

2020-2021 Outcome Agreement

1. Introduction

This 2020-21 Outcome Agreement outlines Newbattle Abbey College's contribution to the delivery of Scottish Government priorities and our response to the needs of learners during the unprecedented challenges of the past year. It also includes our achievements and aspirations as Scotland's national adult learning college. The support and advice from our Board of Directors and Trustees have been essential in enabling the college to adapt and develop during the sustained period of lockdown. The commitment of staff in all teams has ensured that our students continued to progress, despite the difficulties we faced.

As in previous years, Newbattle received approximately 48% of its annual income from SFC. The remaining 52% was generated through corporate activities and curriculum developments funded by other sources. The impact of the pandemic has had a major effect on corporate business, which has been significantly reduced since March 2020.

As a national adult education college, Newbattle continues to play a major role in the development of adult learning in Scotland. We do this through our contribution to the Adult Learning Strategic Forum and to the development of the national strategy for adult learning in 2020-21. As detailed below, the college has developed over many years a range of strategic partnerships with national organisations.

2. Our Curriculum

Our curriculum reflects the priorities of our 2016-20 Strategic Plan https://www.newbattleabbeycollege.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/02/NAC_Strategic_Plan_2016-20_.pdf

We delivered the following courses funded by SFC:

- 1 year full-time Access to HE Arts & Social Sciences - SCQF Level 6
- 1 year full-time Access to HE Arts & Social Sciences (Primary Education), SCQF Level 6, in partnership with Queen Margaret University
- 1 year full-time Access to HE (Celtic Studies) - SCQF Level 6
- 1 year full-time HNC Social Sciences (SCQF Level 7), an Associate Degree with Queen Margaret University
- 1 year full-time National Certificate in Rural Skills (SCQF Level 4)
- 6 month full-time Preparation for FE Course (SCQF Level 4), in partnership with Midlothian Council

In 2019-20 we also delivered:

- Adult Achievement Awards (SCQF Levels 2-6) to learners across Scotland

- Forest and Outdoor Learning Awards (SCQF Levels 2-8) to learners across Scotland
- short courses in Gaelic language, Rural Skills and Beekeeping

In order to develop and deliver our curriculum effectively we have prioritised digital development in our 2020-21 capital programme for several reasons:

- We have shared an ICT service with Edinburgh College for almost 10 years. This service is no longer robust and we need to invest in infrastructure and hardware to deliver the curriculum flexibly and integrate information systems across the college. Our current ICT arrangements have been highlighted as a high risk in college risk registers and internal audits for the past 2 years.
- The college uses SharePoint and does not have a Learning Management System (LMS). This is disadvantageous to students and staff and has impaired essential online delivery during lockdown.
- We need to refresh our Wide Area Network to improve resilience, performance and firewall security.
- Staff across the college require professional development in the operation and potential of our LMS.

3. Promoting Fair Access and Transitions

Since its inception in 1937, Newbattle has demonstrated the value of promoting access to adult learners, particularly those facing major barriers to learning. In the past 10 years, we have also extended access to younger learners at points of transition in schools and in the community. All of our courses reflect successful collaboration with local and national partners: colleges, universities, community learning and development and third sector organisations. From March-December 2020, our courses were delivered on a blended learning basis, with students typically attending college for 1 day per week. Since January 2020, all of our courses have been delivered online, with additional tutorial and guidance support. Despite these restrictions, we achieved the following in 2019-20:

- Our credit target for 2019-2020 was 921. We achieved 1237 credits, exceeding our target by 34.3%. We are keen to extend our target allocation, given our ongoing success in this area.
- Our successful Preparation for FE Course was co-designed with Midlothian Council to offer progression to adults engaged in community-based programmes. For the past 8 years this course has offered a supportive curriculum pathway to adults with few qualifications, for whom one year full-time courses are not feasible for a variety of reasons. On average, over 80% of students progress to full-time courses at Newbattle or other colleges. We now plan to deliver this successful course online across Scotland, in partnership with the Workers Education Association (WEA) Scotland. This will extend access to adults facing multiple barriers to learning and offer progression to local colleges and employment.

- Our Access to HE Primary Education Course, with a progression pathway to the BA Education Studies at Queen Margaret University, demonstrated another successful partnership with higher education.
- Through successful collaboration with a range of partners, 147 credits (13.5%) in the above courses were delivered to learners in SIMD 10 areas.
- In addition, 12.6% of the 176 learners who completed Adult Achievement Awards (SCQF Levels 2-6) in 2019-2020 were from SIMD 10 areas. These awards, which are not funded by SFC, offer adults accreditation for their learning in a range of locations and promote access and progression.
- Attainment across all courses funded by SFC in 2019-2020 was 90.12%, an increase of 16.22% on the previous year. Of these, 12 students (16.44%) were from SIMD 10 areas and 9 students (12.33%) were care-experienced.
- Partnership with the Hub for Success enabled the college to support 9 care-experienced students to attain a qualification, an increase of 11% from 2018-19.

4. Quality Learning, Teaching and Participation

Following the lockdown in March 2020, the Learning & Teaching Team continued to deliver the curriculum via blended learning. This included:

- online teaching via Zoom and Teams
- enhanced online guidance and extended Support for Learning
- health and wellbeing support
- improved assessment schedules
- extensive online support materials

In addition, the Learning and Teaching Team continued to meet on a weekly basis to identify and support 'at risk' students. All learners had Individual Learning Plans and all students with an identified need had a Personal Learning Support Plan (PLSP).

Additional Scottish Government funding enabled the college to extend ICT resources to students to allow them to access the curriculum. The timetable was also adjusted to enable students and teaching staff with caring responsibilities to work flexibly. Many of our students experienced difficulties in working online and required additional support. This was offered in a variety of ways:

- ICT/PC Passport session as part of Induction
- ICT drop-ins/individual support (face to face and virtual)
- Loaned equipment - chrome books/laptops and assistive technology, if required

Additional counselling was also available to students and staff, through a paid subscription to an online health and wellbeing portal (TogetherAll) and an online counselling referral service via Health in Mind Scotland.

Throughout lockdown, the college continued to follow its quality cycle to ensure that the student learning experience remained positive and that the student voice was clearly represented. This included:

- fortnightly meetings with Education Scotland
- a programme of virtual Quality Days
- mid-unit student evaluation and focus groups
- weekly online Student Representative Council (SRC) meetings

SRC office bearers represented the student body on various college committees in order to help improve the quality of all aspects of college life. Students were also represented on the COVID-19 Working Group. The group was established to provide a forum for consultation and engagement with staff and students and met virtually every 2 weeks throughout lockdown.

As a result of these measures, student retention and attainment in 2019-20 remained positive, as detailed below:

- Our retention across all full-time FE courses was 90%. This represents only a 2% decrease on our 2018-2019 retention rates of 92%, despite the problems faced by the pandemic.
- Attainment across all courses funded by SFC was 90.12%, an increase of 16.22% on the previous year. Of these, 12 students (16.44%) were from SIMD 10 areas and 9 students (12.33%) were care-experienced.

Student progression also remained positive in 2019-20. 96% of students who successfully completed their courses progressed to a positive destination in further education, higher education, employment or volunteering. As in previous years, progression from our Preparation for FE Course remained very positive. 90% of students progressed to Access Courses at Newbattle in 2019-20. This reflects our successful partnership with Midlothian Council and the scale and quality of support offered by college staff.

Our students valued the supportive environment of the college, as illustrated in their comments below, taken from mid-unit evaluations. They were asked about their college experience in general and about what had sustained them during the period of lockdown:

- *Having the support from the tutors coming back into learning was an advantage. All the help we received with university applications and with work throughout lockdown really helped.*
- *The help, support and encouragement. Nothing was too much trouble for the staff. The content of the course opened my eyes to opportunities and set me up for my future studies at university.*
- *I think the size of the college and all the staff at Newbattle is what sets it apart from other colleges and of course the building itself! I had a far better college experience than I had anticipated.*
- *The lecturers - the support and encouragement they offer and the fact that they genuinely want everyone to succeed, are what makes the college stand*

out. A student is only as good as their teacher. They go above and beyond their job descriptions.

- *I liked the amount of support available. It can be quite challenging at times but Newbattle Abbey College offers the support that no other college does.*
- *I loved everything. The staff are amazing. They worked extremely hard to ensure we achieved our best and supported us during these uncertain times.*

Please see Appendix 1 for our National Measures Template

5. Equalities and Inclusion

In 2019-20, the college made progress in extending support to learners from different protected characteristics. This was mainly achieved through the work of our Equalities and Diversity Group and our Learning & Teaching Team. Statistics relating to learners from different protected characteristics are detailed below:

- ethnicity: 330 credits (26.7%)
- disability: 539 credits (43.6%)
- male: 538 credits (43.5%)
- female: 699 credits (56.5%)
- care-experienced: 70 credits (5.66%)

See also the link to our Equalities Mainstreaming Report:

<https://www.newbattleabbeycollege.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/06/Equalities-Outcome-Report.pdf>

The gender balance across all courses was 43.49% male and 56.51% female. This compares with the following in 2018-2019: 50.96% male, 47.47% female and 1.57% other.

We have yet to improve the number of female students on our Rural Skills Course, despite extended marketing and community engagement. However, five female volunteers were involved in our Forest College volunteer programme and 120 students, over 90% female, on the BA Education Studies at Queen Margaret University obtained a Forest and Outdoor Learning Award.

The gender balance in our Board of Directors is 70% male and 30% female. The three members of our senior management team are female. The college has now established a cross-college reporting system in relation to gender-based violence and a student forum group has met to discuss this issue. In 2019-20, there were no reports of gender-based violence. Our Gender Action Plan is available at:

<https://www.newbattleabbeycollege.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/06/Newbattle-Abbey-College-GAP-excerpts-from-the-AY-2019-22-OA.pdf>

We are also implementing a Menopause Policy to support female staff and students.

6. Economic Recovery and Social Renewal

Our membership of the Improving Opportunities for Midlothian (IOM) Partnership ensures that we are aware of the Labour Market Intelligence (LMI) relevant to Midlothian, including data drawn from Scottish Government Labour Force Survey (LFS) or Regional Skills Assessment (RSA) produced by Skills Development Scotland.

We also contribute to Midlothian's COVID employability recovery plan, as part of our membership of the Midlothian COVID 19 Employment and Learning Group. This ensures that we are familiar with any relevant local upskilling or reskilling requirements, enabling us to help local residents acquire the skills and qualifications to respond to the inevitable changes in the labour market as a result of the pandemic.

All of our current courses and proposed curriculum partnerships have clear progression pathways and transition routes from community-based learning and community development programmes through to university. Our proposed HNC Childhood Practice is also central to Scottish Government's commitment to expand childcare places. We continue to explore the potential of developing an outdoor learning nursery, in partnership with Midlothian Council. As well as offering much needed local childcare, the nursery would generate commercial income and offer work placement opportunities for students on the HNC Childhood Practice with Outdoor Learning.

The need to widen access for learners by establishing better pathways between qualifications and institutions is also a priority for us. Our proposed partnership with the Workers Education Association [Scotland] aims to improve the learner journey, widen access by developing a new learner pathway, enable regional community-based access to high quality, accredited learning programmes and create a new form of college and third sector collaboration.

The national focus on the green agenda and promoting health, well-being and outdoor learning, means the demand for our Forest and Outdoor Learning Awards (FOLAs) should increase significantly across the country. We recently received funding to support the mental health of vulnerable senior phase pupils in Midlothian (senior phase) through outdoor learning programmes.

7. Public Health Emergency

The college community has responded well in the past year to the effects of the pandemic. We produced COVID Guidelines for a safe return to college, based on national advice. These were followed by staff and students and monitored fortnightly through a working group, involving students and representatives from all staff teams. This enabled the college to function well, using a blended learning approach from Sep-Dec 2020.

The digital developments demanded by the period of lockdown have enhanced staff expertise but have also highlighted the need for further developments in this area. These include developing a virtual learning environment for students and staff, data transformation to Cloud, refreshing networks and upgrading hardware.

8. Collaboration

As a national adult education college, Newbattle has always developed effective partnerships with local and national agencies. This was extended in 2019-20 in a variety of ways:

- In partnership with the University of Edinburgh, we explored the development of an HNC Course (Working with Communities) as Year 1 of an Associate Degree, leading to the new MA Learning in Communities at the university.
- We were awarded funding from the Midlothian Community Mental Health Support and Services Framework Covid Response Fund to support the mental health of vulnerable young people in Midlothian through outdoor learning programmes. We are now working in collaboration with all 6 secondary schools in Midlothian to plan and deliver this programme.
- We also continue to work in partnership with Midlothian Council to deliver the outcomes associated with the Midlothian Family Learning funding and the Rural Skills programmes for adult offenders. These have been delayed following the continuing restrictions posed by the pandemic.
- Newbattle continues to play a leading role in promoting Gaelic language and culture. Our ongoing partnership with Sabhal Mòr Ostaig has enabled us to enrich the Celtic Studies curriculum by offering students a residential Gaelic language programme in Skye. Likewise, successful partnerships with local and national Gaelic organisations, have enabled the college to offer Gaelic language courses in the community. Funding from Bòrd Na Gàidhlig has supported a partnership project with Newbattle and Ceòlas in South Uist to develop the Gaelic language skills of staff in early years education.
- The pandemic resulted in the postponement of the national adult learning conference scheduled for 2020, which would have been the 8th successive national event hosted by Newbattle. However, in partnership with Colleges Development Network, Newbattle is hosting an online international conference in May 2021 to celebrate the 700th anniversary of the Declaration of Arbroath, which was drafted at Newbattle.
- In 2019-20, we ran a successful Creative Musicianship Course in partnership with Edinburgh Napier University and 2 Midlothian high schools. This offered progression pathways to senior phase pupils whose personal circumstances restricted access to higher education in this field.

To extend curriculum pathways and respond to local economic needs in 2021-22 we plan to:

- deliver accredited outdoor learning short courses to enhance the employability of young people and adults in our local community with Midlothian Council and Forestry and Land Scotland
- develop an HNC in Childhood Practice with Outdoor Learning, in partnership with Queen Margaret University
- develop an HNC Course (Working with Communities) in partnership with the University of Edinburgh
- in partnership with Midlothian Council, establish an Outdoor Nursery in college grounds, offering work placements for students studying related courses and enhancing college income
- work in partnership with the Workers Education Association (WEA) Scotland to co-deliver an online Preparation for Further Education Course across Scotland
- extend our corporate market in outdoor learning programmes for businesses and community groups
- explore further online opportunities for curriculum delivery in relation to all of our programmes

We have demonstrated the success of our Rural Skills Programme in promoting access and progression to vulnerable learners and offering national accreditation. We continue to seek SFC credits to offer progression to Rural Skills SCQF Level 5 at Newbattle.

9. Climate Emergency

The college continues to make progress in this area. With capital funding from SFC, we introduced LED lighting and insulation in teaching areas and student communal areas. We also introduced instant hot water heaters in the kitchen and student toilets in the main building and in student communal areas.

The impact of the Coronavirus on all aspects of society has highlighted the importance of outdoor learning in supporting sustainability and promoting the health and well-being of people of all ages. We are very well placed to respond to the Scottish Government focus on the green agenda and sustainability. Our Forest College Programme offers accredited learning options to a wide range of learners across Scotland, including:

- 3-18 pupils and staff
- 16-24 year olds
- adult returners
- Third Age learners
- outdoor learning practitioners
- corporate clients

Our Rural Skills Courses and Forest and Outdoor Learning Awards are delivered in our 125 acre estate and in community locations. Our Community Woodland Ranger and Forest College Co-ordination have continued to undertake community engagement with volunteers, in compliance with national social distancing guidelines, throughout the period of lockdown. Our outdoor learning classroom, established through SFC capital funding, has enabled us to extend curriculum and commercial opportunities.

While the impact of the Coronavirus continues to have an adverse effect on college income, Newbattle is very well placed to emerge from national restrictions with confidence. Support from SFC and our Trustees has greatly enhanced the condition of the main building, outdoor teaching areas and student residency. Our staff expertise and our successful collaboration with partners offer major opportunities to respond to the green agenda through curriculum and corporate developments. Although challenging, online delivery of the curriculum has enhanced the skills and creativity of staff. These skills will be valuable in developing our online learning opportunities, as detailed at point 6 above. Likewise, the difficulties faced by all members of our college community have strengthened our collective commitment to work together for the continuing development of Newbattle.

College Outcome Agreement Impact Framework: Supporting Data

Measure		2014-15	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21
A	Credits Delivered (Core)	1,220	1,320	833	1,190	1,148	1,237	921
	Credits Delivered (ESF)	0	0	0	0	0	0	
	Credits Delivered (Core + ESF)	1,220	1,320	833	1,190	1,148	1,237	921
B	Volume of Credits Delivered to 10% most deprived postcode areas	40	80	64	50	70	147	56
	Proportion of Credits delivered to 10% most deprived postcode areas	3.3%	6.1%	7.7%	4.2%	6.1%	11.9%	6.1%
C	Volume of credits delivered to care-experienced learners	0	0	0	84	16	189	80
	Proportion of credits delivered to care-experienced learners	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	7.1%	1.4%	15.3%	8.7%
D	Number of senior phase age pupils studying vocational qualifications delivered by colleges	0	0	0	0	0	10	0
E1	Proportion of enrolled students successfully obtaining a recognised qualification (Full time FE)	78.6%	68.6%	77.4%	52.1%	75.0%	90.0%	75.0%
	Number of enrolled students successfully obtaining a recognised qualification (Full time FE)	55	48	41	38	54	61	40
	Total number of FTFE students	70	70	53	73	72	68	50
E2	Proportion of enrolled students successfully obtaining a recognised qualification (Part time FE)	-	-	100.0%	-	-	0.0%	-
	Number of enrolled students successfully obtaining a recognised qualification (Part time FE)	0	0	12	0	0	0	0
	Total number of PTFE students	0	0	12	0	0	0	0
E3	Proportion of enrolled students successfully obtaining a recognised qualification (Full time HE)	82.4%	64.3%	78.9%	66.7%	66.7%	95.0%	66.7%
	Number of enrolled students successfully obtaining a recognised qualification (Full time HE)	14	9	15	16	18	18	21

E4	Total number of FTHE students	17	14	19	24	27	19	21
	Proportion of enrolled students successfully obtaining a recognised qualification (Part time HE)	-	-	-	-	-	-	4.6%
	Number of enrolled students successfully obtaining a recognised qualification (Part time HE)	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
	Total number of PTHE students	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
F	Number of students achieving an HNC/D qualification articulating to degree level courses		7	9	13	16	1	21
	Number of students achieving an HNC/D qualification articulating to degree level courses with advanced standing		6	8	11	15	11	21
	Proportion of students achieving an HNC/D qualification articulating to degree level courses with advanced standing		85.7%	88.9%	84.9%	93.8%	1	84.9%
	Total number of full-time FE college qualifiers (in confirmed destinations)	42	40	45	36	50	58	32
G	Number of full-time FE college qualifiers in work, training or further study 3-6 months after qualifying	41	34	44	36	47	61	NA
	Proportion of full-time FE college qualifiers in work, training or further study 3-6 months after qualifying	97.6%	85.0%	97.8%	100.0%	94.0%	96.0%	100.0%
	Total number of full-time HE college qualifiers (in confirmed destinations)	13	9	8	16	18	12	22
	Number of full-time HE college qualifiers in work, training or further study 3-6 months after qualifying	13	9	8	16	18	12	NA
H	Proportion of full-time HE college qualifiers in work, training or further study 3-6 months after qualifying	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
	Percentage of students overall satisfied with their college experience (SSES survey)	-	-	95.7%	N/A	94.9%	0.0%	94.9%

