

# Ayrshire College Outcome Agreement 2023-24

## The College and its context

Ayrshire College is a large regional college which operates from three main campuses in Ayr, Kilmarnock and Kilwinning. The College provides education, skills development, and training for learners across Ayrshire and beyond. The College is recognised locally, regionally and nationally as an organisation which makes a positive difference to the lives of its students, to our communities, to Ayrshire's economy and to Scotland.

The College delivers programmes at Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF) levels 1-8, including a range of Foundation and Modern Apprenticeships and bespoke delivery for businesses.

Ayrshire College plays an active role in regional community planning partnerships and works with the three local authorities: East, North and South Ayrshire. East and North Ayrshire local authorities are amongst those with the highest local share of areas of multiple deprivation in Scotland with the highest rates of children living in poverty outside Glasgow.

Ayrshire College has approximately 11,000 learners enrolling on college programmes every year and employs over eight hundred staff. The College works with local secondary schools and special schools in the region.

The College continues to play a key role in socio economic development across Ayrshire and Scotland. Working with its employers, key stakeholders and third sector partners, the College is central to the development of a skills pipeline enabling the key sectors of Ayrshire and Scotland to thrive.

## Financial Objectives

The College's financial objectives are to be financially sustainable while continuing to invest in the development of student-centred services, infrastructure and resources. The financial context and funding settlements over recent years continue to present challenges to these financial objectives.

The College continues to develop its financial planning structures, budgeting, monitoring and financial reporting systems to support a complex organisation of the scale of Ayrshire College. Robust financial planning remains a key priority going forward given the challenges for the college sector around the levels of funding made available while continuing to demonstrate financial sustainability.

The Executive Leadership Team (ELT) continues to work with the Board of Management and its committees to review financial information requirements and key performance data to ensure good Governance in relation to challenge and scrutiny.

## Financial Review

Robust financial management systems, innovative delivery models and prioritisation of expenditure commitments are in place. College staff continually review and refine operations during the year to ensure that the College continues to operate efficiently and effectively within its financial context and funding settlements.

## Priority Area 1: Fair Access and Transitions

### People from deprived areas have fair access and are supported to succeed

The College continues to support a high number of students living in the 10% most deprived postcode areas. In AY 2022-23, the volume of credits delivered to the 10% most deprived postcode areas was 24,209 credits - 19.9% of the total delivery. This was the same as the 19.9% delivered in AY 2021-22. The College aims to ensure that the percentage of students living in the 10% most deprived postcode areas is representative of the Ayrshire region. It is anticipated that the figure for AY 2023-24 will be 19.0%.

The College is committed to ensuring that students living in the 10% most deprived postcode areas achieve at the same rate as their peers. Unfortunately, the Covid-19 pandemic exacerbated inequalities and there is work to be done to ensure that the attainment gap is narrowed again.

### People with experience of care have fair access and are supported to succeed

The College's Corporate Parenting, Student Carers and Estranged Students Steering Group continue to implement and monitor progress against the actions outlined in the [Corporate Parenting Action Plan](#) and the [Student Carers Action Plan](#)

The volume of credits delivered to Care Experienced students in AY 2022-23 was 11,256 credits – 9.3% of the total delivery. This is above the 8.4% delivered in AY 2021-22. The College aims to achieve at least 8.9% in AY 2023-24.

In AY 2022-23, the College continued to work towards the targets set out in the SFC's National Ambition for Care Experienced Students. Internal monitoring processes were further enhanced to support vulnerable students including Care Experienced students, Student Carers and Exceptional Entry students.

In AY 2023-24, the College will continue to focus on reducing the successful completion gap between Care Experienced students and non-Care Experienced students.

### School/college partnerships - supporting successful transitions and pathways for students.

The College works closely with individual schools and local authorities to ensure that the school-college offer complements the vocational pathways offered in schools. Each of the 26 schools in Ayrshire has an individualised vocational pathway map, specific to their own curriculum offer, which outlines vocational pathways, starting in school and continuing to college, university, further training, and potential employment.

The number of senior phased age pupils studying with the College in AY 2022-23 was 622 – a increase on the 391 in AY 2021-22. The College has realigned school-college partnership activity to ensure a focus on areas of importance outlined in the [Ayrshire Regional Economic Strategy](#) and [Ayrshire Growth Deal](#).

### Articulation - supporting successful transitions and pathways for students.

The latest available published figures demonstrate that, following successful completion during AY 2021-22, 272 (48.1%) HN students articulated to degree programmes, with advanced standing. It should be noted that Covid-19 restrictions were still in place and many students opted not to take up a place at university due to the continuation of online learning only.

The College continues to work closely with several universities through strategically focussed forums to ensure a continued sustainable infrastructure for articulation to university routes. Articulation pathways are available to students both within and out with the region. The College expects the proportion of students articulating to degree programmes, with advanced standing to be 65% in AY 2023-24.

## Priority Area 2: Quality learning and teaching

During February 2023, the College engaged with Education Scotland who undertook a Thematic Review of Curriculum. The inspection team explored curriculum planning, design and delivery and considered four overarching themes:

1. curriculum rationale, design, and development
2. effectiveness and appropriateness of the curriculum
3. skills for learning, life and work
4. learning pathways.

During their visit, the team talked to learners, staff, and stakeholders, and undertook observations of learning, teaching and assessment. The Thematic Review was one of only two reviews which took place in colleges during AY 2022-23 and the only review to examine curriculum planning support and delivery.

Many areas of good practice were identified, however, areas for development included the impact of unreliable connectivity and inadequate digital infrastructure on the learning, teaching and student experience, the absence of consistent, comprehensive, reliable data to support improvement and a consistent student learning experience across all campuses, subjects and modes of learning. The College has identified six transformational projects to facilitate improvement and digital infrastructure is a theme which cuts across projects. Work is scheduled to take place during the autumn of 2023 which will improve ICT infrastructure.

The in-depth review provided a wealth of information which will be used during AY 2023-24 to ensure a consistently outstanding learning experience across all campuses, subject areas and modes of delivery.

In May 2023, a team of HM Inspectors also engaged with the College on an Annual Engagement Visit where they evaluated progress made by the College towards its improvement priorities, and outcomes of previous engagement with HM Inspectors. HM Inspectors provided a report which summarised the findings from the visit, highlighted areas of positive progress and areas for development. There were main points for action identified:

- The College should take action to improve rates of successful completion, and in particular address the number of learners who leave their programme early.
- The College should ensure staff have access to comprehensive and reliable information to support systematic evaluation to secure improvement.

During AY 2023-24, development sessions will take place with Heads of learning and Curriculum Managers on evaluative writing, curriculum design and with lecturing staff on using IRIS Connect as a self-reflection tool. The College will extend its peer evaluation pilot and will progress with a digital online learning framework.

Since May 2023, some of the College's teaching staff have been operating 'Action Short of Strike' (ASOS) as part of an ongoing campaign of industrial action, called by

EIS-FELA. Consequently, although lecturers will have marked student work, some lecturers did not disclose or processed results into college systems. The College provided all students who studied during AY 2022-23 and who applied for an Ayrshire College course during AY 2023-24 an unconditional offer. The College also worked with university partners to ensure that no student was disadvantaged.

As of September 2023, a significant number of results remain outstanding and, therefore, it is not possible to provide an analysis of attainment rates for AY 2022-23. Improving retention and attainment rates, however, remains a key priority for the College.

### **Safeguarding and Child Protection**

Wylie and Bissett, the College's internal auditors, conducted a review to assess whether the College's systems and procedures for safeguarding, and child protection are fully compliant with legislation and that the College is taking all necessary steps to protect its students. Auditors provided the College with an overall strong level of assurance surrounding the controls in place for safeguarding. Eighteen points of good practice were identified with no recommendations for improvement. In addition, the annual safeguarding review conducted by Education Scotland noted that the three development points identified in AY 2021-22 had been completed.

### **Student participation and engagement in their educational experience**

Ayrshire College's Student Association (ACSA) represents the student voice through active participation on all Board of Management committees and representation on a number of internal steering groups. The Principal and Vice Principal meet with the Student Association monthly and this provides an opportunity to discuss any emerging issues; forthcoming plans and initiatives and any strategic/national matters that may impact on the College and its students.

The lack of opportunity for face-to-face and on-campus presence in recent years meant that students reported that the ACSA was not visible enough and that they were unclear about what support the ACSA could provide. During AY 2022-23, the College worked with ACSA to maximise its visibility and accessibility to students. Education Scotland, during the May 2023 Annual Engagement Visit (AEV), noted that the ACSA had worked hard to raise its profile amongst learners.

During AY 2021-22, Education Scotland found that the new system of class ambassador training was not yet reaching all and that some class ambassadors were unclear about their role and would value greater clarity around their remit. It was pleasing to note that during the May 2023 AEV, Education Scotland commented on the fact that the number of Class Ambassadors, across the College, has increased and most had received appropriate training to support them in their role. Staff engage well with most Class Ambassadors and could articulate examples of positive change initiated from Class Ambassador feedback. In addition, it was noted that most curriculum staff make good use of tailored arrangements to gather learner feedback on their college experiences. Finally, where improvement suggestions were made, it was observed that vocational teams introduce enhancements and these help learners to remain and continue with their studies.

In AY 2023-24, the College will continue to work with ACSA to raise its profile and to embed the Class Ambassador role.

### **Student Satisfaction and Engagement Survey**

Analysis of the AY 2022-23 survey indicates that there has been an overall increase of 2% in levels of student satisfaction to 96%. This is 1% higher than the last pre-pandemic survey (AY 2018-19)

While sector benchmarking information for AY 2022-23 will not be available until October 2023, the learner participation rate for the SFC Student Satisfaction and Engagement Survey (SSES) in AY 2020-21 was 10% lower than the sector norm. The College continues to work proactively with ACSA to raise awareness of the survey and to ensure that participation levels continue to increase.

It also continues to seek ways to improve the student experience and to ensure a consistently outstanding learning experience irrespective of campus, subject or mode of learning. Team evaluations have illustrated excellent examples in all curriculum areas of acting on student suggestions received through course team meetings and ongoing feedback mechanisms with class groups.

## Priority area 3: Coherent learning provision

**Institutions use data and intelligence and engage with stakeholders to adapt, develop and align provision to meet the needs of students, industry and other stakeholders.**

Ayrshire College's learning and skills offer is aligned to the needs of employers in the Ayrshire region. Curriculum planning is informed by the latest labour market information for Ayrshire and Scotland, the [Ayrshire Growth Deal](#) and the [Ayrshire Regional Skills Investment Plan](#)

The new [Ayrshire Regional Economic Strategy \(RES\)](#) was launched on 19 June 2023 and was developed by the Regional Strategy Working Group of the Ayrshire Economic Partnership Board of which the Principal and Vice Principal Skills and Enterprise are members.

Recently the Vice Principal Skills and Enterprise has become the Chair of the Skills workstream of the AGD. This group will determine the priorities for the growth deal skills investment and act as a catalyst for future funding bid opportunities.

Underpinning the skills group are the following sectoral workstreams:

- Aerospace and space
- Clean growth
- Visitor economy
- Food and Drink
- Life Sciences
- Advanced manufacturing

The College is leading the development of a coherent approach to ensure employers have the skilled workforce required in the aforementioned areas. This involves working in partnership with schools, third sector and universities to develop a pipeline of talent with a focus in above areas.

In North Ayrshire, XLCC, based at Hunterston, is working in partnership with the College to increase the number of Performing Engineering Operations (PEO) courses available to prospective students across Ayr, Kilmarnock and Kilwinning campuses. Additional course content was provided in partnership their specialist training provider who delivered train the trainer sessions for college staff in the Spring of 2023 on cable manufacturing fundamentals. Once fully operational in 2025, the XLCC facility will support 900 jobs in the Hunterston area, with thousands more in the wider supply chain.

Renewable technology, including a cutting-edge hybrid air source installation has been donated by industry partners and almost all staff have been upskilled in both qualifications and manufacturers training. This will allow the College to roll out re-skilling and upskilling in renewable heat technologies in the current academic year. In addition, Motor Vehicle staff have completed the PDA Hydrogen: An Introduction for

Technicians SCQF level 7 offered through Energy Skills Partnership which will also enable reskilling and upskilling learning opportunities to be offered in this area.

## Priority area 4: Work-based learning and skills

**Institutions' plans for work-based learning and apprenticeships and how institutions will work with key partners to understand and respond to the current and prospective skills needs of individuals through all stages of life, address employer, industry and regional skills needs and contribute to workforce planning.**

Ayrshire College, North Ayrshire Council, the Magnox Socio Economic Panel, the Scottish Funding Council and the Ayrshire College Foundation have worked in partnership to provide funding for The Willie Mackie Skills Hub which will open in August 2023. This partnership approach has created the opportunity for the first time for North Ayrshire communities to access Modern Apprenticeships, firstly in Carpentry and Joinery. In AY 2023-24, The College will deliver to ten apprentices from Ayrshire company James Frew LTD.

The College is leading the development of a coherent approach to ensure employers have the skilled workforce required in the aforementioned areas. This involves working in partnership with schools, third sector and universities to develop a pipeline of talent.

Specifically in the aerospace sector, the College has a critical role to play in providing the sector with a pipeline of appropriately skilled people and is a key partner in the long-term economic ambitions of Ayrshire to be a recognised global centre of excellence in aircraft and space technology.

Companies, within the Prestwick cluster, have immediate workforce planning issues as a result of competition to fill existing vacancies exacerbated by short-medium term replacement demands. The College has established an employer advisory group and is leading the skills pathway response during AY 2023-24 by increasing its school-college partnership senior phase offer, introduced accelerated learning pathways and increasing its apprentice provision alongside a portfolio of upskilling programmes. Of the 50 first year apprentices enrolled in the College in September 2023, 28 previously studied with Ayrshire College on a range of school-college partnership programmes, PEO and HNC/D Aircraft engineering.

The College is also progressing its application with the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) to become a Part 147 Approved Maintenance Training Organisation in response to employer feedback. The application is being developed in partnership with Industrial partners around the airfield at Glasgow Prestwick Airport and throughout Scotland.

In the medium term, Ayrshire College and partners will continue to adapt regional training to meet the continuing needs of industry and support adaption and growth in the sector. The College is working with a range of partners including innovation centres, employers developing sustainable aviation materials, satellite manufacturers and supply chain businesses to ensure Prestwick realises its ambition to be the National Aerospace Hub for Scotland.

Health Care Support Workers, Senior Healthcare Support Workers and Assistant Practitioners provide the foundations to safe and effective patient care. In 2022-23,

NHS Ayrshire and Arran and Ayrshire College jointly developed and delivered several educational programmes to upskill the workforce using an 'earn as you learn' model.

The suite of programmes is aligned with the Scottish Government's Nursing and Midwifery Taskforce, led by the Cabinet Secretary for NHS Recovery Health and Social Care, which seek to improve staff confidence and competence, raise job satisfaction and retention within the job roles whilst taking pressure away from front line NHS services.

During 2023-24, the partnership will extend delivery for Band 2 Healthcare Support Workers (HCSW) and Band 3 Senior Healthcare Support Workers to Band 4 newly appointed Assistant Practitioners.

Band 4 Assistant Practitioners work under the supervision of Registered Nurses to assist patients in their care. They undertake baseline assessments within clearly defined parameters and use specialist technical and practical skills to deliver flexible, patient-centred programmes across a variety of clinical settings.

The programme for Band 4 Assistant Practitioners is a full one day a week release programme. The PDA in Acute and Community Care is an SCQF Level 8 programme which incorporates evidence-based practice, research, decision making, accountability, care of the acutely ill patients, teamwork and leadership modules.

The College continues to work collaboratively with its three Local Authority partners to ensure that young people have access to the opportunity to undertake Foundation Apprenticeships. Skills Development Scotland was unable to support East Ayrshire Council's requirements to offer young people a Foundation Apprenticeship in Food and Drink. As this is a sector of importance for the Ayrshire region, the College, East Ayrshire Council and Scottish Funding Council were able to work to find a solution to ensure that young people in East Ayrshire continue to have access to this opportunity in AY 2023-24.

Since AY 2018-19, there has been a steady increase in direct employment from the Foundation Apprenticeship in Engineering as the profile grows with local industry. Two large aerospace companies, Spirit and GE, list this qualification as an entry requirement. The College exceeded its Foundation Apprenticeship target in AY 2022-23 and expects to meet the target in AY 2023-24.

## Priority Area 5: Net zero and environmental sustainability response

### A whole-institutional climate emergency response

Ayrshire College is responding to the climate change emergency by being environmentally responsible and embedding sustainability in its learning and teaching and business practices. The College's actions are outlined in [its Sustainability Strategy \(2022-2025\)](#).

**Outcome Agreement Ayrshire College the Scottish Funding Council for AY  
2023-24**

**On behalf of Ayrshire College**

Signed:



Print name: Angela Cox

Position: Principal

Date: 29 November 2023

Signed:



Print name: Fiona McQueen

Position: Chair

Date: 29 November 2023

**On behalf of the Scottish Funding Council:**

Signed:



Print name: Karen Watt

Position: Chief Executive

Date: 15 January 2024