



# The Isle of Wight College

## Strategic Aims 2021-24

## **Introduction**

Welcome to the strategic plan for the Isle of Wight College. Having consulted widely, this plan sets out the college's priorities for the next three years. It includes details of how we will work towards these priorities, and how we will assess our progress using key performance indicators, where relevant, and annual self-assessment reports.

The college is a further education college, with its main site located in Newport the county town of the Isle of Wight and with a second site comprising of a Centre of Excellence for Composites, Advanced Manufacturing and Marine (CECMM) in East Cowes. This centre, opened in September 2017, was funded by the Solent Local Enterprise Partnership and built in partnership with GKN. Recognising its role as the only provider of general further education on the island, the college offers a broad curriculum from foundation level to higher education, to meet the needs of employers and the local community.

In the national context the college is considered to be 'medium' size with approximately 1,500 students aged 16-19, 2,000 adults and just under 400 apprentices. The college employs just over 360 teaching and support staff in a variety of full and part-time roles.

There is a high proportion of young people with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) on the island and the college provides comprehensive, high quality programmes for these students including those with the most complex needs, in new specialist facilities.

The college subcontracts provision to Platform One, a specialist music college, and UKSA, a maritime training charity, which are both based on the island. It also collaborates with Portsmouth in the Community to support the college's football curriculum. The college offers higher education programmes in partnership with the University of Portsmouth.

## **National context**

2020 has been a year of unprecedented challenges following the coronavirus pandemic and ongoing negotiations to secure the UK's exit from the European Union. Colleges, like all organisations, have not been immune to these challenges, experiencing significant changes to their operations, the way that they work with students and having to plan for a new trading environment and the impact this will have on skills needs.

The national lockdowns in response to the pandemic impacted on the learning of a generation of young people. Interrupted teaching and changes to assessments mean that many young people will have gaps in their learning that colleges will need to take into consideration when planning teaching and learning activities. However, the lockdown periods also accelerated the college's use of digital learning, and the skills and knowledge that staff acquired during these periods will enable the college to continue to make learning more accessible and engaging for its students. The pandemic has also had a profound impact on business and the economy, with the island identified as one of the areas of the country most likely to be severely impacted. Many people face an uncertain future at work, with potential job losses and many people needing to retrain and move into new roles. The government has recognised this and responded with various financial support packages, including additional funding for colleges to support adults wishing to develop their skills in new areas.

There are promising signs that the Government increasingly recognises the significant role that further education can play in responding to the economic challenges presented by the coronavirus pandemic and Brexit. This is evident through more frequent references in government announcements to the contribution that colleges can make, increases in college core funding, investment in college estate, increasing focus on technical education at level 4 and 5 and the launch of T levels.

### **Regional context**

The island lies in the south east of England, an area of relative prosperity and wealth, however the island includes areas of significant deprivation. Economic development in the region is supported by the Solent Learning and Enterprise Partnership (LEP), bringing together the public and private sectors.

The LEP has identified a number of priority strategic industry sectors (marine; aerospace and defence; advanced manufacturing and engineering; transport and logistics; low carbon and, the visitor economy), all of which are represented on the island. More recently the LEP has published a response to the coronavirus pandemic. The college's strategy and curriculum offer are informed by the work of the Solent LEP, regional and local labour market information and by working collaboratively with employers to establish local skills gaps.

### **Local context**

#### **a) The island**

The island is largely rural with almost half classified as an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and in 2019 the island was awarded UNESCO Biosphere status. The total population of the island is 142,000 and the proportion of older people is higher than the national average and growing more quickly. 95% of the island population identify themselves as being white, British, 3% as non-white and the remainder being from other ethnic groups. A significant minority of the population, approximately 30%, consider themselves to have a disability. Many young people leave the island to gain employment, often not returning until their mid-forties, which contributes to skills shortages for employers.

#### **b) Economic / work force**

In 2019, 77% of the island's working age population were economically active, which is relatively low compared to the South East and the UK as a whole. This is largely attributed to the number of retired people and those who have long standing health issues.

Unemployment rates on the island are in line with those nationally. Between April 2019 and March 2020, 3.9% of the island population who were economically active were unemployed, the same as the national rate and marginally higher than the South East rate of 3.1%. However, there is a differential in the level of earnings, with island residents earning significantly less than those in the South East or the rest of Great Britain. The average gross weekly pay for full-time workers on the island is £477, compared to £613 in the South East and £586 in Great Britain overall. The cost of travel from the island to the mainland is a significant consideration in many people's decision to travel off the island to work and study.

The five largest employment sectors on the island are: health and social work (18%), wholesale and retail (16%), accommodation and food services (14%), manufacturing (10%)

and education (8%). Almost one in five of all residents of working age are self-employed. There is also a large seasonal labour force, both of which contribute to the significant proportion of residents who work part-time (38%). The island is a low wage, low value added economy, with a low Gross Value Added (GVA) compared to the South East and nationally.

### c) Education

The proportion of young people securing 'good' passes in GCSE qualifications at age 16 is significantly lower than that of their peers in the South East of England and nationally. There are similar issues for those attempting A level qualifications. As a result, relatively few young people progress to higher level study at university. This picture is long standing and has led to the island having a low skill base, with the proportion of residents possessing higher level qualifications being significantly lower than that in the South East, as shown below:

- Level 4 and above: IW 32% (SE 43%)
- Level 3 and above: IW 54% (SE 62%)
- Level 2 and above: IW 76% (SE 79%)
- Level 1 and above: IW 91% (SE 89%)
- No qualifications: IW 5% (SE 6%)

(NB the above data relates to NVQ level or equivalent qualifications)

The school system on the island is based around a model of primary and secondary schools, similar to that found in most of England. Many of the secondary schools have sixth form provision. A unique feature of the island is the high number of young people who are electively home educated, in response to which the college works with the local authority to offer a range of part-time programmes. There are a number of private training providers, which offer apprenticeships and other programmes for young people and adults. Therefore, the market place for students post-sixteen is highly competitive.

In this context the college often recruits students with low prior attainment, especially in the core subjects of maths and English. The college has seen sustained expansion of its foundation learning offer at entry level and level 1. The college provides a range of programmes for adults to help address local skills shortages and enable them to progress into work, gain promotion or progress to further study.

## Mission

The mission of The Isle of Wight College is:

To deliver outstanding education and training driven by:

- Putting students first
- Working with employers
- Supporting our community

## Educational character

The college's educational character reflects its unique location and context. The college is the only general further education provider on the island. As a result, in order to meet the needs of its community, it is committed to offering programmes across the full range of the curriculum, from foundation to advanced level and, where demand exists, higher education programmes.

This character influences the college's approach in the following ways:

1. **We have high aspirations** – for all our students and support and challenge each to learn, develop, progress and succeed
2. **We provide high quality teaching and learning** – which delivers an inspiring, engaging and enjoyable learning experiences that will enable students to develop their knowledge and skills for employment and life
3. **We offer a wide range of programmes** – designed to meet the education and training needs of the island community
4. **We work with employers** - to understand their needs and ensure our programmes give students the skills and knowledge employers require
5. **We work in partnership and collaboration** - to meet the education and training needs of the island
6. **We embrace equality and diversity** – providing an inclusive and welcoming place to learn and work

## College values

The college values embrace the spirit of the Nolan Principles which govern standards in public life. The values are based on the collective views of staff and governors and inform how they do things.

1. **Leadership** – displayed by everyone and characterised by honesty, impartiality, objectivity, and recognising the contribution of others
2. **Learning** – taking every opportunity to grow and develop
3. **Empowerment** – supporting personal responsibility and accountability
4. **Diversity** – being respectful, tolerant, inclusive and acting with integrity
5. **Innovation** – encouraging creativity, enterprise, entrepreneurship and the use of technology
6. **Caring** – promoting individual resilience and shared responsibility for each other's wellbeing.

These values help develop a culture characterised by dedication, commitment and motivation enabled through clear and effective communication.

## Strategic partners

The college works with a range of partners and stakeholders to deliver its strategy. A selection of these strategic partners are shown below.

### Franchise partners



### Key partners



## Strategic Priorities 2021 – 2024

### **The college exists and works to:**

1. Grow each student's life opportunities.
2. Offer a dynamic, adaptable and rewarding curriculum.
3. Sustain purposeful, mutually beneficial and productive relationships with employers and the wider community.
4. Secure a vibrant and sustainable future.