Ayrshire College
Refresh & Renew Plan 2021–24

Statement of Ambition

Ayrshire College will be an inspirational place of learning where individuals can excel and realise their full potential. A place where businesses and communities can access skills, expertise and innovation that supports local and national economic development and inclusive growth.

We will achieve this through strong collaboration and partnership working and by investing in and valuing our staff and students.

Strategic Context

The global Covid-19 pandemic has caused severe disruption to society and economies across the world. Ayrshire College, along with colleges across Scotland, moved its learning and teaching and business operations to online and remote working in March 2020, as campus buildings were closed as part of the first lockdown. Since that time, there has been limited access to campus buildings and facilities for both staff and students, depending on Public Health and Scottish Government guidelines at any particular time.

College staff responded magnificently to the crisis and teams across the College adapted to working remotely, always keeping students at the heart of operations. Staff worked collaboratively to ensure students continued to receive the best experience possible but

also adopted innovative ways of working as well as keeping in touch with, and looking out for, each other. Communication, flexibility, understanding, and support were the key themes that emerged throughout the extremely challenging period as well as a strong sense of community.

The impact of the pandemic is not yet fully known but it is significant. Economic analysts predict that it may be 2024 before the UK economy recovers to anything like pre-Covid times, and the mental health and wellbeing of people will need to be supported for many years to come. College students and young people transitioning to college from school have had their learning and personal development disrupted over a two-year period and we will focus our efforts on closing the attainment gap.

As we begin to emerge from the pandemic, now is the time to reflect on the period since March 2020 and think about what we have learned during this time and consider what we need to do to support our regional businesses and communities to recover, as well as re-balance and re-position the College.

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Learners will be different in the future – all will have had their learning disrupted, and they will also expect increased use of technology and flexibility in their student experience, and we need to respond. Demand for upskilling, reskilling, and retraining will be significant, and the College will need to ensure our curriculum, including our short course provision, aligns to regional skills demands and employment opportunities. Ongoing support for staff and students will be crucial.

An Organisation Effectiveness Review provided the opportunity for teams across the College to reflect on how they operated during the pandemic, what were the positive things that we want to keep as we move forward, and what did not work so well and what needs to change. The outcomes from this review will determine our business delivery model going forward. The College also needs to ensure its own ongoing sustainability over the period covered by this statement of ambition document. The pandemic has caused significant macro-economic issues and public finances are expected to be challenged over the medium term. The College will require to review its business model and, in particular, maximise other sources of funding. In addition, as a public sector body, we need to refocus efforts on further activities and initiatives to address our responsibilities to the climate emergency.

The Skills and Enterprise Board was established by Scottish Government to ensure greater alignment between skills and the economy and this, along with other key national developments, will impact on the college sector, including Ayrshire College, as we move forward and emerge from the pandemic. In addition, the Scottish Funding Council (SFC) Review of Coherent Provision and Sustainability in the tertiary sector will have significant implications for the sector in terms of how colleges operate and how they are funded. We believe our Refresh and Renew Plan 2021-24 will accommodate potential changes but will review and amend our strategic objectives if required.

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Ayrshire College Statement of Ambition 2030 sets out our medium-term ambitions.

This Refresh and Renew Plan 2021-2024 identifies our key strategic objectives for the next three years that will support economic and social recovery and contribute to achieving our Ambitions. A College Operating Plan will be developed to identify the actions required to achieve these strategic objectives and College Teams will also develop their own operating plans.

Over the next three years we will:

• Embed a culture of open leadership and empowerment where staff and students feel valued, their voices are heard, and they are involved in decisions that affect them

• Provide an inspirational college experience which supports and enables students to overcome the disruption to learning caused by the pandemic and to successfully progress on their learning journey.

• Embed diversity and inclusion in all decisions, and support staff and students by providing accessible opportunities to learn, work and develop.

• Focus on being a high-performing College underpinned by excellence in stewardship, effective risk management and the highest standards of corporate governance.

• Respond to the climate change emergency by being environmentally responsible, embedding sustainability in our learning and teaching and business operations

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• Work with partners, including businesses, to co-create and deliver a portfolio of learning and skills that is relevant, dynamic, flexible, and responsive to employer and industry needs, to current and future skills requirements and contributes to social and economic recovery.

• Develop and support staff and students to work and learn in new and innovative ways to enable excellence in all aspects of learning and teaching and service delivery.

Measures of Success

By 2024 we will have:

• Increased the numbers of students, including those from disadvantaged backgrounds, who have accessed and successfully completed programmes of study

• Increased staff and students' digital skills and confidence

• Established enhanced, flexible learning and teaching and service delivery models incorporating the use of digital technologies, where appropriate

• Increased the diversity of our staff and students

• Increased the number of businesses we engage with and support through upskilling, reskilling, and improving productivity
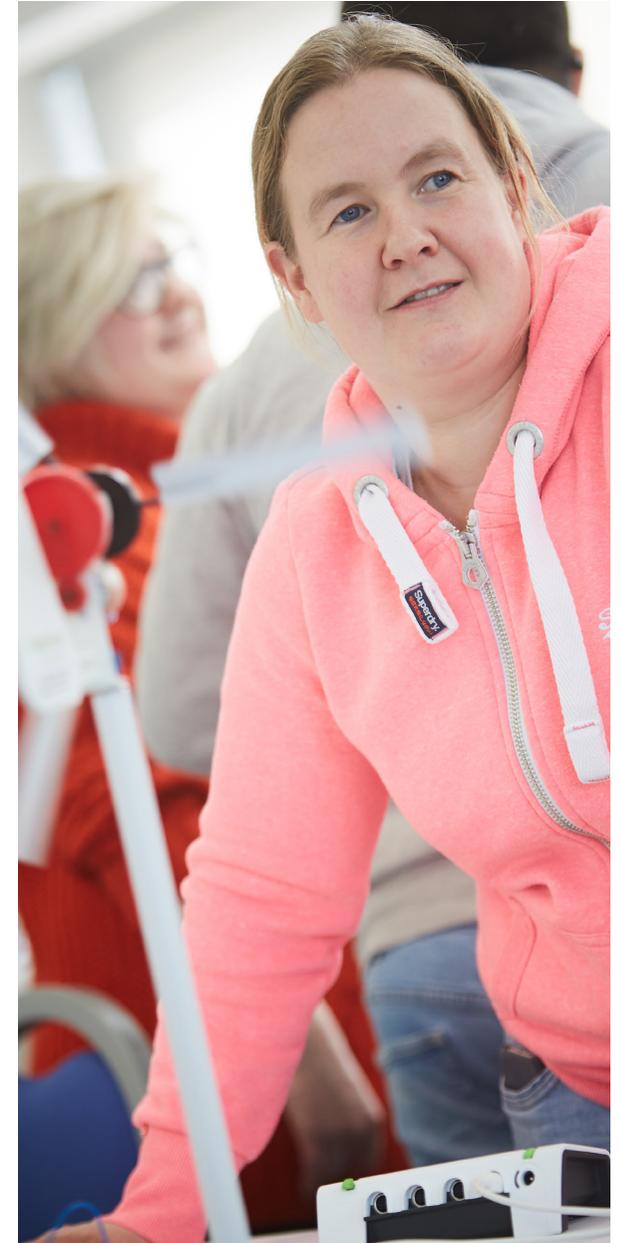
• Achieved/exceeded SFC and other contract targets and increased our commercial/other income to ensure continued financial sustainability

• Embedded sustainability within learning and teaching practices and business operations and reduced our carbon footprint

• Achieved external recognition of success and excellence

• Increased staff, student and stakeholder satisfaction levels

• Increased support to enable staff and students to improve their own mental health and wellbeing

Ownership and Accountability

The Senior Leadership Team will have strategic responsibility for the delivery and monitoring of the Refresh and Renew Plan and will provide regular progress reports to the Board of Management.

The College Leadership Team will have responsibility for the delivery and monitoring of the College Operating Plan that will identify key actions to achieve these strategic objectives and will provide regular progress reports to the Senior Leadership Team.