

STRICTLY IN CONFIDENCE



Developing Destinies

The Strategic Plan for Stratford-upon-Avon College 2007 to 2012



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The Strategic Plan for Stratford upon-Avon College: 2007 to 2012

21st century Stratford-upon-Avon: the time and place

“All our destinies contain the element of chance in the affairs of life; the unforeseen and un-estimated conditions considered as force shaping events” (Alexander Pope).

As Stratford-upon-Avon moves on into the 21st century the College will be central to shaping and developing the destinies of all of its key stakeholders. People and organisations have destinies - and with the development of education and skills we can help our stakeholders shape their own futures by making the most of those unforeseen chances that will be force-shaping events in their lives.

This document describes our strategy - reflecting the continuing conversations we have with students, staff, communities, businesses, universities and schools.

No one who lives or works in the West Midlands can have failed to see the changes in our regional landscape over the past decade. The changes in our major regional cities, including Birmingham and Coventry, mirror the changing face of the United Kingdom and Europe. The creation of the ‘West Midlands in Europe’ office in Brussels is further evidence of the expanding influence that the West Midlands has on the economy of 21st century Europe. In fact the impact of the global economy can be seen in the diverse communities that now live and work throughout the West Midlands, and in the numerous countries around the world where West Midlands organisations carry out their operations.

Changes can also be seen in the sub-regional economic & social agenda, placing Stratford-upon-Avon firmly at the heart of UK tourism, competing with other tourist cities around the world. With 2012 on the horizon the College will play a major role in showing Stratford’s sites to advantage and championing the care of all our visitors.

The growth of Stratford-upon-Avon College over the last five years reflects that very real change in the global economy and the impact that this has had on the demand for learning and skills within our local communities as well as in the region and beyond.

“Developing Destinies” is about the real extension and enhancement of what the College has to offer by embodying an approach to education and skills’ training that delivers more than simply a qualification. The College is ideally placed to develop its own destiny as an organisation, delivering education and training of the highest quality, building and broadcasting its own reputation and capitalising on its superb location at the heart of Shakespeare's country.

Above all “Developing Destinies” is not simply a plan for the College - it is designed to be a dynamic tool for the future; reflecting the views not only of the College but also of all the communities that we serve and the UK education sector in the broadest sense. The agenda laid out in this strategic plan is the development of the destinies of us all.

National policy agenda



The National Policy agenda for these new times is very clear. The series of White Papers produced in the middle of the first decade of the 21st century clearly show the central planks of the Government's new educational agenda.

The Department for Education Skills Strategy paper “Further Education: Raising Skills, Improving Life Chances” has a number of central themes which the College will address. Embodied in these is a requirement for us to work in close

collaboration with a number of agencies to improve the quality and breadth of provision for all of our learners.

The College is well positioned to address the Government's Skills agenda at local, regional, national and international levels through both new and established collaborative partnerships, building on our Centres of Vocational Excellence and our quality academic provision.

14-25 Agenda

The Government's FE White Paper carries a clear message for the involvement of colleges in the education & training of 14-25 year-olds in the United Kingdom. In addition it establishes a number of “entitlements” to free education for those up to the age of 19, those without a first Level 2 qualification, and those under the age of 25 without a first Level 3 qualification and thus reflects the Government's priorities in these areas.

The Government has also produced a White Paper “14-19 Education & Skills” that calls for the introduction of 14 new diplomas to be delivered to our young people. These diplomas confirm the Government's commitment to the recognition of vocational training and at the heart of that vocational excellence is the contribution of the College.

The College will need to work closely with local schools and other training providers to build on the current 'matrix curriculum' arrangements in order to produce a coherent and quality delivery of the new diplomas in the South Warwickshire Area. This also links with a central theme of the FE White Paper that requires colleges to build on their vocational strengths and have at least two areas of vocational excellence.

The Skills Agenda



The Foster review of further education "Realising the Potential" and the Leitch "Review of Skills" analysis have resulted in a commitment from the Government to close the skills gap that exists between the United Kingdom and that of other world economies. The Learning and Skills Council has proposed funding to address perceived gaps in both Level 2 and Level 3 qualified people in the work force.

During the period of this strategic plan the College must grow its work with businesses in the South Warwickshire area and become a provider of choice for their needs. As well as being able to deliver the government-funded Level 2 and Level 3 qualifications in the workplace, the College must establish itself as a provider of choice for all business needs.

The strategic approach will be for the College to develop a separate delivery organisation that will provide for all business training requirements from an initial training needs analysis through to the successful delivery of training to the company. As well as drawing on the College's own experienced trainers we will also become part of collaborative federations and trusts that seek to maximise the delivery of training to businesses by colleges in the Coventry and Warwickshire area.

Given the demographics and make-up of businesses in the South Warwickshire area the College will also look to provide a service for businesses in terms of back room support. This would be achieved through the establishment of a separate company that would offer expertise in such areas as finance, human resources and administration to micro and small businesses in South Warwickshire. The College will also establish a pre- incubation unit in Stratford to assist small businesses in the very early stages of development.

The International Agenda

Stratford-upon-Avon College is uniquely positioned to attract international students into the West Midlands region. Previous strategic plans have placed insufficient emphasis on the location of Stratford-upon-Avon at the heart of Shakespeare's country.



The new premises build that has taken place during 2006 gives the College an exciting 21st century appearance. It is that enhanced learning environment, centred at the heart of the historic birthplace of William Shakespeare, which will be the biggest attraction to international students, along with links to the Royal Shakespeare Company and the University of Warwick.

International education is a success story for the UK. We receive the second largest number of international students, after the USA, and the UK benefits from international students in many ways: directly - culturally, academically, economically, and financially and indirectly and of no lesser significance - through trade and international relationships.

The UK Government has previously recognised the importance of international students. In 1999 the prime minister launched an initiative to support a national promotional strategy for all types of UK education internationally - this was known as the Prime Minister's Initiative (PMI). The PMI set targets for increasing the number of international students in Higher and Further education.

The chancellor, Gordon Brown, also endorsed international activities during his visit to China in February 2005 saying - "We want to promote further expansion in the number of international students at UK further and higher education institutions."

It is this National Agenda that the College will seek to address through the International Academy. With significant student numbers already at the College from China and the UAE we will aim to grow and diversify that student body further, in geographic, age-range and delivery level terms. We will build on an established international reputation for quality and student support and look to exploit our location and new student residence facilities.

Shaping the Future

Developing Destinies through Collaboration, Innovation and Imagination

This plan sets out the next phase of the College's development by identifying the key goals to be achieved and outlining our contribution to the learning and skills agenda in the West Midlands.

We are building on firm foundations:

- Continuing demand for our services
- Improving student achievement
- Continuous curriculum innovation
- Expanding range of academic and vocational programmes
- Excellent Learner Support Services
- Increasing investment in facilities and other resources

Our Vision is that Stratford-upon-Avon College will be:

a dynamic 24/7 institution, embracing new learning pathways & technologies becoming the provider of choice for the educational and learning needs of all our communities.

Our Mission will be:

to develop the destinies of all our stakeholders by providing high quality learning opportunities that enable a full participation in active economic, social or community life.

Our core Strategic Goals will be:

- Collaboration** to deliver learning
- Innovation** to develop learning
- Imagination** to foster learning

Voices Heard

Throughout the period that we have consulted on this strategic plan we have listened to the voices of all our stakeholders both internal and external. Those consultations reflect the continuing conversations we have with students and their families, with local people, local authorities, community organisations and with businesses, schools, universities, education organisations and many forms of local, regional and national government.

An important part of this process was a consultation that we had with the governing body and our own staff in early 2006. We received a constructive and positive response and witnessed an appetite to be involved in the strategic direction of the College during its next phase of development.

We also listened to the voices coming from the national government offices shaping the agenda for the future of further education in the country. Also from the regional government office with a regionalisation agenda that will affect both funding provision and the structure of education during the life of this strategic plan.

Government White Papers, national, regional *and sub-regional* agendas give the College a focus for educational and organisational development. Coupled with a constantly changing landscape in which to work, many voices demanded that the College become flexible and proactive in the way that it works with all its communities and stakeholders.

“The future is a place we are making”

Given the National Policy agenda our strategic plan focus for the next five years is on the capability to address the three main strands that have been identified in the educational landscape.

Our aim is to create three distinct education/training delivery Organisations within the College supported by a single cross College corporate function. These areas are as follows:

Stratford-upon-Avon College

During the period of the strategic plan this part of the Organisation will establish and grow provision that is dedicated to delivering that 14-25 Government agenda - largely funded by the LSC and HEFCE. It will deliver courses for pre-entry to level 4, including basic skills, covering academic and vocational areas, apprenticeships and Access to Higher Education. On high-level programmes it will develop



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foundation degrees, top-up years and full honour degree programmes, collaborating with partner Higher Education Institutions and focussed on the College's specialist curriculum areas, to deliver top quality academic and vocational provision.

There will be a commitment to continue top-quality A-level provision alongside excellent vocational training to local, regional and international students. Stratford-upon-Avon College will be a provider of choice for 14 to 25 year-olds - extending quality to become part of an unrivalled collaborative provision for the local area.

This part of the Organisation will pay particular attention to issues raised in both the 14-19 White Paper as well as the FE White Paper. We will seek to work in close federation with local schools in the South Warwickshire area, working in partnership on the development of the new diplomas system and leading the Warwickshire 14-19 steering group for the Southern Area.

The creation of the Stratford Education and Learning Federation (SELF) will extend across the wider Stratford area and we will engage other providers in addressing issues arising from "Every Child Matters" and the requirement for extended schools provision. We will also continue our commitment to support those students with special educational needs.



Central to the purpose of this Organisation will be the equipping of our young people for the future. We will build on our areas of strength, enhancing the CoVE status for hospitality and catering as well as proposing our performing arts and media as a secondary CoVE specialism.

We will take a major role, where appropriate, in the collaborative partnership to deliver the new diplomas in the South Warwickshire area, and become a fully active member of such other federations and collaborations as are required to deliver projects that support the equipping of young people particularly in the delivery of apprenticeships.

There will be a family of underpinning strategies that include risk assessments to deliver these aims. For this part of the Organisation these will include:

- A 14-25 strategy – linked to the delivery of pre-entry to level 4 provision
- Schools strategy – linked to the delivery of the 14 new diplomas
- Apprenticeships strategy - linked to Work Based Learning for young people
- HE strategy - linking foundation, top-up and honours degrees

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Currently this area of the Organisation generates around £9 million of income for the College. Over the life of this strategic plan the aim would be to increase income in this area to around £13.25 million, an inflation increase of approximately £2million and a growth target of a further £2.25 million.

Stratford-upon-Avon International Academy

This part of the Organisation will be designed to meet the needs of international students, with the aim to become the premier choice institution for overseas students who seek further or higher education experiences and continued learning pathways within the UK. The Academy will work with UK Higher Education Partners and other academic institutions on a global basis, as well as individuals and students based in countries other than the UK. The strategic aim of the Academy is to substantially grow its secondary provision and professional consultancy services thereby creating extensive opportunities for income generation. It will specialise in level 3 to level 5 delivery as well as basic skills, particularly providing specialist A-level subjects as well as pre-HE programmes.



During the period of this strategic plan the Academy will offer level 3 to level 5 education and training to international students. It will also offer basic skills training, particularly in English, as well as developing products for the United States, European and Far Eastern markets to satisfy a demand for short periods of study in Stratford itself. It will also aim to maximise income for the new 256 student accommodation bedrooms located on the main College site.

Key to the Organisation's success in the international market is its ability to work closely in collaborative partnerships with other education and training providers both in the UK and overseas. There are distinct market opportunities in the provision of education to 16-18 year-old students from overseas, as well as the market for preparation of overseas students to take part in the full UK HE experience. Additionally there are key market opportunities in the USA to develop short programmes to be delivered in the Stratford upon-Avon area outside of our normal term-time activities. These new products will be the basis for expanding the College from its current traditional academic year provision, centred on a 9am -4pm; 5 day week, towards a 24/7 provision both on and off site, through traditional delivery methods as well as new and exciting E Learning pathways.

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There will also be a family of underpinning strategies, including risk assessments, to deliver these aims. For this part of the Organisation these will include:

- International strategy - including target markets and segmentation
- Pre-HE strategy - including HEFP, pre-MBA and foundation programmes
- EFL strategy - addressing capacity, delivery and quality

Currently this area of the Organisation generates about £1 million of income for the College. Over the life of this strategic plan the aim is to raise that income to £2.75 million, maximising the use of our on-site student accommodation and the ability to deliver outside of normal term-time on the College's premises.

This is a challenging target but the College has consistently failed to trade on its location and reputation in a proactive way in the overseas market. With a new lead being given from the College's executive team and the introduction of a comprehensive and costed international strategy, these targets may be challenging but not unrealistic.

Stratford Academy for Enterprise (SAfE)

This part of the Organisation will deliver training for employers and employees, offer services and solutions for businesses, and learning opportunities for our local communities. For employers the main aim is to engage with commercial enterprises locally, nationally and globally and to assist those organisations in identifying and delivering the training solutions that will enhance their viability and profitability.

We will aim to achieve this through the provision of innovative business solutions services, building on a combination of delivery from current College resources as well as entering into collaborative partnerships to deliver profitable solutions. Delivery will be for level 1 to level 5 and basic skills, working with employers and employees as well as in the adult leisure learning market.

This part of the Organisation plays a key role in generating the 'Engine Room' for a successful local regional and national economy. It will look to work closely with employers and devise the right tailor-made solution for their needs rather than a pack of predetermined products. We will utilise the College specialisms to deliver the highest quality where we are the best provider, and will encourage a diverse set of providers to work together when that will best meet the businesses' needs.

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We will work closely with new national sector based networks and become involved in federations and collaborations that will allow us to access diverse funding streams in the delivery of the new employer led qualifications. We will adopt a coherent approach to the delivery of 'Train to Gain' programmes alongside full-cost recovery work that will provide flexible business solutions to employers through a mixture of free and chargeable training for their employees.

A consequence of the Government's Skills Agenda is the 'slimming down' of funding for adult leisure courses and activities. We have long been a provider of these courses in rural areas of South Warwickshire and during the period of this strategic plan we will continue to build this provision wherever economically viable. During the life of this strategic plan this part of the Organisation will work in conjunction with Warwickshire County Council and other adult training providers, including voluntary organisations, to attempt to bring as much adult learning activity as possible to the hardest to reach communities in our region.



A fundamental part of the Colleges work is with and for our local communities. To support the provision of high quality learning opportunities that enable a full participation in social and community life, we will take an active part in networks and partnerships that are working in the South Warwickshire area - taking the lead where appropriate. We will also look to generate funding from various sources to support this work and, where it is appropriate, we will support delivery and encourage progression routes through into economically focused training in the future.

There are also a family of strategies, including risk assessments, underpinning these aims:

- Business development / employer engagement strategy - including full cost recovery work and business support services
- Train to Gain strategy - linked to the LSC's agenda
- ESF strategy - designed to maximise income from ESF sources
- Adult & Community learning strategy - linked to the life long learning agenda

Currently this area of the Organisation generates approximately £1 million of income. In this strategic plan the aim is to increase this to £4 million through a mix of business development and business solution work and flexible packages for employers.

Directorate of Corporate Services

The new Directorate of Corporate Services will encompass the professional and functional areas of the College that together provide the base services supporting all three Organisations. These are listed below and each area would have an underpinning strategy to show how it will support all three Organisations.

Estates & Facilities Management
Finance and Knowledge Management Information Systems
Health and Safety
Human Resources
Information Technology
Learner Support
Marketing

Quality provision

To succeed in our mission and deliver our strategic goals of collaboration, innovation and imagination, the College must maintain at all times the highest level of quality in provision.

The College will set up a dedicated quality unit that will operate across all three Organisations within the College. There will be a consistent high level of quality maintained throughout all our programmes from pre-entry to the highest level, regardless of whether they are delivered on the College premises, on businesses' premises, in the local community or in an international location.

This quality unit will report directly to the Deputy Principal producing a single Self Assessment Report that incorporates all action plans from inspectors, audits, awarding bodies, internal inspections etc. resulting in a focal document with actions required to drive forward our high quality agenda right across the College and supported by 'Quality Champions'.

In addition the quality unit will have the responsibility for the continual professional development of all teaching staff no matter where in the world they operate. There will be minimum levels of acceptable performance and poor performance will be challenged and eradicated from the Organisations. The highest quality teaching will be praised and used for other areas of the College as a benchmark against which to rate themselves. The unit will also provide support for teaching staff at all times, including assisting managers in the support and development of the teaching staff. That emphasis on quality will extend into our recruitment of new staff to delivery in challenging areas such as Construction.

Conclusion

“Developing Destinies” is a challenging but realistic strategy to take the College into 2012. The three parts of the Organisation will operate a family of strategies that aims to deliver the vision, mission and strategic goals of the College by the end of the first decade of the 21st century.

The College will structure its management resources in such a way as to deliver these challenging agendas in an ever-changing educational landscape. The Executive Team will have key responsibility for driving forward the College, the International Academy and the Enterprise Academy Organisations to deliver to target. Senior managers will also be looking to talent spot and develop junior and middle managers for the future, as well as committing to the continuing development of all staff.

The College will never grow at the expense of quality and must always be aware of its physical capacity as it moves into the future. There is still an opportunity to develop on the main College site and in the fullness of time a new Accommodation Strategy will address future space needs.

The College must aim to generate large financial surpluses in order to reinvest to deliver the vision. The capital programme must be robust and affordable and the human resources strategy must consider opportunities for flexible and non-traditional delivery in a changing environment.

The College must create a number of distinct atmospheres for learning to support our home, international and HE students to high standards, and those standards must be maintained and enforced when working with employers on their premises or with other partner organisations.

The way forward

The 2006/2007 academic year will be a stepping stone year to the new strategic plan. There will be changes to the academic and support structures as well as senior team responsibilities. The College will budget to generate a surplus in the year in order to reinvest in the new strategic plan and the underpinning systems resources required to support it. During that year the College must put in place strong strategies for the Corporate Service areas as well as the Quality and Delivery plans.

Subject to the changing landscape created by National Policy Agendas, by 2012 the College will have doubled in size, with a budget of over £20 million and learner numbers approaching the 10,000 mark. It will have an international as well as local reputation, and will have fulfilled its vision and mission.

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