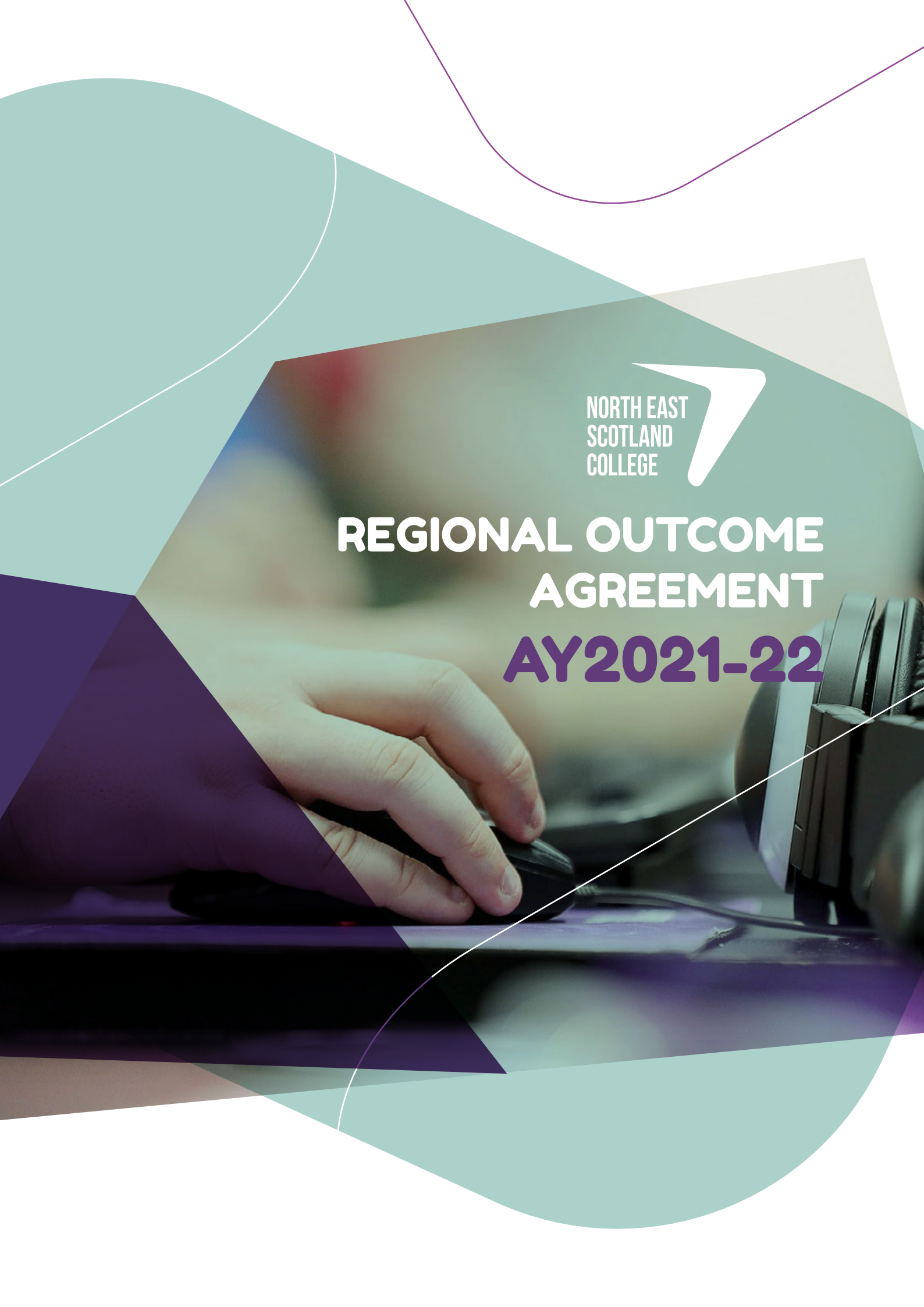


NORTH EAST
SCOTLAND
COLLEGE



REGIONAL OUTCOME AGREEMENT **AY2021-22**



Contents

INTRODUCTION	1
OUTCOMES FOR STUDENTS	2
- Fair Access and Transitions	2
- High Quality Learning, Teaching and Support	3
- Partnership, Participation and Student Experience	5
- Learning with Impact	6
- Public Health Emergency	7
- Equalities and Inclusion	8
ECONOMIC RECOVERY AND SOCIAL RENEWAL	9
- Responsive Institutions	9
- Confident and Highly Capable - Work-ready - Graduates	11
- Knowledge Exchange and Innovation	12
- Collaboration	13
- Climate Emergency	14
APPENDICES	
APPENDIX A - Supporting Data	
APPENDIX B - College Self-evaluation AY2020-21	

Introduction

North East Scotland College (NESCol) is the only further education College located within the North East of Scotland, and provides a wide range of education and training opportunities across the region to meet the needs of individuals, communities and employers. The College's main (College-owned) centres of delivery are in Aberdeen (3 sites), Fraserburgh and Peterhead with a number of leased community-based learning centres across the region.

NESCol serves an extensive geographical area (Aberdeen City: 186 sq km, Aberdeenshire: 6,313 sq km), with its 2 main centres of delivery, Aberdeen and Fraserburgh, located 41 miles apart.



College services are also provided in a number of the region's main centres of population outwith Aberdeen City: Ellon, Inverurie and The Scottish Maritime Academy in Peterhead. Further detailed information on the College, its courses and services can be accessed at www.nescol.ac.uk.

This Outcome Agreement aims to capture, at a high level, the College's contributions, impact and outcomes, and to provide assurance to the SFC on use of allocated funding in AY2021-22.

The College's Strategic Plan for 2021-23 can be accessed [here](#).

Supporting Data, including national measures and associated targets are included as Appendix A. In setting targets for AY2021-22, the College has taken into account its own past performance; the most recent national performance outcomes (AY2019-20); the current regional economic circumstances and the impacts of COVID. The targets are considered to be realistic, given the challenging and unique circumstances in which the College continues to operate, but ambitious in terms of recovery.

Whilst the targets are for 2021-22 only, it is acknowledged that the impacts of the pandemic and economic change will continue to impact significantly on the College for a number of years and that recovery will be gradual and dependent on restored confidence in education; improved alignment with the school senior phase curriculum; freedom from restrictions on course delivery and improved understanding of career prospects in the region. Using the College's well established partnership links will be critical for this purpose.

It is accepted that the pandemic has had a differential impact on people belonging to protected characteristic groups. The College's approaches to these are detailed in the equality outcomes - with specific reference to the attainment gap for those with a declared disability and those in digital poverty.

The College's Self-Evaluation for AY2020-21 is included in a separate document.

Outcomes for Students

FAIR ACCESS AND TRANSITIONS

NESCol works hard to ensure that anyone who wants to come to college can gain a place on a course, by removing any barriers and providing support so that all students reach their potential and successfully complete their course of study. Groups of particular interest, such as care-experienced and those from the 10% most deprived postcodes on the Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD10), are guaranteed a place on a course.

The College plays a pivotal role in developing skills of young people across the region, most significantly in the region's approach to the Developing the Young Workforce (DYW) agenda.



The College also supports many opportunities, for adult learners, part-time and distance learners including those returning to education for up-skilling and re-skilling. Strategic initiatives and community planning partnerships have also been established regionally which offer opportunities to more vulnerable sections of the community across both Aberdeen City and Aberdeenshire. NESCol also works closely with the University of Aberdeen (UofA) and The Robert Gordon University (RGU) and a tripartite approach, branded as the National Energy Skills Accelerator (NESA) is developing the skills required for the region's energy transition ambitions. These activities support NESCol to provide learning to senior phase school pupils, to extend our reach to the most deprived areas in the regions and to encourage students to continue their studies by articulation to university, or via work-based distance and part-time learning.

An innovative approach to working with schools is being developed to ensure NESCol can meet the needs of senior phase pupils and school leavers. This involves staff from the College school's team and other staff from across the College working with teachers, Skills Development Scotland (SDS) careers advisors, DYW co-ordinators and community planning groups. Better sharing of information and data insights will support planning for an appropriate offer to school children.

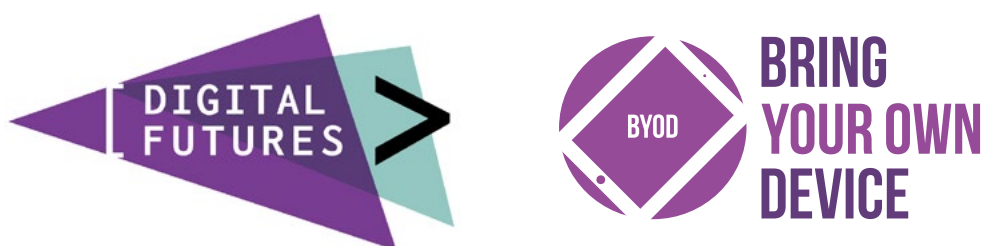
NESCol has been working especially closely with RGU to improve students' experiences and outcomes while studying at College. Areas of collaboration include subject level reviews, admissions and offers, validation and marketing school transitions products.

NESCol works closely with a wide range of partners to support fair access and transitions. A key partner is Aberdeen Foyer, with whom the College works to ensure it reaches vulnerable people within the community. This is one example where digital poverty is being addressed. Students referred to NESCol can be supported by the provision of digital devices so that appropriate studies can be completed, especially when much delivery continues to be online.

One of the groups of specific interest to NESCol is students who are care-experienced. NESCol wants to expand the number of care-experienced students studying at College, and to improve the outcomes for this group of students. A named contact has been introduced for this group so that queries or concerns can be directed quickly to someone who understands and can help. Care-experienced students are also now meeting as a group, where tailored support is made available, and essential guidance and advice is shared with them. The group will also provide useful feedback on the support provided to them. In the past, a number of students self-disclosed as care-experienced inaccurately and the application process has been redesigned to gather more robust and accurate data.

NESCol continues to run its pioneering and sector-leading “Bring Your Own Device” (BYOD) scheme, where students are required to use their own laptop for their studies, and to bring it to College when they are required to attend. Students are expected to supply their own device, but support is available in the form of a bursary-funded device which can be made available if the student is eligible, or by the student applying for a loan device if their course is not bursary funded. Loan devices are available from funds allocated to the College by the SFC to address digital poverty. Students can also apply for loan devices on courses which are not BYOD courses, if required, as most courses have some element of online delivery.

A “Digital Futures” initiative, delivered in tandem with the BYOD scheme, ensures that teaching staff optimise use of digital technologies to support access and transitions. Blackboard Ally provides automatic alternative formats of teaching materials to improve accessibility across all courses. In addition, it provides guidance to staff to target improvements in resources for accessibility. A Digital Accessibility Content Working Group will monitor and encourage the use of Blackboard Ally, ensuring compliance with the public sector bodies’ web accessibility regulations.



HIGH QUALITY LEARNING, TEACHING AND SUPPORT

Despite the challenges faced as a consequence of the COVID-19 pandemic and the associated campus closures, delivering a high-quality experience that is safe for all staff and students, while ensuring successful outcomes for all students remain the core priorities for the College.

The collation of feedback and evaluation of the learning and teaching experience of both staff and students in AY2020-21 has informed the development of a revised “Framework for Curriculum Planning and Delivery” to inform approaches to blended learning in AY2021-22. This document, alongside other supporting materials, such as the Quality Essentials and Learning and Teaching Enhancement collection, has been prepared to support teaching staff to keep up with good practice and lessons learned from the blended learning experience in AY2020-21. These new methods of information collation and presentation also enhance cross-disciplinary and cross-campus sharing. This is especially important with respect to assessment guidance as awarding bodies update their requirements in accordance with the predicted pandemic circumstances.

A review and restructure of the curriculum structure in AY2020-21 has also improved the management arrangements to ensure greater consistency, enhanced communication and more efficient cross-campus working. A revised committee structure has been designed to facilitate enhanced collective planning, sharing of good practice and collective responsibility.

Continuing Professional Development has been focussed heavily on developing digital teaching skills in AY2020-21 and this will continue into AY2021-22. Building on the success of the online courses, webinars and the College’s Learning Technology Team’s support in AY2020-21, further work is planned to deliver webinars on topics such as digital accessibility, universal design, contemporary pedagogy and effective assessment. This will be supplemented with equalities awareness and instructional design training to further enhance accessibility of teaching resources and to assist in effective student support.

The College continues to work with university partners, in particular the regional universities and especially RGU in devising new, and revising existing, articulation arrangements. In AY2020-21, 394 students articulated to courses in HE partner organisations with advanced standing. This is fewer than in previous years, most likely due to the impact of COVID-19 and student confidence, although there is no definitive feedback to provide evidence. However, numbers remain high, demonstrating the strength of the widening access opportunities for the region's students. Existing articulation agreements have been revised and work is underway to strengthen the collaborative opportunities between staff in the partner organisations and the College to improve and to expand the current offer.

Internal review and self-evaluation is an essential process employed by the College to ensure the ongoing continuous improvement in the delivery of high quality learning, teaching and assessment, and an effectively integrated and embedded student support experience. In AY2020-21 the self-evaluation process was modified to include more professional discussion as a means of review and generating evidence. The College's approach to self-evaluation continues to evolve with a formal project now in place to develop and pilot an online self-evaluation system "MyEvaluation". The aims of this system are to improve the quality of self-evaluation and enhancement planning; enable and encourage staff to reflect on practice throughout the year; support greater co-operation and collaboration among teams; easily link evaluation to How Good is Our College (HGIOC) and NESCoI strategic objectives; and capture good practice as it happens.

Education Scotland undertook its most recent progress visit to the College on 5 December 2019 and the next is scheduled for March 2022. In preparation for this, and to maintain dialogue with Education Scotland, the Director of Quality attends monthly engagement meetings with the College Inspector and reports key messages back to the Leadership Team. The College is currently participating in the SFC review work through a variety of bodies, including the Principal and Vice Principal groups and the College Development Network (CDN) Quality Network.

PARTNERSHIP, PARTICIPATION AND STUDENT EXPERIENCE

The College has a range of mechanisms to support effective student partnership. These are outlined in the Student Partnership Agreement which sets out our approach to student engagement, detailing priority objectives and associated actions. The College and the Students' Association work collaboratively to deliver the objectives and review progress at the Student Engagement Action Group (SEAG), which has been in existence for a number of years and is the main mechanism for overseeing student engagement and partnership.

Until recently, the number of students represented on SEAG was disproportionately low in comparison to the number of College staff and it was recognised that the group should be much more student-led. At the start of AY2021-22 the Terms of Reference and group membership were reviewed, and the membership changed to comprise a greater number of students. Whilst the group maintains representation from the Leadership Team and some support staff, the majority of the membership is now made up by the sabbatical officers and executive officers, which will improve the effectiveness of SEAG in supporting and promoting student engagement and partnership.

Coupled with the Student Partnership Agreement, the College also has a Framework for Effective Student Engagement which was created to outline the importance of student engagement. This includes a toolkit of practical exercises and activities to enable and encourage curriculum and support teams to review their contribution to the agreement. Both of these documents are being reviewed and updated in AY2021-22 to take account of the impact of COVID-19 and new ways of working.

The Student Partnership Agreement project is already underway, and started with consultation with staff and students on the content and structure. The new Student Partnership Agreement will also have the addition of project co-leads, one from the College and one from the Students' Association, to demonstrate a true partnership approach and clear, measurable outcomes.



All students are provided with opportunities to take ownership for their own learning and influence their college experience. Students are encouraged to be active participants in College life and encouraged to co-design and steer the way in which key services are provided to them. This is supported via a wide variety of engagement activities including class representative meetings, course committee meetings, peer-led reviews, as well as via feedback shared through the Students' Association.

The College, and the Students' Association will continue to work closely in partnership with Student Partnership in Quality Scotland (sparqs) and National Union of Students (NUS) Scotland to support the work of the Students' Association, including wider student engagement. A key change for AY2021-22 is that the training for class representatives is being delivered wholly by sparqs and the planning for this has been scheduled earlier in the academic session than last year, with the hope that this will equip the class representatives from a much earlier stage, to undertake their duties and participate in activities such as Course Committee Meetings.



In November 2021, NESCol launched a new Wellbeing Strategy for staff and students. This strategy is supported by two frameworks for delivery, the Framework for Student Wellbeing and the Framework for Staff Wellbeing. A College steering group consisting of support, teaching and student body representatives, Wellbeing Matters, has been created in order to develop and drive forward a range of initiatives that link to the Wellbeing Strategy.

The strategic aims are:

- **Deliver a whole-College approach to wellbeing which support both staff and students**
- **Challenge stigma and discrimination by promoting and supporting mental, physical and social health and wellbeing**
- **Explore and strengthen links with external organisations**
- **Develop the awareness, knowledge and skills of staff throughout the organisation, equipping them to support students as well as to develop self-management and self-care strategies as appropriate**
- **Ensure continuous review of College policies, procedures and practices**

Whilst the aim is to provide support and opportunities for staff and students to maintain their personal wellbeing, ultimately, wellbeing is an individual responsibility, and NESCol will encourage individuals to engage in services and opportunities provided for them.



LEARNING WITH IMPACT

As part of the whole-College support model, the Student Advice and Support Team offer a series of events for transitions support. This year, following review of last year's event, UCAS week has been rebranded as "UCAS and Transitions Week" and will offer a programme of events to help prepare students for the next stage in their journey, whether that is progressing with their studies or moving into employment. Due to ongoing restrictions, the event is being delivered virtually as it was last year, offering a series of live sessions and pre-recorded content. A number of stakeholders are involved in the event including RGU, UofA, The Open University (OU), SDS, SAAS, The Royal Air Force, The Royal Navy, Army and Police Scotland.

This event, and other initiatives like "Hack Your Studies", a week-long programme of study skills sessions supported by the NESCol Study Toolkit, have been incorporated into the delivery of the Academic and Personal Skills Development unit (detailed below) and is shared with all Academic Tutors across FE and HE courses. The foundation created during these events will prepare students for future extension events later in the year, including "Enterprise and Employability Week" and "Virtual Careers Week". All employers who participated last year confirmed their intent to be involved again this academic session.

In addition to supporting the above events, RGU regularly engages with NESCol students through information stands on campus and bespoke in-class sessions promoting our degree-link programmes. This work supports the annual subject-level review meetings focused on articulation arrangements and transition activities. All the arrangements described above will be further supported working collaboratively with the new Head of Planning and Academic Partnerships.

PUBLIC HEALTH EMERGENCY

NESCol continues to treat the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic public health emergency as one of its major business priorities. The health, safety and wellbeing of our staff and students remains at the forefront of our activities and influences all high level decision making.

The College Leadership Team continues to meet weekly, online, to review the evolving local and national situation and implement the latest national guidance. This group and frequency of meetings has allowed the College to agilely adapt to the ever-changing public health situation.

Access to College facilities remains strictly controlled and restricted with many staff and students still working or learning from home. As the pandemic and subsequent Scottish guidance allows, in person activities to resume, more and more on campus activity is being completed in a controlled, cautious and measured way. This unfortunately still limits our ability to provide our full service, some groups of students are still fully remote and learning online.

The College has throughout the public health emergency fully supported the Scottish Government's strategy on asymptomatic COVID-19 testing for staff and students. Individuals who are attending campus in-person are required to undertake lateral flow testing twice per week. This has been communicated via weekly updates from the Principal, Student Association consultations and involvement, and by utilising social media routes such as Facebook, Twitter etc.

The College's Head of Health, Safety and Security chairs College Development Network's Health, Safety and Wellbeing (CDNHSW) group, which comprises health and safety professionals from the Scottish college sector. This network group met weekly at the start of the pandemic to ensure a consistent sector wide approach to the control and management of COVID-19. Through the pandemic, the frequency of meetings has been reduced to twice a month, but emergency meetings are held if national guidance or a particular situation evolves quickly.

Students isolating or absent from College due to COVID-19 are supported at NESCol through a variety of methods to ensure they stay connected and on track with their course work. College Academic Tutors make regular contact with students to ensure that they are aware of weekly assignments and have access to all the resources that they require. Students can still participate in live lessons via online Blackboard Collaborate or TEAMS webinar sessions. A range of online tools accessible by students via the College's virtual learning environment (VLE), help to maintain contact with their peers and to participate in collaborative activities. Virtual Drop-Ins for students are available three days a week where Students can "drop in" to receive study skills support etc.

Students' Association representatives are available to support students and can be reached remotely to discuss any concerns or signpost support. The Students' Association successfully reaches out and engages with students through various Societies, Class Representatives and Students' Association Officers.

The Library Team has a wealth of resources to support students in isolation with many books, publications, databases and papers available to them electronically. Students can access the support via online chat or Microsoft Teams. The Library facilities are still open for those without access to quiet study spaces.

In AY2021-22 the College will deliver almost 300 hours per week "in-class" support via our Learning Support Assistant (LSA) Team. The online Blackboard Collaborate sessions allow the LSA Team to facilitate breakout rooms with students requiring extra support during online learning.

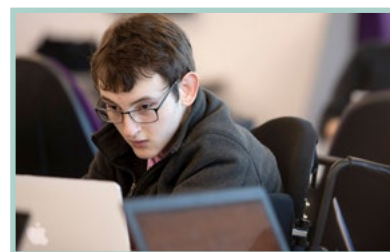
The Student Advice and Support Team (SAST) have had great success in delivering one to one support via an online blended model. Students can book in person appointments however the percentage of students choosing to come on to campus for support is running at less than 50% which demonstrates that students are enjoying the freedom and choice that remote appointments offer, saving them unnecessary trips to campus.

One of the key lessons learned from the pandemic was the value students gained from being able to access key support services online. The College will continue to offer remote appointments for our students and applicants beyond the emergency period. The feedback received by the College has been very positive and considering the large geographical area NESCol covers, this type of appointment will continue to be offered beyond the emergency years.

Through this online model students are able to access a wide range of support advice and services across a broad range of themes including:

- **Alternative Assessment Arrangements**
- **Disabled Students Allowance**
- **Learning Support Appointment (Needs Assessment/Support)**
- **Money Management Appointment**
- **Study Skills**
- **Support Appointment**
- **Wellbeing Appointment**
- **Counselling**

In addition to one-to-one support, the College also provides online events aimed at supporting students academically. For students who are having trouble with access to a laptop or Wi-Fi, NESCol have put in place procedures to ensure a timely response to supporting those in isolation by loaning the IT equipment necessary for them to fulfil the online element of their course requirements.



EQUALITIES AND INCLUSION

The College strives to support people from a wide range of backgrounds to access high-quality educational provision and ultimately improve their positive destinations in life. To that end, it continues to seek to ensure that as an organisation it creates a more equal, diverse and inclusive learning and working environment where students and staff are respected, valued and supported.

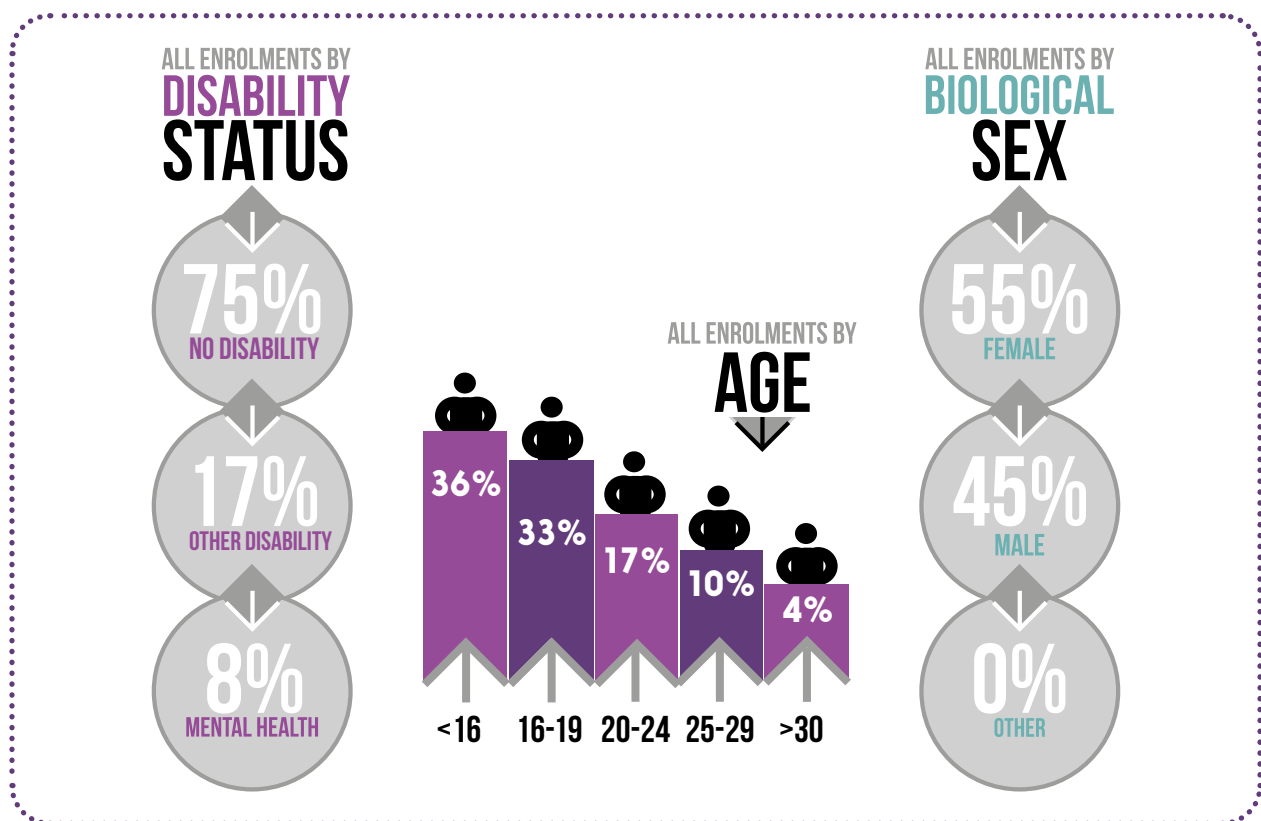
The College produced its Equality Mainstreaming report and revised Equality Outcomes in April 2021 and work in AY2021-22 is focussed on applying the actions and outcomes identified by these exercises.

The attainment gap between students with and without a declared disability remains a priority, with work focussing on early identification and intervention; support mechanisms and development of resources to support student resilience. Specific interventions for digital poverty and under-represented groups are other areas of focus. Digital poverty has become a particular area of attention as a result of the disproportionate impact on learning resulting from COVID restrictions. Whilst hardware and internet access were one part of the emerging issue, skills gaps were also more apparent for some groups.

Particular attention is also focussed on care-experienced students with the specific intention of improving outcomes for this group. Support arrangements for this group were more challenging to implement during lockdown and restricted access and the attainment gap grew for full time students in AY2020-21 from 23% to 29%. Additional support measures are being applied and curriculum colleagues are being better prepared to deal with potential needs of students in this group.

Whilst robust data is available for most protected characteristics, work is required to improve qualitative data and feedback on the student experience for sexual orientation; gender identity; race; religious belief; pregnancy and maternity to inform the need for further action.

The College commitment to provision of an accessible and inclusive environment includes mainstreaming activity such as incorporating challenge questions for support teams to develop understanding of mainstreaming equalities and diversity within their own teams and additional support for equality impact assessment writing, evidence collection and evaluation. Plans are also underway to introduce staff Equality Champions to help promote awareness and confidence in tackling equality-based issues.



Economic Recovery and Social Renewal

NESCol is a driving force in the economic recovery and social renewal of the North East of Scotland. A proactive approach to responding to the downturn in the oil and gas sector and supporting energy transition in tandem with addressing the impact of BREXIT and the many harms of COVID-19 will be crucial during one of the most challenging periods in the region's history.

RESPONSIVE INSTITUTIONS

NESCol is guided by a wide variety of labour market intelligence which comes from sources including:

- **Direct engagement with employers**
- **Skills Development Scotland (SDS)**
- **Local Authorities**
- **Aberdeen and Grampian Chamber of Commerce (AGCC)**
- **Department of Work and Pensions (DWP)**
- **Industry bodies**
- **Media releases**

NESCol staff represent the College on a variety of regional groups including:

- **Community Planning Groups (where the CPA Management Group oversees the delivery of a Local Outcome Improvement Plan through 7 themed Outcome Improvement Groups).**
- **PACE (Grampian, Shetland and Tayside)**
- **Local Employability Partnerships**
- **Employability Training Providers Forum**
- **Aberdeen City & Aberdeenshire Hotels Association**
- **National Energy Skills Accelerator (NESA)**
- **University links with 9 associate universities**

The sources above provide regular and current labour market intelligence which guides curriculum planning and decision-making through discussion at the College's Regional Board, Executive Team and Leadership Team and is cascaded throughout the organisation. Programme development and delivery for NESCol students and commercial clients and stakeholders is also contextualised with this market intelligence.

NESCol's support of the apprenticeship family will create 178 new Foundation Apprentices across accountancy, business skills, civil engineering, construction, creative and digital media, engineering, hardware and system support, scientific technologies, social services, children and young people, social services and healthcare, and software development.

In addition, the College is actively recruiting Modern Apprentices against the AY2021-22 contract (which runs April to March) for 172 new candidates across automotive, business and administration, care, construction, engineering, hairdressing, hospitality and transport and logistics. NESCol's apprenticeship programmes help to secure new candidates with local employers - supporting economic recovery - and gives the College the opportunity to deliver up-to-date skills and knowledge along with the meta-skills employers require in today's workplace. NESCol's foundation apprenticeship programmes (Level 4 and 5) provide progression to modern apprenticeships, and, for a number of frameworks, to graduate apprenticeships. The College's close working relationship with RGU ensures alignment of graduate apprenticeship programmes.

The Flexible Workforce Development Fund (FWDF) remains the College's most valued vehicle for commercial delivery. Collaborating with its wholly owned subsidiary, Aberdeen Skills and Enterprise Training (ASET), the College is working with existing and new clients delivering a wide range of programmes including leadership and management, IT and digital, health and safety, mental health and wellbeing, engineering and business and administration. Promotion of this opportunity for employers is being done via direct marketing and through a variety of industry bodies or regional partners including Aberdeen and Grampian Chamber of Commerce, Federation of Small Businesses, SDS and others. With additional resources, there is greater opportunity this year for NESCol to secure more of the £1.9m regional allocation - although the challenge of securing new contractual commitment while delivering AY2020-21 activity remains a considerable risk for NESCol.

NESCol's longstanding relationship with Shell UK Ltd, is continuing in AY2021-22 with a new cohort of 12 Shell technicians, 129 "Girls in Energy" students and a reinvigorated S2 Skills competition reaching 15 secondary schools (approximately 2,000 pupils) across Aberdeen City and Aberdeenshire. In addition to this, the College has also launched the Shell Digital Passport programme, offering new digital skills for learners who find themselves out of work and unable to function effectively in a digital world. The sponsorship is a great indicator of the strength of relationship between the College and Shell UK Ltd. Candidates completing the programme can access another Shell sponsored programme - "Fast Futures" - an intensive employability programme with high success rates. Similar College-employer partnership arrangements are in place with Vestas (Offshore Wind Technicians) and Clyde Marine (Merchant Navy Officer Cadets).

Relationship building is at the heart of much of what NESCol does as a regional College. As a result of nurturing longstanding relationships, a very generous 6-figure donation was received from a local businessperson and this has been invested in the Fraserburgh campus. The funding has enabled an innovative technology centre, with robotic and automation equipment, that will benefit local students and school pupils. The "FutureSkills Centre" will be formally opened this year and will sit alongside our "Fujitsu Innovation Hub".

Within NESCol's commitment to support its business and communities, are a range of partnerships which help to protect some of our more vulnerable regional groups. This provision helps to ensure equality of opportunity in areas which can often be neglected. The College's partnerships with Aberdeen Foyer, Project Search (UofA) and the regional Community Planning Partnership (CPP) offer learning experiences and progression opportunities for candidates at different stages of their learning journeys. With Aberdeen Foyer, the College co-delivers a number of employability programmes for candidates who have often not engaged in school or been impacted by turbulent home lives. A new initiative this year has seen £29k secured from the Tackling Child Poverty Fund and this will enable the delivery of two Foyer Families cohorts. This innovative programme encourages family friendly hours and support while upskilling adults and children as a family unit.



DFN Project Search

Project Search is an international transition to work programme committed to transforming the lives of young people with learning disabilities and Autism. This supported learning and internship opportunity for 12 candidates per year has a high success rate in securing long-term employment which would otherwise have been difficult to achieve. The programme delivered a near 90% success rate of placing candidates in employment last year and we will look to continue the progress the team is making along with UofA, Values Into Action Scotland (VIAS), SDS and the two local authorities.

The University of Aberdeen Medical School and NESCol are in receipt of Scottish Government funding to support an innovative access programme to their MBChB medical degree programme. The first cohort was recruited in AY2017-18 and there has been an intake each year since then, with funding secured until AY2022-23. Students are recruited from groups traditionally poorly represented in medicine, fulfilling criteria such as rurality, SIMD postcode, first generation university and care background. They complete a pre-medical school year, the first half of which is spent at NESCol consolidating their science and they move on to medical school courses in January. Successful completion of the course and UCAT testing allows the students access to the first year of the MBChB degree. Eighty-two students have entered over the first 4 intakes, retention and progression rates have been excellent.

Our English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) provision delivered along with the Community Planning Partnership will see some new challenges emerging in the year ahead as it looks to support existing communities with their language needs as well as Afghan evacuees looking for opportunities to upskill to work within the communities of Aberdeen and Aberdeenshire. These learners all have different abilities and so programmes have to be tailored to suit. Our provision offers learning opportunities from the most basic 'cafe conversations' through to full time advanced programmes, so candidates are well-catered for in terms of provision and progression.



CONFIDENT AND HIGHLY CAPABLE WORK-READY - GRADUATES

Ensuring that all students, regardless of their background or personal circumstances, are provided with opportunities to develop the skills necessary to be successful as confident, resilient and highly capable work-ready graduates, is at the heart of all that we do at NESCol.

The world of work is changing and along with it, the suite of knowledge, skills and attributes that graduates must possess so as to thrive in a highly complex and ever-changing work environment. Technological, societal and environmental innovations and disruptions are rapidly transforming a wide range of industries across the world, and these changes are being felt particularly acutely within the North East of Scotland where a combination of BREXIT, COVID-19 and the increasingly urgent need to transition our society away from oil and gas to green and renewable sources is fundamentally affecting the economic landscape, and as consequence, wider society as a whole.

NESCol understands the importance of delivering a curriculum that is employer-informed and explicitly designed to address the unique needs and skills demands of the region, ensuring a pipeline of high quality, technically skilled graduates who possess a broad schema of essential knowledge and understanding. One of the defining characteristics of the student experience at NESCol is the way that qualifications are designed and delivered to place the development of essential domain, core and higher order meta-skills front and centre.

All qualifications at NESCol are designed with substantial employer input and industry insight, and are shaped further via close partnership work with our students. By engaging directly and working closely with key regional stakeholders the College is able to ensure that all students are provided with opportunities to develop their work-readiness via regular access to work-placement, work-experience, simulated industry environments and practical hands-on learning using industry-standard equipment and resources. NESCol believes strongly in the vital role of hands-on learning, and the value provided by expert direct instruction and time spent engaged in deliberate practice enabled via placement and on-campus attendance. This philosophy has strengthened during the COVID-19 pandemic and associated campus/workplace lockdowns where the lack of access to campuses, peers, College staff and the workplaces has had a detrimental impact on the student experience.

That is not to say that the College does not see digital, blended or online learning as important elements of current or future provision, indeed NESCol has been at the leading edge of digital learning within the College Sector for well over 10 years. Because of this early commitment to digital learning NESCol was particularly well placed to respond to the pressures of the COVID-19 pandemic. Through our previously mentioned BYOD and "Digital Futures" initiatives, the College had already made considerable investment in our IT infrastructure, student access to devices, online resources and in the digital capabilities of our staff and students.



Indeed, NESCol strongly believes that high-level digital skills are the essential underpinning skills for the current and future world of work and so the development of high-level digital skills is integral to and embedded within every course that the College offers. Use of tools such as the JISC digital capabilities model and the CDN Digital Standards for Lecturers in Scotland's Colleges have enabled the College to ensure that all students are supported to develop key capabilities that will enable them to work, communicate, create and collaborate safely and confidently online.

Central to ensuring that all NESCol graduates are confident and fully prepared to transition to their next level of study or enter the workplace is investing sufficient time in raising their awareness of the wider world and expanding their personal development and employability skills. To ensure consistency and alignment in this approach across all qualifications, NESCol has designed a bespoke stand-alone module, entitled "Academic and Personal Skills Development", that is aligned to SCQF levels 4, 5 and 6 that is integrated into all FE programmes of study. This mandatory 3-credit module was centrally designed as an "off-the-shelf" product that all academic teams can customise to support contextualised delivery of essential personal and employability skills development. Its integration within all programmes of study helps ensure that sufficient focus is dedicated to the delivery of these skills and provides Lecturers with the essential ring-fenced time that they need to ensure that all students have access to vital employer, peer, group and one-to-one support and guidance.

NESCol works very closely with local authority, third sector and national skills agency partners to address and respond to the skills and training needs of the region and is represented across a wide range of key regional economic, community and skills groups. The College co-chairs the Regional Skills Partnership and is working closely with private sector catalysts, "Opportunity North East" and "Energy Transition Zone" to ensure that NESCol graduates possess the range on industry knowledge, skills and experience so vital in supporting economic recovery within the region and across the country.

KNOWLEDGE EXCHANGE AND INNOVATION

NESCol is committed to working collectively with partners across higher, further and tertiary education to support strategic and operational knowledge exchange, best practice sharing and innovation.

This is demonstrated via our willingness and enthusiasm to engage with local and national groups, including the Scottish Government, SFC, Education Scotland and Colleges Scotland to influence and co-design national strategies, policies and procedures aimed at supporting the sector (and society more widely) through the pandemic.

Through national entities such as the College Principal's group, Curriculum Vice-Principal's group, the Quality Manager's group, the Finance Director's group and the Business Development Director's group, members of the NESCol Leadership Team play a leading role in sharing good practice and shaping the national approach taken by the SQA, SFC and Scottish Government.

Our legacy of proactive engagement and collaboration with key schools and university partners has placed the College in an ideal position to lead on the development of new and innovative models of tertiary provision and it is hoped that NESCol will be able to play a leading role in supporting SFC work in this area.

COLLABORATION

As already mentioned, the North East of Scotland faces an unprecedented and unique challenge as a consequence of the combined impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, continued disruption caused by BREXIT and the downturn of the Oil and Gas Industry.

Whilst these issues are all very different in the way in which they affect the region, with some, such as the shift from oil and gas to renewable and greener forms of energy production actually presenting tremendous opportunities, it is clear that effective collaboration between local authorities, educational institutions, the third sector and industry will be essential in safeguarding the future success and prosperity of Aberdeen City and Aberdeenshire.

NESCol is very much committed to working in partnership to address these challenges and ensure the creation and development of a broad yet focused portfolio of sustainable, employer-informed skills pathways for those progressing from school, looking to re-enter the workplace or for those currently employed looking to diversify or update their skills set. The College engages regularly with a wide range of key industry partners to ensure that our curriculum continues to meet the needs of employers, is tailored to address skills deficits or industry demand within the region, and provides opportunities for those facing redundancy as a consequence of the current economic situation.

A key collaborative project for NESCol in AY2022-23 is the development of NESA, a formal partnership between the College, RGU, UofA, SDS and Energy Transition Zone Ltd (ETZ). This new alliance is unique within Scotland and is intended to provide the energy industry with a clear gateway to access bespoke qualifications, training and skills development, and the research and development expertise required to train workers for the energy transition. The NESA will build upon established foundations for analysing the opportunities in the green energy transition and is a key part of the ETZ in Aberdeen, which is being earmarked for land next to the new £350m South Harbour. The work is supported by ETZ who have secured significant investment from UK and Scottish Government funding.

Intensifying and developing our strategic relationship with RGU is also a major priority for AY2022-23. Both NESCol and RGU have now formally agreed to establish a joint steering board to oversee a programme of work aimed at improving partnership across a number of strategic themes including widening access, curriculum delivery and schools engagement. The planned programme of work will seek to enable a more effective and joined up approach to articulation that will improve coherence of offer and sustainability of provision within the region. This will ensure smoother and more seamless transitions for students from school, through college to university and the workplace, and will better align the regional apprenticeship “family” of qualification on offer across both institutions.

In addition, the College has continued to collaborate effectively with Aberdeen City and Aberdeenshire local authorities across a range of key essential themes including child services, education, economic recovery and health and wellbeing. The College has contributed to the development of key Local Outcome Improvement Plans and the creation of several improvement charters aimed at supporting strategic intervention across the region.

Recently the College has strengthened its relationship with the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) and now has staff from the agency based within the Aberdeen City Campus. This aligns well with the collaborative work already underway with SDS which sees their advisors working from within the College’s Students Advice Centres.

NESCol is also playing an active role in national collaboration and is working closely with the Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA) in the development of the Next Generation of Higher National Qualifications. With representation on the National HN Next Gen Steering Board, as well as leading on the development and piloting of two of the new courses the College is ideally placed to help shape the future direction of these world class and renowned qualifications. [Click here for the news article](#)

CLIMATE EMERGENCY

The College continues to make significant progress in addressing the climate emergency. 2020 was the final year of operation under the College's Carbon Management Plan 2015-2020, which delivered a 33% reduction in greenhouse gas emissions from the 2010-11 baseline. In June 2021, The Regional Board approved a new carbon management plan covering the years 2020-2025, with the goal of delivering a further 50% emission reduction over that period, and aiming for Net Zero by 2045.

Externally, the College has representation on the College Development Network Climate Emergency Expert Panel, and continues to engage pro-actively with the Environmental Association of Universities and Colleges (EAUC), including board membership and attendance at COP26. It is also a partner in the National Energy Skills Accelerator and closely engaged with the North East Energy Transition Zone and the North East Scotland Hydrogen Ambition Board.



For AY2021-22, the College is undertaking a number of specific actions:

- The College has secured grant funding to take forward a number of specific estates projects which will reduce its CO2 footprint, in particular the installation of Solar PV panels and extending the use of LED lighting. The College also intends to undertake feasibility studies on a range of other carbon reduction projects.
- In terms of biodiversity, the College has engaged with the Queen's Green Canopy project to plant trees at the College's Fraserburgh, City and Altens campuses.
- September 2021 carried the theme of Sustainability under the College's Respect agenda, with a number of student-led initiatives taking place.
- The College intends to achieve Fairtrade status by July 2022.
- The College has undertaken a strategic planning event involving the Regional Board and leadership team. A half day, which included student representatives, was devoted to development of a new sustainability strategy which will take account of the Climate Emergency and UN Sustainable Development Goals.



ServiceDesignAcademy
@SDA_Scot

“BOARD STRATEGIC EVENT TWEET”...

Well done to the reusable bottle winners 🍷
A really packed agenda for @NESCollege's Boards design challenge "to embed #Sustainability at the heart of the College to ensure the greatest impact & achieve the best possible outcomes"
[#CollegeClimateChange](#) [#servicedesign](#)



Katie Murrie @KLMurrie · 11 Nov

We finished up @NESCollege with some prototype strategy adverts and a planning pizza focusing on how to turn these ideas into reality!

We even squeezed a climate quiz at the end to dish out the @SDA_Scot reusable bottles 🍷🍷🍷🍷 #servicedesign #codesign #CollegeClimateCrisis



Closing Statement

NESCol has an integral role in realising the ambitions of the North East Regional Economic Strategy. The College, anchored in Aberdeen and Aberdeenshire with a commitment to shaping the workforce of the future, is proud of its role in the evolution of traditional industries and excited by the opportunities presented by new and emerging sectors.

An engaging, supportive and inclusive learning environment is at the heart of a College experience designed to give every student the opportunity to fulfil their potential in employment and in life as we work together to build a vibrant, innovative and sustainable future.



Appendix A

Supporting Data

College Outcome Agreement Impact Framework: Supporting Data											
	Measure	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22		
A	Credits Delivered (Core)	132,327	137,897	135,312	135,125	130,069	131,296	130,594	129,280		
	Credits Delivered (ESF)	0	3,898	2,881	1,140	2,154	2,433	2,525	2,635		
	Credits Delivered (Core + ESF)	132,327	141,795	138,193	136,265	132,223	133,729	133,119	131,915		
B	Volume of Credits Delivered to 10% most deprived postcode areas	6,257	6,587	7,130	2,928	2,813	2,597	2,395	2,374		
	Proportion of Credits delivered to 10% most deprived postcode areas	4.7%	4.6%	5.2%	2.1%	2.1%	1.9%	1.8%	1.8%		
C	Volume of credits delivered to care-experienced learners	16	982	1,314	1,210	1,296	5,332	8,534	2,111		
	Proportion of credits delivered to care-experienced learners	0.0%	0.7%	1.0%	0.9%	1.0%	4.0%	6.4%	1.6%		
D	Number of senior phase age pupils studying vocational qualifications delivered by colleges	154	277	425	553	567	802	575	620		
E1	Proportion of enrolled students successfully obtaining a recognised qualification (Full time FE)	61.9%	67.4%	66.2%	66.6%	64.8%	61.8%	56.7%	62.0%		
	Number of enrolled students successfully obtaining a recognised qualification (Full time FE)	2,459	2,800	2,649	2,704	2,663	2,564	2,127	2,377		
	Total number of FTE students	3,973	4,152	4,001	4,058	4,112	4,151	3,750	3834		
E2	Proportion of enrolled students successfully obtaining a recognised qualification (Part time FE)	62.2%	71.1%	71.2%	69.0%	72.4%	73.4%	71.8%	72.0%		
	Number of enrolled students successfully obtaining a recognised qualification (Part time FE)	5,481	4,142	4,156	3,018	4,118	4,223	4,743	4,104		
	Total number of PTFE students	8,809	5,827	5,837	4,371	5,687	5,753	6,607	5,700		
E3	Proportion of enrolled students successfully obtaining a recognised qualification (Full time HE)	72.0%	77.1%	75.0%	74.1%	72.0%	70.4%	71.2%	72.0%		
	Number of enrolled students successfully obtaining a recognised qualification (Full time HE)	1,884	2,101	2,135	1,953	1,772	1,703	1,832	1,662		
	Total number of FTHE students	2,616	2,724	2,847	2,634	2,460	2,420	2,574	2,308		
E4	Proportion of enrolled students successfully obtaining a recognised qualification (Part time HE)	82.8%	80.1%	80.1%	79.5%	71.8%	66.9%	83.2%	81.0%		
	Number of enrolled students successfully obtaining a recognised qualification (Part time HE)	1,293	1,245	1,025	744	599	467	546	348		
	Total number of PTHE students	1,561	1,554	1,280	936	834	698	656	430		
F	Number of students achieving an HNC/D qualification articulating to degree level courses	0	600	673	817	772	675	600	535		
	Number of students achieving an HNC/D qualification articulating to degree level courses with advanced standing	0	411	485	528	453	456	435	364		
	Proportion of students achieving an HNC/D qualification articulating to degree level courses with advanced standing	-	68.5%	72.1%	64.6%	58.7%	67.6%	72.5%	68.0%		
G	Total number of full-time FE college qualifiers (in confirmed destinations)	2,268	2,517	2,467	2,550	2,527	2,169	2,051			
	Number of full-time FE college qualifiers in work, training or further study 3-6 months after qualifying	2,042	2,322	2,220	2,415	2,377	2,037	1,928			
	Proportion of full-time FE college qualifiers in work, training or further study 3-6 months after qualifying	90.0%	92.3%	90.0%	94.7%	94.1%	93.9%	94.00%			
	Total number of full-time HE college qualifiers (in confirmed destinations)	1,030	1,177	1,269	1,171	1,065	982	1,000			
	Number of full-time HE college qualifiers in work, training or further study 3-6 months after qualifying	850	1,069	1,109	1,125	999	916	940			
	Proportion of full-time HE college qualifiers in work, training or further study 3-6 months after qualifying	82.5%	90.8%	87.4%	96.1%	93.8%	93.3%	94.0%			
H	Percentage of students overall satisfied with their college experience (SSES survey)	-	90.6%	90.9%	N/A - see note	93.3%	n/a	90.3%	90.0%		

Please note that figures for 2020-21 are impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic and may not be directly comparable to other years

Outcome Agreement between North East Scotland College and the Scottish Funding Council for AY 2021-22

On behalf of North East Scotland College:

Signed:

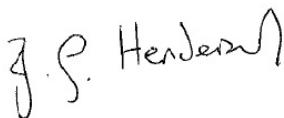


Print name: NEIL COWIE

Position: Principal and Chief Executive

Date: 14.06.22

Signed:



Print name: JOHN HENDERSON

Position: Interim Regional Chair

Date: 14.06.22

On behalf of the Scottish Funding Council:

Signed:



Print name: Karen Watt

Position: Chief Executive

Date: 28 July 2022

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