Edinburgh College

CURRICULUM STRATEGY

2023 - 2026

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1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

As Scotland's Capital College, Edinburgh College's responsibility, reach and impact is significant. We deliver life-changing education and training to people across the city, the region and beyond. We will build on the strong foundations already in place, to ensure we continue to be the right shape and right size to deliver for our people, our region and our partners.

This Curriculum Strategy outlines how our College aims to deliver a curriculum that addresses the local, regional and national skills gaps and shortages, meets the needs of employers and community stakeholders and, in doing so, contributes to the economic and social prosperity of the region, whilst offering every student the best possible learning experience.
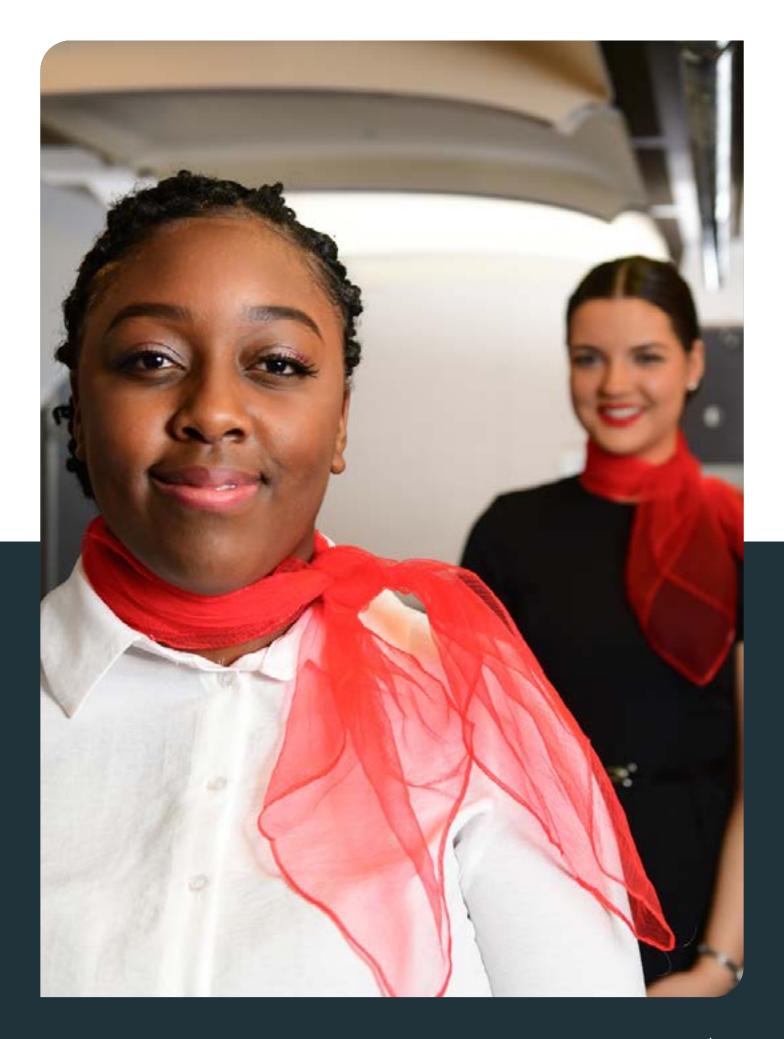
Learning and skills development are vital to creating a more adaptable and resilient economy and strengthening communities in our region. By outlining the key drivers behind our curriculum development as well as setting out how we aim to continue our growth in unique student numbers, this strategy will support our College in reaching its ambition of fundamentally improving the educational, social, economic and environmental wellbeing of our students and communities.

This Curriculum Strategy will enable our College to be a positive force in both economic and community development and will create increased and improved learning opportunities across Edinburgh and the Lothians.

This strategy links with the College's other four strategic pillars (Commercial, Digital, Finance and People) and aims to provide all students with a high-quality and inclusive education provision that enables and empowers development of the skills and knowledge required for sustained positive destinations and improved life chances.

Delivery of this strategy will ensure we:

- Design and deliver a curriculum offer for the region that is dynamic, flexible and responsive to industry and employer needs, meets future skills requirements and contributes to social and economic recovery.

- Provide employers with high-calibre students equipped with essential knowledge and skills, trained to industry standards.

- Have an equitable and inclusive curriculum that provides work and learning opportunities for anyone who faces barriers to employment and education.

- Provide increased vocational learning for school pupils, in line with Developing the Young Workforce recommendations.

- Place every student who enrols at our College on a programme of study that provides the best learning experience the sector has to offer.

2. BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

2.1. Where are we now? – National Context

The national education policy, planning and funding landscape is currently being reshaped as a result of a number of key drivers, which include:

- The Scottish Funding Council (SFC) Coherence and Sustainability Review recommendations

- The James Withers Independent Review of the Skills Delivery Landscape Report

- The College Commission College of the Future Report

- National Skills and Enterprise Board Aims and The National Economic Transformation Strategy

- The Muir Review

- The Hayward Review of Qualifications and Assessment impacts

- Scottish Government Green Skills Action Plan

- Scottish Government Digital Strategy and Innovation Strategies

- Scottish Government Agenda for Cities and City Region Deal

- National workforce plans for health and social care, the digital economy, cultural economy, construction sector, and the early years sector

All of the above propose a need for fundamental shifts in the way tertiary education and skills development are delivered and funded in

Scotland, placing learners at the heart of the process, and driving forward more opportunities to improve skills, knowledge and experience in key economic growth areas.

This Curriculum Strategy has been developed to respond to this changing landscape and to adapt to the dynamic shifts in economic growth sectors, ensuring our College is well placed to provide students with the best learning and employment opportunities.

> **Driving forward more opportunities to improve skills, knowledge and experience in key economic growth areas.**

2.2. Where are we now? – Regional Context

Skills Development Scotland's (SDS) Regional Skills Assessments (RSA) provide a robust evidence base to support partners in strategic skills investment planning. Produced in partnership with a number of key stakeholders, the RSAs provide insight to help shape the College's curriculum planning.

Total employment in Edinburgh, East and Midlothian (measured by people) was estimated to be 407,700 in 2021, 15.7% of Scottish employment, according to the Annual Population Survey, between October 2020 and September 2021. The employment rate for the working age population (aged 16-64) in the region was 76.9%, which was above the rate for Scotland (72.9%).

The region's overall employment rate means that approximately one in four of the working age population were unemployed (2.3 per cent*) or economically inactive (21.2 per cent). Inactivity includes people who are studying, retired or looking after their family or home.

In Edinburgh, East and Midlothian the largest employing sectors in 2021 were:

- Education
- Human Health Activities
- Retail Trade
- Public Administration and Defence
- Food and Beverage Service Activities
- Health and Social Care
- Financial and Business Services

Of the key sectors, Health and Social Care, was estimated to be the largest in 2021, Financial and Business Services was the second largest.

In the short-term (2023-2024) the number of people in employment is forecast to grow by 14,900 in the region. Whilst positive, this growth does not fully replace jobs lost as a result of the pandemic. Over the longer term (2024-2031), employment within the region is forecast to increase. In 2031, it is forecast that there will be 16,700 more people in employment compared to 2024. Across Scotland the number of people in employment is also forecast to increase.

Although strong employment growth is forecast in the mid-term in the region, sectors will have varying performance. The greatest employment growth is forecast within Human Health and Social Work Activities. Other sectors forecast to have growth over the mid-term forecast period include Information and Communication, Arts, Entertainment and Recreation, and Accommodation and Food Service Activities.

Over the longer term, the greatest growth is forecast to be in Business and Public Service Professionals. This will be closely followed by Caring Personal Service Occupations, Corporate Managers, Health Professionals and Science and Technology Professionals. Growth in these roles reflect the relatively strong performance in business services employment and the uplift in spending and recruitment in the health sector. This data is vital as it not only indicates the subject areas in which there is growth potential, it also identifies the SCQF level at which it should be offered.

It is essential that the development of our College's curriculum uses the regional data available to provide a pipeline of skilled people to meet the demands of industry and be the workforce of the future.

2.3.   Where are we now? – College Context

Our current curriculum offers a wide range of learning opportunities to around 30,000 students each year, from a variety of backgrounds, and with an array of educational and employment experiences.
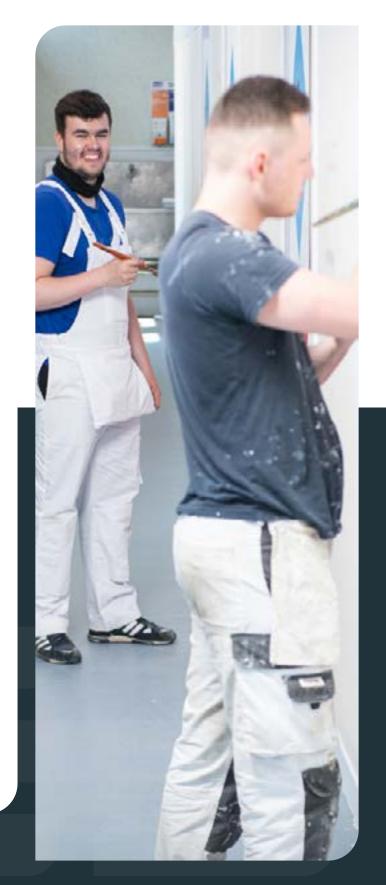
Prominent examples of our current curriculum offer include:

- **STEM**

  As a STEM Assured organisation, and Regional STEM Hub, we are committed to playing a leading role in supporting the development of strong Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths capability. Working with industry and strategic partners, we will develop a curriculum that reflects validated demand in areas of economic growth and delivering cross-curricular provision to drive innovation, enterprise and employability.

- **NET ZERO**

  We are working towards being a College at the cutting edge of environmental sustainability, embedding green ambitions across our learning, teaching, partnerships and core operations. Our Renewables and Energy Efficiency Training Centre is supporting the development of skills required to build low energy homes, and to modify existing homes to become more energy efficient as well as retraining and upskilling the current workforce to embrace new technologies and employment opportunities.

■ **HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE**

Through our work with health and care partners, our Digital Care Hubs at Sighthill and Milton Road campuses are providing greater skills and opportunities to health and social care students. The hubs are providing clear pathways to further study and employment by equipping students with the transferrable skills required to work in Health and Social Care and Dental and Pharmacy with a particular emphasis on technology-enabled care.

> **Our overarching digital ambition is to be a High Performance Digital College, aiming to be at the forefront of improving business performance**

■ **DIGITAL AND DATA INNOVATION**

Our overarching digital ambition is to be a High Performing Digital College, aiming to be at the forefront of improving business performance in an increasingly technology driven environment. We are a key partner in the Edinburgh and South East Scotland City Region Deal's Data Driven Innovation initiative, providing digital and data skills training and job prospects for students. Our Automation Lab also houses state-of-the-art robotics and automation equipment used to train the engineers of the future.

- **ADDRESSING POVERTY - NO ONE LEFT BEHIND**

  We enrol a higher proportion of students from deprived backgrounds relative to the Edinburgh population. Whereas 23% of Edinburgh households are among the 40% most deprived nationally (e.g. SIMD decile 1-4), around 40% of Edinburgh College students come from SIMD decile 1-4. Our Equality Outcome and Mainstreaming Report commits to widening access and improving the retention of students from deprived backgrounds to support sustainable positive destinations and promote social mobility.

- **ECONOMIC GROWTH AND PROSPERITY**

  We're supporting businesses to upskill, reskill and train staff through professional training delivered via the Flexible Workforce Development Fund (FWDF) and Standard Innovation Vouchers. Through increased collaboration with industry our training and development portfolio is expanding and helping to address the skills gaps across the country.

- **CREATIVE INDUSTRIES**

  Our region is well known for arts and culture (Edinburgh's Festivals in particular) and is experiencing growth in screen production as a result of new studio facilities in Leith (First Stage Studios) and in Bathgate, West Lothian (Pyramids). Our College is well-placed to address local skills gaps as identified in the recent City Region Deal report.

- **HOSPITALITY & TOURISM**

  The effects of Brexit and Covid have created an abundance of employment opportunities within the hospitality and tourism industry, however, there is a shortage of skilled individuals to fill these vacancies. Our College has the staff, expertise and facilities to be able to help train the next generation of employees within the industry.

3. AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

3.1. Where do we want to get to?

The future success of our College will be determined by the extent to which the curriculum meets the needs of stakeholders in the region, and addresses Scottish Government education and economic policy priorities, both locally and nationally.

This Curriculum Strategy will drive changes to the estate, flex delivery models to reflect a shift away from 'traditional' full-time provision, and ensure the sustainability of our College moving forward. It's noticeable that in 2016-17, 50% of students studied part-time and in 2022-23 this increased to 76%. Full-time students have reduced by 13% over the same period.

Our strategy has eight key aims and objectives, described below:

Priority 1

ECONOMY	BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT OBJECTIVES
Aligning Curriculum with Economic Priorities	▪ Our curriculum will be designed to align with the economic priorities outlined in Scotland's National Strategy for Economic Transformation. ▪ This includes identifying key sectors and industries that are critical for economic growth, such as renewable energy, healthcare, technology, and creative industries, and incorporating relevant knowledge, skills, and competencies in the curriculum.

Priority 2

SKILLS	BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT OBJECTIVES
Future-Focused Skills Development	■ Our curriculum will prioritise the development of future-focused skills that are in demand in the evolving job market. ■ This includes critical thinking, problem-solving, digital literacy, creativity, entrepreneurship, communication and collaboration skills. These skills are essential for preparing students to thrive in a dynamic and rapidly changing economic landscape.

Priority 3

EMPLOYERS	BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT OBJECTIVES
Industry and Employer Engagement	■ Our curriculum will foster strong partnerships and engagement with industry partners and employers. ■ This will be achieved through collaboration with local businesses, industry associations, and relevant professional bodies to ensure that the curriculum is aligned to the needs of the job market. This includes opportunities for work-based learning, internships, apprenticeships and industry-led projects to provide students with real-world experiences that enhance their employability.

Priority 4

EQUALITY	BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT OBJECTIVES
Inclusion and Equality	■ Our curriculum will prioritise inclusion, diversity and equality by ensuring that all students, regardless of their background or circumstances, have access to high-quality education and training that prepares them for the changing economic landscape. ■ This includes addressing any disparities in educational attainment and outcomes, and ensuring that the curriculum is culturally responsive, inclusive and free from bias.

Priority 5

AGILITY	BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT OBJECTIVES
Flexibility and Adaptability	■ Our curriculum will be designed to be flexible and adaptable to accommodate the changing needs of the economy and the job market. ■ This includes regularly reviewing and updating courses to reflect emerging trends, technologies and economic priorities. It also involves providing options for students to choose pathways that align with their strengths, interests and aspirations.

Priority 6

NET ZERO	BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT OBJECTIVES
Sustainability and Global Citizenship	■ Our curriculum will integrate sustainable development goals, and global citizenship as core components. ■ This includes incorporating knowledge and skills related to environmental sustainability, social responsibility and global issues such as climate change, diversity and social justice. This will prepare students to be responsible citizens who are aware of their impact on the world and can contribute positively to the economy and society.

Priority 7

DIGITAL	BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT OBJECTIVES
Digital Literacy and Innovation	■ Our curriculum will prioritise digital skills and innovation as essential skills for the future economy. ■ This includes integrating digital skills and innovation practices into all courses, providing opportunities for students to develop digital skills whilst fostering a culture of innovation, creativity and problem solving. ■ This will prepare the students to thrive in a digital economy and contribute to innovation-driven economic growth.

Priority 8

LIFELONG LEARNING

BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT OBJECTIVES

Lifelong Learning

- Our curriculum will foster a culture of lifelong learning, where students develop a growth mindset and are equipped with the skills and attitudes necessary for continuous learning and adaptation.

- This includes promoting self-directed study, critical reflection and metacognition. This approach will give students the confidence to pursue further education, professional development and upskilling throughout their lives.

- Our curriculum will be future-focused, inclusive, adaptable, and aligned with industry needs. It will prioritise the development of future-focused skills, foster industry engagement, promote sustainability and global citizenship.

- This will prepare students for a lifelong learning mindset. Regular monitoring and evaluation will be carried out to ensure its effectiveness in achieving the desired outcomes.

4. HOW DO WE GET THERE?

The key to the success of this Curriculum Strategy is our people.

Our staff are experienced, knowledgeable and, most of all, student-focused. They are innovative and forward thinking and will be challenged and supported to make this strategy a reality. By being respectful, responsible, trustworthy, student-centred and working together we can ensure all of our learners have the best possible experiences and outcomes.

By engaging staff and students in the pursuit of excellence we will ensure that every student is provided with the best College experience the sector has to offer. In this way, we will ensure that the curriculum at our College will:

- Be informed by local and national policy and be data driven to meet identified needs

- Be contemporary and relevant

- Embed, promote and celebrate equality, diversity and inclusion and be accessible to students from all backgrounds

- Recognise and reward prior learning

- Clearly identify progression pathways both inside and outside of College

- Promote active learning

- Embrace advances in AI, digital technology and meta-skills

- Embed innovation, enterprise and sustainability

- Reduce the assessment burden on staff and students alike by becoming the sector leader for innovation in assessment

- Advancing project-based assessment methodology

- Consistently deliver transformative lifelong learning for all learners

The establishment of an annual curriculum review will also help us to achieve our Curriculum Strategy objectives. This review will aim to strike the right balance between continuity and change, retaining provision that is fit for purpose, and replacing courses that have reached the end of their life cycle, and where new provision is required.

This annual self-evaluation will also ensure our curriculum offer remains flexible, dynamic, responsive and digital, as described below:

Theme	Description	Drivers, Milestones and Measures
FLEXIBLE	Curriculum that can easily flex and is constantly re-imagined	■ Curriculum design principles self-evaluation process ■ Course approval process ■ How Good is our Learning and Teaching framework
DYNAMIC	Curriculum that is co-designed, co-delivered, collaborative and agile	■ Employer / Stakeholder Groups ■ Clear progression pathways ■ New collaborative / responsive programmes ■ How Good is our Learning and Teaching framework
RESPONSIVE	Curriculum that meets the needs of individuals and employers	■ Data driven decisions ■ LMI trend analysis and SDS Regional Skills Analysis ■ National Strategy for Economic Transformation aims ■ New course provision
DIGITAL	Curriculum that embraces advances in technology	■ Developed digital pedagogy ■ Increased digital content on all courses ■ Student-focused approach

5. HOW DO WE KNOW WE HAVE GOT THERE?

Our robust annual self-evaluation process will keep the implementation of the strategy on track, and will lead to the delivery of the following Key Performance Indicators:

Key Performance Indicator	Baseline 2023	Target for July 2026
Credit target delivery	98%	TBC
Numbers of students	28,498	TBC
Student retention rates	93%	TBC
Student placement and employment opportunities	78%	TBC
Student outcomes at FE and HE levels / PT and FT modes	Full-time FE 57.2% Full-time HE 55.4% Part-time HE 75.7% Part-time FE 69.0%	TBC
Student satisfaction rates	96%	TBC

6. GOVERNANCE

6.1. Who is responsible?

At an operational and tactical level, the Vice Principal for Education and Skills, and the Assistant Principals Curriculum will take the lead roles to ensure delivery of our Curriculum Strategy. They will be supported in this role by the Heads of School and Curriculum Team Managers.

In addition, other Executive and Senior Management team members will assist in the delivery of curriculum strategy objectives.

At a strategic level the Learning, Teaching and Student Experience Committee will be responsible for the strategic oversight and evaluation of the delivery of this Curriculum Strategy, who will in turn report to the Edinburgh College Board of Management.

6.2. When will we review and report progress?

The strategy will be reviewed annually as part of the annual self-evaluation exercise indicated above, and reported accordingly.

A final review of the strategy will take place in 2026.

Edinburgh College

Curriculum Strategy
2023 - 2026

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