Ambition and Vision

Somerset College is a vocational college with a rich mix of further and higher education, and we are dedicated to expanding and developing opportunities for Somerset residents to gain occupational and employment skills. We believe that skills are vitally important to the future of our economy. It is our wish that more young people, and parents especially, see vocational training and education as a sound alternative to the traditional A level route. We believe that vocational training and education can and does prepare young people with the critical employment skills necessary for work and life. We are passionate about the development of tomorrow's workforce and will tirelessly work with business to achieve this.

Employers are demanding ever more contemporary and higher level skills in new technologies and in the way people work and interact. Specialist occupational training, especially for adults, is crucial for business success and it is our intention to ensure that anyone trained or educated at Somerset College has the most up-to-date skills and knowledge to enable them to compete for employment.

National and Regional Picture

Nationally employers are crying out for a new workforce: a workforce which is skilled and knowledgeable; a workforce which works collectively and in multi-disciplinary teams; a workforce which is solution focused, has effective personal skills and is customer facing; a workforce which has the right attitudes.

Government is keen for colleges to meet the needs of employers and local communities. With our wealth of expertise in further and higher education we can and will open-up opportunities for individuals and businesses to go further and higher. Local provision is more economically beneficial to individuals and government, giving us more opportunities to add value.

The future will depend upon innovation and development. Nurturing talent and unique thinking will be important; fostering the ability of all to adapt to change will be essential. Playing our part in this economic and social challenge is something we will relish.

Implications for Somerset College's Vision and Purpose



Young People

Our vision is for vocational education to be integrated into the secondary school curriculum, developing generic employment and vocational skills which will prepare young people for productive and sustainable economic lives. An all round good education is a fundamental component of this vision, and we expect schools to ensure that students are equipped with essential skills in numeracy and literacy and given good impartial information and guidance about the further studies available to them.

From 14 years we believe this education can be strengthened to include sound vocational education which may lead to further and higher education. Our part is to open up these opportunities, to work with schools to make this happen and to ensure that as young people progress they gradually enter more sophisticated levels of occupational training either through further education, apprenticeships, higher education or work and training. We are confident that employers will want to work with us and schools to foster this aim.

We know that Somerset's Key Stage IV achievements are below that of other counties in the south west and that Somerset students aged 17 and over drift away from education more than in the top performing regions. We will build on the outstanding success of the introduction of new diplomas for 14-16 year olds to raise the motivation, ambition and achievement of school leavers. We will work hard to open young people's minds to the opportunities available to them through activities, information and good guidance, and where necessary challenge institutions who work only in their own interests.

Employers and Adults

Our vision is that employers will invest in training and development for their employees. That they will value training for all staff, whatever their level, and understand the economic benefit to business and the economy of creating and shaping the workforce they so passionately desire. We will work with employers to ensure they realise the opportunities available, find value for money solutions which retain training initiatives and enable them to support and recruit the very best from those we train and educate. We will strengthen our commercial offer and seek new markets, the success of which will enable us to maintain our commitment to the local economy.

Our provision will reflect the changing economic climate in Taunton and Somerset and we will work with business and political leaders to ensure we identify these changes and respond quickly to demand.



The next few years will present many challenges for the public sector and in response we will strengthen our offer to adults and those who are unemployed, helping them to learn new skills and enter and gain new employment. Wherever possible we will access appropriate concessions and funding opportunities for those in greatest need.

Higher Education and a University for Somerset

Our experience of delivering higher education, skills and qualifications up to and including honours degrees is now long-standing and we are recognised nationally for our specialisms. Although there is no university in Somerset, our wide ranging provision and academic expertise is central to Somerset's ambition to achieve university education in the county. We will strive to ensure that our provision meets Somerset's ambitions. There will be many challenges, not least from changes in funding and competitors, but the national imperative is to deliver employment focused higher education locally at affordable rates and we will adopt strategies to achieve these goals.

Meeting Demand

We will ensure there is a broad vocational 14-19 curriculum from pre-entry levels to level 3. We will develop pathways to higher education for adults and young people in health and care, arts and design, and engineering and technology. We will expand our apprenticeships and make sure students have appropriate progression opportunities. We will respond to market demand for adult and employer training and invest in new areas of development, especially to meet Somerset's economic strategy for nuclear, alternative energy, technology, business services, tourism, rural regeneration and inward investment. We will extend opportunities for learning and increased income through blended and e-learning solutions. We will continue to improve our curriculum and be committed to providing an outstanding offer to all.

Our Community

We will be a part of Taunton's regeneration, working for a better and more prosperous town. As the employment pattern shifts, so we will anticipate these needs and shift our curriculum accordingly. We are committed to promoting sustainable development in our curriculum, campus and culture and support Taunton's ambitions for a low carbon economy. We will be known for our positive and constructive engagement with partners, employers and political leaders. We will listen to our students, staff and employers to improve and provide the very best vocational education and training.

Strategic Priorities



The next five years will contain uncertainties, and it is important that the strategy adopted will enable us to achieve our Vision but be sufficiently flexible to adapt to changing circumstances and to grasp opportunities as they arise or are anticipated. In essence we will stay true to our Vision and Aims but be adaptable to change.

Our priority strategies in pursuit of our Vision will be:

- 1** Maintain and improve the quality of our curriculum and services and retain and improve our reputation.
- 2** Develop the curriculum offer and increase income from commercial opportunities, aligning developments to our curriculum specialisms in order to strengthen the core offer and reduce dependency on direct public sector contracts.
- 3** Work more smartly to improve our learner focus and reduce wasteful infrastructure costs.

SOMERSET COLLEGE AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

Our Ambition is to create the college of the future providing a unique blend of professional and vocational further and higher education to meet the needs of our local and regional economy for employment, prosperity and success.

Our Vision is that:

- Every learner will excel and develop their talents and potential for employment, independence and life
- Somerset College will be a catalyst for economic and social change in Taunton and Somerset

Our Aims are to:

- 1** Provide educational opportunities for all ages in applied vocational learning and skills training for those aged of 14 years through to further and higher education and employment.

- 2** Be a recognised centre for higher education and excel as a college recognised regionally, nationally and locally for our specialist areas.

- 3** Be the provider of choice for employer based training and employment based solutions for innovation, enterprise, development and growth.

- 4** Excel at student success and achieve a local, regional and national reputation for quality.

- 5** Be pivotal to greening the economic environment of Taunton Deane and Somerset

Strategic Priority 1



Maintain and improve the quality of our curriculum and services and retain and improve our reputation

Quality and Reputation

Maintain and improve the quality of our curriculum and services and retain and improve our reputation

We know that learners and customers will only choose us if they are confident in the quality of our services and our teaching and learning. We know that students, parents and employers value good communication, consistency and good quality education and training. We know that how students, parents and employers feel about us will influence their choices. We know that it is the experience of students, parents and employers which ultimately shapes our reputation in the community.

If we are to achieve our vision for vocational education then the quality of all that we do will remain our primary focus. At the heart of this experience is the quality of teaching and learning and the quality of the training we provide. We already have strong endorsement from Ofsted and the Quality Assurance Agency and have achieved many kite marks to recognise the quality of what we do. These are not the true test. The true test is what learners think about us and whether they achieve the outcomes they seek, be they qualifications, employment or further study.

Curriculum Development // We will align our curriculum to Somerset's emerging economy. This changing landscape gives us the opportunity to strengthen our engineering and construction curriculum in line with the needs of the nuclear industry and the parallel technological and social demands generated by a low carbon economy. The main urban areas of Bridgwater and Taunton are identified as growth points and there is an emerging industrial corridor spanning the M5 from Junctions 26-23. We are committed to the development and regeneration of Taunton and believe that our contribution to the wealth of educational provision (independent and public) is an important aspect of Taunton's vision.

We will play a part in stimulating tourism and inward investment through our extensive arts and design curriculum, aligning it increasingly to the potential for international students, residential summer schools and the needs of this sector for technical skills especially. Our curriculum in health will be expanded to respond to the changing context of the National Health Service and working with our partners we will develop a south west response to demand.



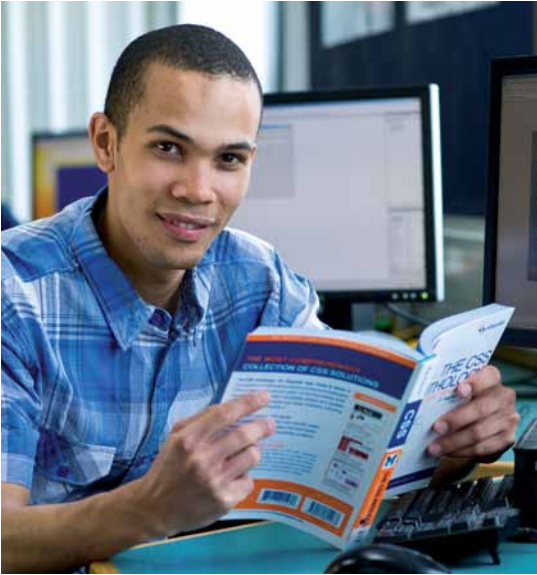
Our curriculum development will be based on good information and we will actively work with employers, representative groups, public bodies, the third sector, sector skills councils and political leaders to strengthen the skills and achievements of our local community. We will seek out their views and use their advice to inform our plans. We will work with other colleges to provide the very best offer for our local community and ensure there are clear pathways from further to higher education which provide study opportunities for apprentices, part-time and full-time learning, e-learning and training in the workplace.

The Quality of Teaching and Learning // We will not shirk from tackling poor provision. We will regularly monitor and review each learner's progress against their personal plans and take action to prevent individual failure. We are proud of our success rates which put us in the top 10% of colleges but we will not rest until all students achieve the best of which they are capable.

We value teaching and learning and will foster an improvement culture for staff and students and will celebrate the achievements of individuals, course groups and employers. We will encourage individuals to be entrepreneurial, innovative and creative.

We care about all our learners and will provide the very best tutoring support to ensure that they feel valued and part of our whole College learning community.

Enriching and Challenging Curriculum // We believe that all good vocational training also provides a solid educational experience. Our teaching and learning will embrace excellent tutoring, impartial careers advice and activities which enrich the curriculum. For young people and vulnerable adults we will ensure effective safeguarding. We will develop students' personal skills and encourage them to take up active pursuits and healthy lives: to be good citizens; to achieve their ambitions, be economically independent, to respect others and to take pride in themselves. We will promote volunteering and charitable activities to enhance their understanding of the world and encourage them to work constructively with others.



Our Resources // We aim to provide an estate which is modern and welcoming and which meets learners' needs. Our equipment and facilities will be industry standard to reflect our vocational focus. We will take pride in our estate, maintain it and invest in it so that future generations may benefit from our assets.

When we recruit staff we will look to appoint those who are committed to students, share our values; seek self-improvement; and are constructive and conscientious team players. Our staff will be appropriately qualified and trained and our teachers will be expected to have professional skills and qualifications, up-date themselves and share best practice. They will be supported to up-date their teaching and technical skills. We will maximise staff resources for the benefit of students' learning.

Our Responsibilities to our Community // We take our responsibilities to the community, to students and to parents seriously. We will promote greater understanding of equality and diversity and work closely with diverse groups in our community to enrich the curriculum, promote community cohesion and open up opportunities for all. Our campus community will be a safe and caring learning environment and we will safeguard children and vulnerable adults from harm. Whilst we are passionate about vocational education and training we will seek to use our privileged position to educate and broaden the intellectual, social and personal skills of all students.

Strategic Priority 2



Enterprise and Commercialisation

Develop the curriculum offer and increase income from commercial opportunities, aligning developments to specialisms in order to strengthen the core offer and reduce dependency on direct public sector contracts

Public expenditure will reduce over the coming years and we will seek out new opportunities to increase our income and sustain investment which will benefit learners and enable us to achieve our ambitions. We are already successful in securing new contracts with employers and will use this experience to seek out new opportunities. We will respond to market demand and introduce a wider access to learning, especially non-accredited learning for those who wish to purchase bite size learning. We will seek funding for projects and initiatives which lever change and help us develop our products and services. We will build upon our expertise in supporting international students and actively recruit students to our key specialist areas.

Develop the curriculum offer and increase income from commercial opportunities, aligning developments to specialisms in order to strengthen the core offer and reduce dependency on direct public sector contracts

Our fees will be realistic yet reflect the value of what we do. We will provide value for money, and ensure that wherever possible learners who are in need are financially supported with clear information through the development of bursary schemes, grants and access to support funds.

We will seek out and be open to any partnerships which enable us to achieve our ambitions.

SOMERSET COLLEGE VALUES

Our underpinning values reflect our drive towards our vision and purpose:

- We value our learners and will put the 'learner first' in all that we do.
- We will value the creation of a learning community for staff and students.
- We will value vocational education and take pride in our contribution to our community's economy and social development.
- We will value diversity and be committed to inclusivity.
- We will value our environment and our community and be committed to a sustainable future.

- We will value our staff and the importance of staff involvement in shaping and helping the College to achieve its aims.
- We will adopt high personal and professional standards and have a deep commitment to a collegiate philosophy.
- We will value working with partners committed to a common purpose to achieve a better future for our community.

Our mission is to ensure that we realise this vision, which will mean a change in the way we work

Strategic Priority 3



Work smartly to improve our learner focus and reduce wasteful infrastructure costs

Value for Money and Efficiency

Work smartly to improve our learner focus and reduce wasteful infrastructure costs

Over the last three years we have done much to reduce costs and provide good value for money. We will continue to provide good levels of teacher contact and investment in industry standard resources. To achieve this we will seek out reductions in infrastructure costs through good procurement, shared services and partnership activities. We will utilise the benefits of technology to increase efficiencies and become more effective, reducing energy costs, unnecessary expenditure and wasteful bureaucracy. Our business processes will be systematically examined to ensure they add value to the learner's journey and promote a culture of continuous improvement. All managers will be trained in business improvement techniques and work in multi-disciplinary teams to share learning, reduce costs and improve learner outcomes.

Partnerships and Structural Change // We will be open to new partnerships and structural change which enables us to achieve our vision for vocational education. We will be mindful of the new emphasis on self-determination and commercialism and will adopt innovative and courageous strategies which diminish our reliance on public sector income and ensure the continued availability of vocational education from 14 to higher education.

Governance



Nick Moore
Chair of Governing Body

THE ROLE OF GOVERNORS

To establish and communicate their expectations to staff and students. In this the Governors will provide leadership to the whole College community, and with the Principal and the senior team establish a culture of improvement, a focus on teaching and learning and promote high standards of student and staff conduct.

The Governing Body

Working in partnership with the senior team, the Governing Body will stay true to the College's vision for vocational education and focus on strategic development and the leadership of change. They will use influence to build strong partnerships, advocate for the College and its students and ensure that the learner's experience is full and rewarding. In this they will engage with learners and staff at every opportunity.

The Governing Body will not shirk from difficult decisions and will at all times have the best interest of learners and the Somerset community at their heart. They will not waste resources on destructive competition but will seek beneficial alliances and solutions.

Message from the Governors

Our expectation is that our community can entrust the Governing Board and staff of Somerset College with the development, education and achievement of their sons and daughters, their employees and themselves.

Our expectation as Governors is that all our students will be the kind of people:

- Of whom the residents of Taunton and Somerset can be proud.
- That employers value and wish to recruit.
- Who are proud of themselves, their College and their achievements.

Our expectation of staff is that they will:

- Be decent people committed to the education and success of all learners.
- Value student achievement and passionately embrace a commitment to improving and developing themselves as teachers and learners.
- Gain the respect of learners, employers and the community for their commitment to all who learn at Somerset College.

Communication

We are committed to open and transparent communication, to keeping learners and staff informed, to listening when people complement or criticise us, and using every opportunity to ensure others share our passion for vocational education and the role it can play towards a vibrant and economically buoyant community.



Somerset College

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