



Ayrshire  
College



# Ayrshire College

Evaluative Report  
and Enhancement Plan

2016-17



START HERE  
**GO**  
ANYWHERE

## Context

Ayrshire College is a large regional college formed in 2013 from the merger of the former Ayr and Kilmarnock Colleges and the Ayrshire campuses of the former James Watt College. The College has around 900 staff spread over three large campuses in the towns of Ayr, Kilmarnock and Kilwinning, and a Skills Centre of Excellence located in a secondary school in Irvine. The new campus in Kilmarnock, made possible with £53 million from the Scottish Government, opened to students and staff in October 2016. The Kilwinning Campus is a PFI building and the Skills Centre of Excellence was supported with funding from the Scottish Funding Council (SFC), The Edge Foundation and Skills Development Scotland.

Over 95% of the College's students reside in Ayrshire, and the majority of students in each of the College's main campuses live in the local authority area in which the campus is located. Reflecting the social and economic challenges facing the region, over a third of the College's full-time students live in SIMD20 areas, and this has increased steadily each year.

In 2016-17, for the second consecutive year, the College exceeded the activity target set by the SFC and delivered 125,749 credits. In 2016-17, there were 14,151 enrolments from 12,442 students. Just over half of all students (51%) attended college on a full-time basis. Of the 18 Education Scotland subject groupings, the College offered courses for fourteen at FE level and thirteen at HE level. The FE/HE balance of students on full-time courses has changed over three years with FE declining from 67% to 62% and HE increasing from 33% to 38%.

The College works with the three local authorities - East, North and South Ayrshire - and plays an active and key role in the corresponding Community Planning Partnerships. It works with all 26 secondary schools, as well as special schools, in the region. Over the past four years, a declining number of school leavers and a reduction in youth unemployment in the region have contributed to a fall in full-time enrolments, most sharply at FE level which has seen a twenty percent drop (HE full-time enrolments reduced by 3%). Over the period, the trend is reducing numbers in the 16-19 and 20-24 age groups, and a corresponding increase in the number of students aged over-25.

The 16-19 Participation Measure in two of the three local authorities is below the Scottish average of 91.1% (East Ayrshire 88.1% and North Ayrshire 90.3%). The most recent Scottish Government's follow up destinations analysis of school leavers demonstrates that East and North Ayrshire local authorities continued to have a significantly higher proportion of leavers who move onto FE study than the national average (33% and 30% respectively, compared with a Scotland average of 22%). Conversely, a higher proportion of South Ayrshire leavers moved onto HE study than the national average (42% versus 37%).

East and North Ayrshire local authorities are amongst the top six councils with the highest local share of SIMD20 datazones in Scotland, and the region has 11 areas of deep-rooted poverty which have been consistently among the most deprived 5% in Scotland since 2004. Two of the region's local authorities have the highest rates of children living in poverty in Scotland outside of Glasgow City - 28.0% in East Ayrshire and 30.4% in North Ayrshire – and ten percent of care experienced school leavers in Scotland live in Ayrshire.

The College is a strategic business partner of the Ayrshire Chamber of Commerce and a key member of the Developing the Young Workforce Ayrshire Steering Group. Significant economic sectors in the region include aerospace, engineering, health and social care, early education, and hospitality and tourism. The College collaborates with employers and industry bodies to plan the provision of courses to address growth in these and other sectors. With over 900 apprentices in training at any given time, the College is the main provider of STEM apprenticeships in the region, and in 2016-17 introduced an engineering foundation apprenticeship.

The College has been an integral partner in the development of the Ayrshire Growth Deal and

its associated projects since inception, helping to promote the projects to senior representatives from the Scottish Government, raising awareness within the UK Government at Westminster and communicating benefits to the local business base through formal and informal events. The College has engaged with all relevant projects which make up the growth deal to ensure that the skills system supports and is aligned to growth opportunities.

Strategic objectives for 2017-20 are set out in the College's **Strategic Plan** and **Outcome Agreement**. Summary information about the College is provided in the **Key Facts** publication. All documents are available on the College website.

## Methodology

Ayrshire College was one of three colleges which participated in the national action learning quality pilot with SFC and Education Scotland from summer 2015 to autumn 2016. From the start, the College embedded the four principles of the pilot - integration, ownership, challenge and regional approach.

Integration has been an important aspect of our methodology. Shortly after merger, following consultation with staff, the College established a new quality cycle which integrated curriculum and service staff in team evaluations which considered all aspects of delivery of learning and services to support learning. The national pilot enabled us to take this further by integrating the reporting of the quality of learning and teaching with that of our Outcome Agreement and Strategic Plan.

One of the most significant outcomes of the changes to our quality enhancement cycle is that they have acted as a catalyst for culture change. Strategic leadership, complemented by an approach which engaged all staff, resulted in all staff taking ownership of their role to support students to achieve successful outcomes. Staff have a clear understanding of how they contribute to enhancing the student experience and, coupled with a more comprehensive awareness of their role in achieving the goals of key college strategies, are more willing to challenge each other in an open, constructive and respectful manner.

Improved application of the data visualisation tool, Qlikview, provided staff with real-time data which they analysed at course level to put in place measures to retain more students and reduce partial success. Importantly, staff analyse this data proactively throughout the year and are not dependant on data being presented to them by a central team for analysis.

During the year, we took our application of data analytics a step further by introducing predictive analytics to enhance our already powerful retention tool and process. Using machine learning algorithms, our tool provides a predicted score of a student's likelihood of withdrawal on a weekly basis by providing an 'at risk' score based on patterns of previous success, attendance, engagement with Moodle, student funding, as well as demographic information.

In 2016-17, we continued to enhance our quality cycle by introducing business improvement techniques. Preparations throughout the year on the forthcoming **How good is our college?** arrangements made the introduction of the new national quality framework a natural and logical step for staff. The framework has been used in ongoing evaluation throughout the year, aided by partnership working with Education Scotland in carrying out classroom observations, in-depth evaluation of identified curriculum areas and evaluating student engagement.

This report is a product of team evaluations and comprehensive analysis of 2016-17 key performance indicators. All Heads of curriculum and service areas provided short summaries of how their teams had performed over the year against the three main themes of leadership and quality culture, delivery of learning and services to support learning, and outcomes and impact. Individuals or small teams were identified to lead on specific challenge questions and identify areas of positive practice as well as areas for development. Their contributions were

synthesised into this evaluation report and enhancement plan.

## Capacity for Improvement

Clear vision, strong and highly effective leadership and prioritisation have led to significant improvements in student outcomes over two years, with highly motivated staff focused on the common purpose of raising aspirations, inspiring achievement and increasing opportunities.

Four years on from the merger, staff are now settled in post, organisational structures are highly effective and the Ayrshire College culture has been embedded. Core systems and processes have been refined, providing good access to high quality data which aids decision making, this has been a key factor in overall improvement.

Effective collaborative working between service and curriculum teams is supporting more students to remain on their course and succeed. Staff have a comprehensive understanding of the factors contributing to withdrawal and success rates, aided by real-time, accurate data upon which they introduce targeted interventions to support the student experience.

Strong and highly effective partnership working with employers, community planning partnerships and schools has shaped a regional curriculum which meets their needs and enhanced the support provided to students to enable them to succeed.

Over the next three years, the College will focus its improvement efforts on achieving the 3-year outcome agreement targets for student success set by the Scottish Funding Council.

## 1.1 Leadership and Quality Culture

### Areas of Positive Practice

- The culture of Ayrshire College is built on the vision *Raise Aspirations | Inspire Achievement | Increase Opportunities*. Strong leadership and a student-centred focus from the Chair and the Principal have ensured that this vision is well understood by staff and students, visible to partners and visitors to the College, and widely communicated to communities across Ayrshire.
- Leadership from the Regional Board is very strong. An externally-led Review of Board Governance Effectiveness in 2016-17 stated that Board members “were proactive in seeking solutions that support their students and in challenging assumptions or existing arrangements”.
- The Board of Management understands very well how effectively the College is delivering against its strategic objectives and is highly effective in providing strategic direction, scrutiny and robust challenge to the senior management team which has contributed to ongoing improvements in student outcomes.
- Progress on Outcome Agreement targets and the student experience is discussed throughout the year at Board and Committee meetings. Reports on progress against outcomes are presented to Community Planning Partnerships to prompt discussion on how the members can work together to achieve shared priorities.
- The Board engages effectively with the Student Association and student feedback is prioritised at Board and Committee meetings where actions are agreed and monitored.
- The Chair, Principal and Board members are very proactive in engaging strategically with employers and stakeholders to improve outcomes for students, and play an important role in strategic external projects such as the Ayrshire Growth Deal. The College has developed strong and collaborative partnerships with all three Community Planning Partnerships in Ayrshire as well as DYW Ayrshire and employers.
- The Principal and senior team provide very strong and highly effective leadership. Over the past year, senior managers have invested significant time in strategic planning with a focus on improving learning and teaching. This has contributed to developing a clear line of sight from the strategic plan to the outcome agreement to other critical college strategies such as the learning and teaching strategy. Importantly, all strategic developments have been consulted on with key stakeholders, employers, staff and the Student Association, with outcomes reported back to illustrate how their feedback influenced the final outcomes.
- National, regional and local priorities are clearly reflected in the strategic plan, outcome agreement and other college strategies. This has resulted in effective target setting which meets the needs of all partners, and is reviewed throughout the year to ensure partners’ priorities are addressed.
- Strategic objectives are communicated through well-planned all-staff and campus-specific events led by the Principal, which are supported by the Chair, Board members and senior managers. These events promote very effectively a culture of enablement, challenge, accountability and celebration, to which all staff and the Student Association are highly committed.
- The College achieved liP Gold in June 2016 in recognition of its people management approach. This accreditation and partnership working with liP supports the College in our planning, delivery and evaluation of learning and development activities.
- The Regional Board has developed a very positive relationship with the Student Association. The Student Association is a critical voice on all Board and Committee meetings, and engage with staff on all team evaluation activities which identify priority areas for improvement. This approach was referred to in an externally-led audit, Student Experience – Student Voice, which recognised the College’s “strong commitment to

engaging with its students”.

- The integration of our team evaluation process, in which curriculum and service staff jointly evaluate the delivery of learning and services to support learning, has been supported by integrated forums for heads and managers which take forward actions for improvement throughout the year. At a strategic level, this has been further enhanced by each of the Vice Principals now having portfolios which include both service and curriculum responsibilities.

### **Areas for Development**

- The Regional Board should build on its strong foundations by continuing to engage in Board development.

## **1.2 Leadership of Learning and Teaching**

### **Areas of Positive Practice**

- The College has very effective arrangements for improving learning and teaching and strong leadership is provided by the Vice Principals. The Vice Principals work collaboratively with Directors and other managers to ensure that the importance of continuous improvement in learning and teaching and learner engagement are embedded throughout the College.
- A strong culture of reflective practice and enterprise and innovation are encouraged and celebrated in the College. Strong leadership at all levels across curriculum and service areas enables all staff and students to engage in professional dialogue on the learner experience and improve outcomes.
- The College utilised the expertise of Education Scotland to undertake classroom observations throughout 2017. This approach was very effective and enabled independent external feedback to be provided to staff to improve learning and teaching
- A systematic analysis of all data and student feedback is shared at monthly forums attended by all college managers. This approach is efficient and effective and supports the College to identify priorities to improve learning and teaching as well as services to support learning. The forums also aid collaboration and the sharing of good practice
- The College undertakes an annual review of the curriculum in partnership with students, employers and key stakeholders. This highly effective strategy ensures that the College is proactive in meeting the skills needs locally, regionally and nationally.
- Arrangements for the induction and investment in continuous development of staff are highly effective and embedded throughout the College, with particular emphasis on the Personal and Professional Development Review process.
- Teaching staff are knowledgeable and well qualified, with 90% of lecturing staff holding a recognised teaching qualification. Staff are well supported by a comprehensive and effective programme of CPD. The College’s innovative approach to career-long professional learning and development was recognised in the region when it was awarded the Ayrshire Business Excellence in People Development Award in 2017.
- The College provides a variety of opportunities for students to input and influence developments in learning and teaching and services to support learning. Real-time feedback from students is now the norm using social media as well as face to face forums where they contribute their views confidently and effectively.
- Effective arrangements are in place to ensure that the student voice influences the portfolio of courses offered by the College through the team evaluation process and Curriculum

Development Plan.

- Class representatives play an active role in course team meetings and in innovative feedback sessions such as 'Ask the Curriculum Manager' which ensure that students influence the design and delivery of learning and teaching.
- Very helpful Student Association meetings are held monthly on each campus with class representatives discussing a range of issues and suggesting improvements. Staff are invited to attend these meetings to work collaboratively with students and agree actions for improvement as well as report to the Student Association on progress.

### **Areas for Development**

- Although classroom observations in 2016-17 were undertaken on behalf of the College by Education Scotland, a formal peer review process should be established to support continuous improvement of the student experience and student outcomes.

## **1.3 Leadership of Services to Support Learning**

### **Areas of Positive Practice**

- The College has very strong and effective arrangements for services to support learning. Innovative approaches in collaboration with partners and strong leadership from Vice Principals and Directors demonstrate a commitment to continuous improvement.
- A range of key services are available to students and excellent partnership working with NHS Ayrshire & Arran, Police Scotland and the third sector ensure support for students across all campuses. A range of intervention and prevention strategies have contributed to improving support for students at risk.
- Highly effective planning and improvement arrangements for the delivery of high quality services are in place. Service managers and curriculum managers work together to focus efforts on improving student retention and outcomes. This approach is underpinned by a continuous improvement methodology and supported by sophisticated data analysis using Qlikview and the college-developed retention tool, and has contributed to a reduction in student withdrawals and improved attainment.
- The College is very proactive in responding to the needs of an increasing number of students from SIMD10 areas, students declaring a mental health issue and under-16s enrolling on full-time courses. A range of very successful targeted interventions have led to improved retention and outcomes for students.
- Creative approaches to staff development, such as the introduction of an action learning pilot with groups of curriculum and service managers meeting at regular intervals, has supported peer learning and the sharing of experience and expertise between managers. This has enabled actions to be taken to support continuous improvement.
- A culture of partnership working is embedded across the College, and throughout the year we invested significant time in enhancing existing private, public and third sector partnerships, as well as developing new ones to further improve the support for students.
- The introduction, by the Student Association, of a Care Experienced Executive Officer, has significantly increased the awareness and support available for this group of students. A range of positive interventions by staff and the Student Association led to a rise in the number of students who self disclosed as care experienced, from 35 in 2015-16 to 217 in 2016-17. This enabled staff providing services to support students to tailor specific interventions in collaboration with students to aid retention and improve outcomes.

## 1.4 Evaluation Leading to Improvement

### Areas of Positive Practice

- The College has very effective arrangements in place for evaluation leading to improvement. The College's engagement in the national quality pilot was a catalyst for significant culture change, particularly in relation to how effectively curriculum and service teams work collaboratively to enhance the student experience. The College's "keen focus on improvement" was externally acknowledged by Investors in People in June 2016.
- The College has embedded a team approach to evaluation, through which curriculum and service staff and the Student Association evaluate provision in an open and constructively challenging way. This has led to quantifiable improvement for students, particularly those most at risk.
- The Student Association is fully engaged in the quality enhancement process, influencing all curriculum team evaluation sessions, and participating actively in business improvement projects throughout the year.
- A critical component of our evaluation activity is student feedback and a range of mechanisms are in place to gather student feedback and this is used effectively to drive improvement. A large number of students now use social media to provide feedback and the College has fully embraced this approach and takes actions for improvement in real time.
- The Quality Enhancement team conduct an initial experiences survey in November, the national Student Satisfaction and Engagement Survey in March and a pre-exit survey in April. *Have Your Say* events are held on each campus to provide opportunities for students to provide deeper feedback.
- A key feature of our quality enhancement cycle is regular engagement with employers and partners to inform evaluation activity. These formal structures provide external feedback on College services and support the College to plan for improvement.
- The College makes very good use of data, including trend analysis to evaluate outcomes and progress and to plan for improvement.
- Managers at all levels in the College use predictive analytics, as well as real-time performance data to plan for improvement. Curriculum and student-focused service teams have a detailed understanding of our student profile by characteristics such as SIMD10, care experience, age and disability. This approach has resulted in proactive, customised approaches to the delivery of learning and teaching and provision of services to support students which, in turn, has had a significant impact on attainment on full-time courses which has risen from 62% to 67% over the year.
- Purposeful and challenging strategic review groups at local authority level are a vehicle for collaboration, sharing performance data and constructive challenge. The groups plan in collaboration and address shared priorities such as supporting school pupils at risk of negative destinations and developing sector-based vocational pathways.
- Evaluation activity which leads to improvement is based on sound analysis of a range of data available to all managers via our business intelligence platform which is used to excellent effect to monitor KPI performance and inform strategic decision making. This approach has led to significant increases in student success, particularly for priority groups.

### Areas for Development

- Participation in the 2016-17 Student Satisfaction and Engagement Survey declined and was below the national participation rate.
- Although the College has very successful employer forums in some areas, all curriculum

areas should establish employer forums to support evaluation and improvement.

## 2.1 Safeguarding and Child Protection

### Areas of Positive Practice

- The College has embedded and well established arrangements for safeguarding and child protection. These arrangements are well communicated and implemented by staff, students and partners.
- Three highly successful shared posts, co-funded with partners including Ayrshire's three Health and Social Care Partnerships and Police Scotland, play a major role in focusing and cohering the College's support for safeguarding through intervention and prevention strategies, allied to the delivery of workshops for staff and students, mobilising resources from partner agencies and offering advice to support students and staff.
- A well developed Protect, Prevent and Parent strategy and comprehensive Corporate Parenting Plan, created in collaboration with students and external partners, ensures that the College has highly effective arrangements in place for supporting and safeguarding all students, including care experienced students. This is supported by mandatory online training for all staff. Safeguarding awareness is included as an essential part of development training for Board members.
- The College's preventative approach resulted in 4,022 students participating in prevention and early intervention workshops delivered by our shared partnership officers on issues such as drug and alcohol awareness, gender-based violence and the dangers of social media. Survey-based evaluation of participants (return rate of 65%) showed that 94% found the workshops useful and 88% stated that their knowledge had increased as a result.
- Increased awareness amongst students, supported by campaigns like Safety Week leading up to the annual festive break, and well-established safeguarding teams on each campus ensured that all safeguarding issues were reported and actioned in an effective and timeous manner. Of 161 safeguarding reports in 2016-17, 69 were referred to external agencies for support, 41 were supported by college services, 14 required a criminal or disciplinary intervention and 37 needed no further action.
- A highly effective cross-college Safeguarding Steering Group, which includes Student Association representation, provides internal leadership on safeguarding arrangements which ensures coherent planning and monitoring of arrangements, and consistency in the dissemination of information to students and staff.
- The College is a member of the Safer North Ayrshire Partnership Group, the East Ayrshire Community Safety Group and the Ayrshire Community Justice Board which contributes to strong partnership working and ensures that college safeguarding arrangements are consistent with current practice across Ayrshire.

### Areas for Development

- Collaboration and partnership working has been very successful in addressing safeguarding issues, however challenging budgetary decisions are putting some of this work at risk.

## 2.2 Curriculum

### Areas of Positive Practice

- The College has effective arrangements for the design and development of its curriculum. Curriculum teams make appropriate use of data to plan and develop courses.
- A well-developed approach to curriculum planning which involves employers, business organisations, economic development and education teams in local authorities, national agencies and other community planning partners ensures that the curriculum and range of provision is based on need at a local, regional and national level.
- The College has in place an appropriate range of courses which support student transitions at all stages, to employment or further study. Staff support students at points of transition to ensure they are following the most appropriate learning pathway to enable success.
- Managers take good account of national policy drivers such as the Scottish Government's youth employment strategy and the SFC's widening access agenda, and make extensive use of internal data. Working closely with SDS and using the Regional Skills Assessment and relevant skills investment plans, shifts in the region's workforce demand are identified and the curriculum portfolio is adapted to meet future needs.
- The relevance, quality and breadth of the College's STEM provision has been recognised nationally by achieving STEM Assured accreditation, being awarded SEMTA's UK Training Partner of the Year and winning the Global Game Changers Award for Innovation in STEM Education and Training.
- Integrating equality and diversity into course design is a priority for all curriculum areas, and good progress has been made on this. For example, all sports students work with disabled young people and adults, and participate in activities which promote diversity in gender, race and sexual orientation.
- The College has effective arrangements in place to support students to gain knowledge understanding and skills which help to prepare them for the future. Curriculum teams encourage student feedback when planning courses and make relevant adjustments and improvements. Students are well represented at team evaluation meetings.
- Volunteering activities enrich students' learning experiences, promote active citizenship and contribute to developing the broader skills of students who, through their involvement with people of different ages, abilities and cultures become more empathetic, tolerant and employable individuals.
- In partnership with employers, DYW Ayrshire, local authorities and schools, the College continued to create innovative and flexible learning pathways in key industry sectors for senior phase pupils. For example, in partnership with Loudoun Academy, East Ayrshire Council and Buzzworks Holdings Ltd, we offered an NC Hospitality Level 5 over two years for S4 and S5 pupils. Building on this successful model, in partnership with the same school and a number of engineering companies, fourth year pupils at the same school are participating in SVQ Level 5 Performing Engineering Operations in partnership with local companies including QTS and Dustacco Engineering.
- Furthering our strategic approach to growing our senior phase offer, we delivered our first Foundation Apprenticeship framework in 2016-17 and secured excellent commitment from engineering companies across Ayrshire who are providing students with high quality work placements. Responding to demand from employers, schools and local authorities, we are delivering three frameworks in 2017-18 and plan to deliver five in 2018-19.
- An increasing number of full-time students progress on to Modern Apprenticeships. In 2016-17, seventy engineering students gained apprenticeships in local companies, demonstrating the confidence that employers have in the training provided.
- Highly effective collaboration with University partners supports articulation and provides

clear progression routes to university for HNC/D courses which include specific arrangements to enable students to articulate with advanced standing. Published figures for 2014-15 show that 366 students articulated from the College to degree level courses with advanced standing, the fourth highest number of all college regions.

### **Areas for Development**

- As part of our ongoing curriculum review and planning process, a consultation with staff and students identified that the model of delivery of Skills for Learning, Life and Work on full-time FE courses was not working effectively. Changes were made for 2017-18 and further development should be undertaken to support an improved approach to this curriculum area in 2018-19.

## **2.3 Learning, Teaching and Assessment**

### **Areas of Positive Practice**

- The College has a wide range of high quality industry standard resources available for students, and the College's estate and ICT infrastructure have been significantly upgraded over the year.
- High quality physical learning environments in the new campus in Kilmarnock, as well as in the significantly refurbished Ayr and Kilwinning campuses, present a positive atmosphere for learning which has led to enhanced student engagement, evidenced by increased usage of LRC resources and social learning spaces.
- Staff expertise in the use of ICT to enhance learning and teaching has increased significantly. For example, construction technology lecturers made extensive use of LinkedIn to build relationships with employers in and outside the region to secure high quality work placements for their HNC students which led directly to improvement in successful outcomes from 53% to 74%.
- Staff effectively use a wide range of assessment methods and assistive technologies to support inclusion and independence in learning, receiving positive feedback from a number of awarding body external verifiers.
- The majority of courses have embedded work experience, community projects or volunteering opportunities which contribute to the development of students' employability skills.
- The College has in place effective arrangements which provide students with feedback to improve course work and aid their learning. For example, students receive extensive feedback from staff in a range of ways, including in class and through Moodle. In the most recent Student Satisfaction and Engagement Survey 97% of students indicated that they were encouraged by staff to take responsibility for their own learning and 89% indicated that they were able to influence learning on their course.
- The Student Association support class representatives through SPARQs training and this has proved highly effective in engaging the student cohort in dialogue to improve the student experience. A bespoke training session was delivered by SPARQs for supported learning students who provided very positive feedback.
- Staff plan sessions well and use a wide range of effective approaches to ensure that students are actively engaged in their learning.
- Staff are highly skilled, with expert subject knowledge and effectively check student understanding to ensure they are progressing well, developing skills and successfully achieving on their course. Staff use a range of experiential, project-led approaches with a strong emphasis on industry-relevant practical activities, taking account of different

learning styles and contextualising delivery.

- Students are highly motivated and very engaged in their learning experience, which was evidenced by feedback from Education Scotland when undertaking the classroom observations. This is also demonstrated by the increasing numbers of students completing courses and achieving a successful outcome.
- Staff use a comprehensive range of assessment methods and assistive digital technologies to support the needs of individual students and negotiate flexible timing of assessments with students.
- Course teams meet regularly to review and plan the assessment arrangements for individual courses and ensure that opportunities for integration of assessments are utilised effectively. Highly effective collaborative working between curriculum, quality enhancement and inclusive learning staff ensure that needs assessments are carried out and individual tailored plans put in place to take account of students who require additional support or special arrangements.
- Staff use a range of formative and summative assessment techniques to gather detailed information of individual student performance which is used to provide extensive feedback and allow students to reflect on, and improve their performance.
- Reports from external verifiers from a range of awarding bodies confirm the appropriateness of the curriculum delivery and comment positively on the support provided to students in preparation for assessment.
- The College has arrangements in place for all curriculum and service teams to gather the views of students, and analyse data to review performance and plan for improvement.
- Curriculum teams hold monthly team and quarterly course meetings with input from class representatives which contribute to ongoing evaluation and improvement. Students are active participants in discussions and student views and performance data are used to implement actions for improvement.
- Course teams have strong industry links and employers influence course design and delivery, ensuring that students are suitably prepared for employment or progression in their chosen sector. For example, the Computing curriculum area has developed productive relationships with local tech companies such as Microtech and Utopia, as well as with large Glasgow-based companies like JP Morgan.
- Curriculum teams gather and use feedback from student performance data to evaluate course performance and plan for enhancement, resulting in effective plans to address areas under target which has contributed to significant improvement in full-time FE and HE student outcomes.

### **Areas for Development**

- The College should continue to invest in the estate in Ayr and Kilwinning to ensure that all curriculum and service areas are fit for purpose.
- Although the use of digital and social media to support learning has significantly increased across the College, there are a few curriculum areas where further development is required.

## 2.4 Services to Support Learning

### Areas of Positive Practice

- The College has well developed and comprehensive arrangements to provide information, advice and guidance to potential and current students as well as employers.
- Service teams and curriculum administrators, demonstrated highly effective partnerships to ensure that prospective students benefit from extensive support and guidance throughout the application process.
- Staff from the School Partnerships, Inclusive Learning and Employability and Engagement teams work effectively with regional partners to plan transitions and ensure appropriate strategies are in place to support students.
- Student funding teams on all campuses work in partnership with staff and students throughout the year to ensure applications are processed timeously, bursaries are in place at the start of session and students in hardship are provided with a clear and fast access route to discretionary funding.
- As a result of feedback from students a wide range of system enhancements were made in the area of student support funds which improved the student experience, for example, the bursary application form can now be completed on a mobile device and documentary evidence uploaded securely with students using an online portal to submit self-certificates when required.
- The Inclusive Learning teams work with a large number of partners across Ayrshire such as West of Scotland Care Leavers' Forum, Population Mental Health Leadership Group, ASN network, SDS and social work teams to plan appropriate support and transitions for students prior to enrolment. This support ensures an increasing number of students remain on course and achieve a positive outcome.
- Targeted support from services across the College has contributed to increased outcomes over three years for care experienced students, students from SIMD10 postcodes and students with a declared disability. For example, the College exceeded SFC's national ambition targets for 2016-17 to improve successful outcomes for care experienced students. The target for FEFT was 57% and the College achieved 63%; for HEFT, the target was 60% and The College achieved 71%.
- The College established a highly successful pre-enrolment programme for students on the autistic spectrum to support accessibility and promote inclusion. The number of students taking part increased from 21 in 2016 to 30 in 2017.
- Our Employability and Engagement team collaborates positively with all curriculum teams and with a range of external partners to support students, particularly those most disengaged from learning and furthest from the labour market. For example, our nationally-recognised innovative Me2You community partnership programme gives unemployed people the opportunity to volunteer in a school two days per week and develop skills at the College two days per week. Over 75% of students move on to a positive destination.
- The College has in place highly effective arrangements for supporting the development of digital skills for students. Collaboration across teams ensures that students are well supported to use new technologies.

### Areas of Development

- The College has a jointly funded post with Ayrshire's Health and Social Care Partnerships to advise on mental health issues, as well as a range of prevention and intervention strategies. An increasing number of students disclosing poor mental health requires ongoing innovative solutions.

## 2.5 Transitions

### Areas of Positive Practice

- The College has excellent partnerships with key stakeholders and staff work positively in collaboration with others to ensure appropriate and effective transitions for students.
- The College has strong partnerships with employers, schools, SDS, universities and local authorities, and involves them in planning and reviewing college provision to ensure that courses meet students' needs, and that clear progression pathways lead to effective transitions into and out of college courses.
- Proactive engagement with schools, participation in external forums and strategic groups such as the Principal Teacher Pupil Support Forum, ASN Forum and Access and Inclusion Forum, and effective liaison with relevant college teams support transitions for all students including school-college students.
- The College makes extensive and effective use of the SDS 16+ Data Hub to achieve the aspirations set out in the government's Opportunities for All policy. Business Intelligence, Student Services and Inclusive Learning teams use this data to plan effective interventions to support our most vulnerable students. Our innovative use of the Data Hub was recognised by SDS and published on their website as a good practice case study.
- The College's award-winning partnership with the Open University gives students who have achieved an HND, but who might otherwise not have been able to go to university, an alternative route to achieving a social sciences degree over two years in familiar surroundings where they receive support from OU lecturers as well as college lecturers they already know. In 2016-17, the first Ayrshire College student from this partnership was awarded a Masters degree from the OU.
- In partnership with local authorities, the College delivered a successful summer programme for 72 young people identified as at risk of a negative destination. All students completed the programme which was held over four weeks in July and all progressed to a positive destination.
- Inclusive Learning staff delivered a bespoke transition programme for students with an Autism Spectrum Disorder, which ensured a smooth transition to college, and supported positive retention and attainment.

### Areas for Development

- Part-time successful completion rates have declined over three years, primarily due to the performance of school-college courses. The College will continue to work with local authorities, schools and the new Regional Improvement Collaborative to develop a coherent focus on raising attainment, closing the attainment gap and improving outcomes for school pupils studying part-time qualifications.

## 2.6 Partnerships

### Areas of Positive Practice

- The College has very successful relationships and highly effectively partnerships with a range of key stakeholders and employers to improve the student experience.
- Partnership working across the College is very strong and highly effective. Students benefit from a wide range of partnerships at local, regional and national level, resulting in opportunities for student placements and jobs. Courses like *Project Search*, delivered in partnership with East Ayrshire Council and NHS Ayrshire at University Hospital Crosshouse, and *WG13*, delivered in partnership with the third sector, improve the employability skills of young people with a learning disability or autism and almost all students who take part move onto a positive destination.
- Sustained efforts with industry partners and organisations such as SmartSTEMs through campaigns like *This Ayrshire Girl Can*, *Man in the Mirror* and *This Man Cares*, are helping to achieve a better gender balance in curriculum areas such as STEM, and health and social care by stimulating interest amongst young people and adult returners who had not previously considered them.
- In partnership with NHS Ayrshire & Arran, Police Scotland, and the three Health and Social Care Partnerships in Ayrshire the College supports three jointly funded roles, with the postholders providing effective support to students by working collaboratively with colleagues across the College, and making full use of resources and expertise from partner agencies.
- Senior managers engage proactively with national organisations critical to achieving strategic goals important for Ayrshire. For example, recognising the critical role of digital skills in the Ayrshire Growth Deal and for student success, the College developed a strategic partnership with The Data Lab and was the only college in Scotland to play a strategic role in the innovation centre's data festival in 2017 which, along with our application of data analytics, was recognised by winning the Public Sector Award at the Scottish Digital Business Awards.
- Throughout the year, the College worked effectively with partners to increase the focus on STEM education across Ayrshire. For example, to stimulate interest in digital technologies we continued to run coding clubs for 7-17 year olds across the region and over 1,000 young people have now participated in these. In partnership with SmartSTEMs, we held a Technology Workout for 250 S1 and S2 female school pupils as part of our ongoing This Ayrshire Girl Can campaign. In June 2017, we delivered our second Mission Discovery Ayrshire with the International Space School Education Trust, the main component of which was an intensive programme over four days for 150 fifth and sixth year pupils.
- Well-established partnerships with East, North and South Ayrshire local authorities enable the College to deliver courses in communities across the region to individuals furthest from the labour market as well as to employees made redundant, lone parents and ex-offenders.
- Effective working relationships with third sector partners such as the Alcohol and Drug Partnership and East Ayrshire Council of Voluntary Organisations led to positive outcomes for vulnerable young people.
- The College's role as a lead partner in economic development with all local authorities has provided support for inward investors and companies developing further in Ayrshire. The College also plays a key role in pioneering partnerships such as Team North Ayrshire.
- The College is playing a key strategic role in workforce planning and development of early years education regionally and is represented on the Early Years Expansion Board of North Ayrshire Council. The College leads a pan-Ayrshire workforce development forum including the three local authorities, secondary schools and UWS to ensure we are meeting Scottish Government early years targets for 2020.

- The College has particular strength in engineering apprenticeships with achievement rates above the national average, and was recognised by the industry for the high quality of our training provision, our activity to achieve a better gender balance in engineering apprenticeships and our partnership approach to meeting the sector's skills needs.
- Partnership work with the Prestwick Aerospace group ensured that business growth was reflected in growth in apprenticeship demand and excellent engagement with employers delivered training solutions to meet business needs, for example gas installation training for local employers and national blue-chip companies like Scottish Southern Energy and Scottish Gas Network.

### 3.1 Wellbeing, Equality and Inclusion

#### Areas of Positive Practice

- The College has taken account of its responsibilities and statutory duties and as well as meeting our Public Sector Equality Duty requirements the College developed shared regional Equality Outcomes for 2017-21 with community planning partners which include NHS Ayrshire & Arran, the three local authorities and Health and Social Care Partnerships.
- The College positively contributes to achieving the shared priority of tackling inequalities in the local outcome improvement plans of all CPPs in Ayrshire. Our 2017-20 Strategic Plan, Outcome Agreement and Equality Outcomes have been aligned to ensure a consistent strategic approach to equality and inclusion, and the Board scrutinises how we are mainstreaming equality and inclusion.
- The College's comprehensive programme of staff development on equality and inclusion, including legislative requirements, successfully utilised online modules for mandatory training on safeguarding and transgender awareness.
- The College's shared partnership posts - Drug and Alcohol Liaison Officer, Campus Officer, and Mental Health and Wellbeing Officer - play a major role in prevention and intervention strategies, promoting inclusion, equality and diversity in the College. Working closely with the Student Association, college teams and an extensive range of external organisations, the post holders promote respect, good citizenship and challenge inappropriate behaviours.
- Staff and students are highly committed to equality and diversity, and a culture of access and inclusion supports the vision and ethos of the College, for example the extensive work our students do on disability sports. Sustained campaigns to challenge racist and sectarian language and behaviours, for example, our *Mental Health Matters* campaign and LGBT+ activity such as *Let's Talk About Trans*.
- Our three-year *Attracting Diversity* project with the Equality Challenge Unit on gender representation and Foundation Apprenticeships, which is nearing completion, has had a positive impact in relation to the enrolment of females in the Engineering Foundation Apprenticeship and males in the Social Services: Children and Young People Foundation Apprenticeship.
- Values, Inclusion, Equality and Wellbeing (VIEW) steering group, which includes staff and students, positively progresses equality outcomes as part of the continued mainstreaming of equality, inclusion and wellbeing across the College and helps to foster a culture of enablement.
- Assisted by collaborative working with local, regional and national partners, above college average improvement in outcomes for vulnerable student groups contributed to overall improvement. For example, a coordinated approach with partners led to a record number of students self-declaring as care experienced in 2016-17 and their outcomes exceeded SFC targets for success.

- Real-time data on students residing in SIMD10 datazones is analysed very well by managers in all curriculum and service areas to ensure that students from these areas are progressing well. Our enhanced business intelligence system provides sophisticated analysis of protected characteristics and SIMD in relation to enrolment, retention and attainment to improve student outcomes.
- For the second consecutive year, an individual from the College was awarded the Rising Star Diversity award at the Scottish Diversity Awards
- The College is providing leadership across the region in challenging gender stereotypes through publications and nationally recognised campaigns such as *This Ayrshire Girl Can*, *This Man Cares* and *Man in the Mirror*, and through its *Ayrshire Connects* mentoring network for women in STEM.
- The College continues to tackle gender imbalance in course and career choices and make progress towards the targets set out in our Gender Action Plan. Over the year there was an increase in the proportion of female full-time enrolments in courses in areas such as aeronautical, construction and science. Female students were proportionately more successful than their male peers in most male-dominated curriculum areas. Male full-time enrolments increased in health and social care and hairdressing courses. Male students performed better than females in hairdressing but less well in health and social care.

### **Areas for Development**

- Success rates for some of our most vulnerable students have improved considerably over three years although they are below the College average. The College will continue with focused student support interventions and innovative approaches to learning and teaching to ensure equity of outcomes.

## **3.2 Equity, Attainment and Achievement for all Learners**

### **Areas of Positive Practice**

- Over the past three years, the College has made good progress on Scottish Funding Council (SFC) priorities for improving outcomes for full-time students. A strategic, proactive and college-wide focus on reducing withdrawals and increasing success led to significant increases in full-time FE and HE student outcomes in 2016-17.
- The College saw significant improvement in completed success for FE full-time students at 67%, which was an increase of six percentage points over the year and placed the College above the 2015-16 sector average. At 68%, success for HE full-time students increased by more than four percentage points over the year
- The 2015-16 College Leaver Destinations survey showed that, of 26 colleges in Scotland, Ayrshire College was one of only eight to show an increase in positive destination of students, with 94% of students moving onto a positive destination.
- The College has a robust strategy to incorporate the development of essential skills. Vocational areas have successfully embedded the College's contextualised model of essential skills delivery which has contributed to improvement in success in all essential skills, with a six percentage points increase over the year.
- Significant progress has been made in achieving SFC targets for specific groups with over a fifth of credits (21%) in 2016-17 delivered to students residing in SIMD10 datazones (the SFC target for all colleges is 20% by 2020). Outcomes for these students improved at a greater rate than the College average over three years (up ten and nine percentage points for FEFT and HEFT respectively).
- Enhanced and coherent efforts to support care experienced students resulted in 216

young people self-declaring as care experienced, a major contribution to the SFC national ambition for 673 care experienced students for all colleges in 2016-17. Effective and proactive support led to successful outcomes for care experienced students which exceeded SFC's national ambition targets for 2016-17 by over five percentage points to 63% for FEFT, and over eleven percentage points to 71% for HEFT.

- The proportion of credits of students with a declared disability increased to 23% in 2016-17 and effective strategies for support led to successful outcomes for full-time students with a declared disability improving by five percentage points over the year.
- Proactive engagement with local authorities and Skills Development Scotland, and targeted support for 106 full-time exceptional entry students aged under-16 (more of whom lived in SIMD20 datazones than the College average), led to a ten percentage points increase in success over the year (although still 14 percentage points below the College average), for this age group.
- Working with local employability partnerships and employers, the College has built the confidence and skills of people in communities to take advantage of opportunities in sectors like care, hospitality and construction. Courses such as Skills for Life have supported many long-term unemployed back to work. For example, in 2016-17 229 people attended 18 of these employability programmes, with 75% achieving a positive destination.
- The College's project-based approach to learning, coupled with experiences of volunteering or work placement has developed the confidence and independence of full-time supported learning students with successful outcomes increasing from 58% to 87% over three years.

<b>FEFT</b>	<b>Completed successful</b>	<b>Partial success</b>	<b>Early withdrawal</b>	<b>Further withdrawal</b>
<b>2016-17</b>	67%	9%	9%	15%
<b>2015-16</b>	61%	11%	12%	16%
<b>2014-15</b>	59%	12%	9%	20%
<b>HEFT</b>				
<b>HEFT</b>	<b>Completed successful</b>	<b>Partial success</b>	<b>Early withdrawal</b>	<b>Further withdrawal</b>
<b>2016-17</b>	68%	11%	6%	14%
<b>2015-16</b>	64%	14%	8%	14%
<b>2014-15</b>	62%	12%	6%	20%
<b>FEPT</b>				
<b>FEPT</b>	<b>Completed successful</b>	<b>Partial success</b>	<b>Early withdrawal</b>	<b>Further withdrawal</b>
<b>2016-17</b>	74%	13%	5%	7%
<b>2015-16</b>	76%	15%	4%	5%
<b>2014-15</b>	83%	8%	4%	5%
<b>HEPT</b>				
<b>HEPT</b>	<b>Completed successful</b>	<b>Partial success</b>	<b>Early withdrawal</b>	<b>Further withdrawal</b>
<b>2016-17</b>	80%	11%	4%	6%
<b>2015-16</b>	81%	10%	3%	10%
<b>2014-15</b>	74%	12%	3%	10%

## Areas for Development

- Although there has been good improvement in retention and attainment in 2016-17, the College needs to continue to prioritise improvement in outcomes for full-time FE students.
- While there was a 4.8% increase in successful completion by students on HE full-time courses in 2016-17, the College is below the most recent sector average of 72%.
- The contextualised model of delivery of core skills has resulted in good improvement in student outcomes, however further development is required in a small number of curriculum areas.

*See also the following area for development for quality indicator 2.5 Transitions*

- Part-time successful completion rates have declined over three years, primarily due to the performance of school-college courses. The College will continue to work with local authorities, schools and the new Regional Improvement Collaborative to develop a coherent focus on raising attainment, closing the attainment gap and improving outcomes for school pupils studying part-time qualifications.

QI	Area for Development	Planned Actions	Lead Person
1.1	The Regional Board should build on its strong foundations by continuing to engage in Board development.	<p>The Board should further develop their approach to succession planning to ensure they continue to provide strong leadership and effective governance.</p> <p>Implement the decision that all Board members will have the opportunity to serve on the Learning and Teaching Committee during their term of office.</p> <p>Provide opportunities for Board members to shadow the Chair at external meetings with SFC and/or Scottish Government</p>	Board Secretary
1.2	Although classroom observations in 2016-17 were undertaken on behalf of the College by Education Scotland, a formal peer review process should be established to support continuous improvement of the student experience and student outcomes	<p>Introduce a peer review process</p> <p>Encourage lecturers to engage in opportunities to share teaching and assessment practices with each other</p> <p>Review the outcome of the IRIS Connect pilot with a view to rolling out across all curriculum areas</p>	<p>Director of Quality Enhancement &amp; Business Improvement Director of HR &amp; Organisational Development</p> <p>Staff Learning and Development Manager</p> <p>Staff Learning and Development Manager</p>
1.4	Participation in the 2016-17 Student Satisfaction and Engagement Survey declined and was below the national participation rate	<p>Reduce the number of questions in the survey and focus on the ten mandatory questions set by SFC</p> <p>Work with the Student Association to consider how to encourage greater numbers of students to engage in the survey</p> <p>Improve the promotion of the survey in partnership with the Student Association using a wide range of relevant media</p>	<p>Head of Quality Enhancement</p> <p>Head of Quality Enhancement</p> <p>Head of Quality Enhancement Marketing and PR Manager Student Association</p>

1.4	Although the College has very successful employer forums in a range of industry sectors, all curriculum areas should establish employer forums to support evaluation and improvement	Establish a Digital Skills employer forum	Director of Learning and Skills for Business, Computing, Sport and Social Science / Director of Industry Programmes
		Establish an employer forum for the Hospitality sector	Director of Learning and Skills for Creative / Director of Industry Programmes
2.1	Collaboration and partnership working has been very successful in addressing safeguarding issues, however challenging budgetary decisions are putting some of this work at risk	Lobby and influence partners to continue with their assistance with strategies to support students and staff.	Director of Student Services
		Provide Griffin training for estates and front of house staff to build an understanding of the practical measures that can be taken to counteract terrorism and extremism in our communities.	Director of Student Services
2.2	As part of our ongoing curriculum review and planning process, a consultation with staff and students identified that the model of delivery of Skills for Learning, Life and Work on full-time FE courses was not working effectively. Changes were made for 2017-18 and further development should be undertaken to support an improved approach to this curriculum area in 2018-19	Introduce a Personal Development component to all FE full time courses to provide pastoral support and academic guidance for students	Director of Quality Enhancement and Business Improvement Director of Student Services
		Deliver development sessions to support guidance tutors	Director of Quality Enhancement and Business Improvement Director of Student Services
		Monitor the effectiveness of the new model	Director of Quality Enhancement and Business Improvement Director of Student Services
2.3	The College should continue to invest in the estate in Ayr and Kilwinning to ensure that all curriculum and service areas are fit for purpose	Work with partners to identify options for improving facilities to deliver STEM courses in North Ayrshire	Director of Learning and Skills for Aerospace, Construction, Engineering and Science
		Continue to review and enhance quality of estates provision for all curriculum areas in all campuses	Capital Projects Manager
2.3	Although the use of digital and social media to support learning has significantly increased across the College, there are a few curriculum areas where further development is required	Continue to provide training opportunities on the effective use Moodle and build on the staff sharing sessions and TeachMeets introduced in 2016-17 to share good practice	Director of Student Services Staff Learning and Development Manager

2.4	<p>The College has a jointly funded post with Ayrshire's Health and Social Care Partnerships to advise on mental health issues, as well as a range of prevention and intervention strategies. An increasing number of students disclosing poor mental health requires ongoing innovative solutions.</p>	<p>College's new Mental Health and Wellbeing Officer to deliver mandatory mental health workshops to all FE students</p> <p>Workshops provided to staff to raise awareness of how to support students within class and signpost them to relevant agencies</p> <p>Continue to challenge the stigma surrounding mental health through campaigns such as My Mental Health Matters</p> <p>Introduce a Wellbeing Hub in Moodle for students</p>	<p>Director of Student Services</p> <p>Head of Inclusive Learning</p> <p>Marketing and PR Manager Head of Inclusive Learning Student Association</p> <p>Head of Inclusive Learning</p>
2.5	<p>Part-time successful completion rates have declined over three years, primarily due to the performance of school-college courses. The College will continue to work with local authorities, schools and the new Regional Improvement Collaborative to develop a coherent focus on raising attainment, closing the attainment gap and improving outcomes for school pupils studying part-time qualifications.</p>	<p>Evaluate our school-college programme in line with A Self-Evaluation Guide for School/College Partnerships to deliver appropriate courses at SCQF levels 4-7</p> <p>Develop joint CPD opportunities for senior phase teaching staff in schools and the College</p> <p>Use our course improvement process to focus on specific school-college courses where outcomes are low</p>	<p>Director of Schools, Essential Skills and Widening Access</p> <p>Director of Schools, Essential Skills and Widening Access</p> <p>Director of Schools, Essential Skills and Widening Access</p>
3.1	<p>Success rates for some of our most vulnerable students have improved considerably over three years although they are below the College average. The College will continue with focused student support interventions and innovative approaches to learning and teaching to ensure equity of outcomes</p>	<p>Develop the College 'at risk' approach to target support throughout the year on vulnerable students</p> <p>Implement cross-college actions, involving curriculum and support staff, to improve outcomes for vulnerable groups</p> <p>Student Funding will prioritise student support fund applications for care experienced students, provide additional contact support and liaise with partner agencies to assist with completion of the application form.</p>	<p>Head of Business Intelligence and Information Systems</p> <p>Director of Quality Enhancement and Business Improvement</p> <p>Student Funding Manager</p>

3.2	Although there has been good improvement in retention and attainment in 2016-17, the College needs to continue to prioritise improvement in outcomes for full-time FE students	<p>Continue to implement cross-college strategies on improving student retention and reducing partial success.</p> <p>Implement a new delivery model for full-time FE courses</p>	<p>Learning and Skills Directors Director of Quality Enhancement and Business Improvement Director of Student Services</p> <p>Learning and Skills Directors Director of Quality Enhancement and Business Improvement Director of Student Services</p>
3.2	While there was a 4.8% increase in successful completion by students on HE full-time courses in 2016-17, the College is below the most recent sector average of 72%	<p>Through our course improvement process, focus on HE courses where performance has been consistently low and support teaching staff with strategies for improvement.</p> <p>Continue to implement cross-college strategies on improving student retention and reducing partial success.</p>	<p>Director of Quality Enhancement and Business Improvement</p> <p>Learning and Skills Directors Director of Quality Enhancement and Business Improvement Director of Student Services</p>
3.2	The contextualised model of delivery of core skills has resulted in good improvement in student outcomes, however further development is required in a small number of curriculum areas	Course teams to continue to work with essential skills staff to integrate, embed and contextualise core skills delivery in vocational areas where performance is below sector average	<p>Head of Essential Skills Heads of Learning and Skills</p>



**AYR CAMPUS**

DAM PARK  
AYR  
KA8 0EU

TEL: 0300 303 0303

**KILMARNOCK CAMPUS**

HILL STREET  
KILMARNOCK  
KA1 3HY

TEL: 0300 303 0303

**KILWINNING CAMPUS**

LAUCLAN WAY  
KILWINNING  
KA13 6DE

TEL: 0300 303 0303



[www.ayrshire.ac.uk](http://www.ayrshire.ac.uk)