

Curriculum Strategy

for a modern, tertiary education

2022 - 2025

Curriculum strategy

Lead Officer (Post)	Director Academic Affairs	Review Date	December 2025
Team:	Curriculum	Review Lead Officer	Director Academic Affairs
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Date approved by ELT:	December 2021	Equality Impact Assessment	

Reviewer	Date	Review Action/Impact
VP Academic Affairs	Dec 2015	Refreshed curriculum strategy 2013-16: Changed approach to incorporate more information on how objectives will be achieved and direction of travel of curriculum development.
DP	December 2017	Updated strategy in line with refreshed WHC UHI Strategic Plan and review of related strategies for learning and teaching and student engagement.
DP	April 2019	Refreshed in line with new 3-year college plan
Director Academic Affairs	December 2021	Review brought forward. Refreshed to align with college strategic plan and college Digital Ambition. Reviewed to take account of the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, the lessons learned and the opportunities that have arisen. New context section. Aims have changed and been reordered.

Purpose

The purpose of this strategy is to provide clear direction for the prioritisation, growth, development and delivery of a tertiary curriculum at West Highland College UHI.

This strategy will ensure the college develops and delivers a tertiary curriculum that is accessible, modern and sustainable. Curriculum and learning will be designed to provide progression pathways with entry and exit routes for all. Learners will be able to join their learning journey at the most relevant point, whether it is entry level, further or higher education, work-based learning, training or employment development. Learning will lead to work-ready, digitally competent, environmentally aware learners who are successful, confident individuals.

This strategy aligns with the [college strategic plan] and underpins all five strategic aims¹. It aligns with the UHI [Daring to be Different](#) plan and takes account of key Government strategies, plans and initiatives (see appendix A). This curriculum strategy links closely to the [Learning and Teaching Enhancement Strategy](#), [Student Engagement Strategy](#), [Business Development Strategy](#) and [Access and Inclusion Strategy](#) – all of which underpin the WHC ethos and values of ‘**Excellence for All**’.

Context

The college was created in 2010, and since 2012 has been consistently ranked amongst the top performing colleges within the sector (Appendix B). The college is an innovative leader in developing a curriculum that is geographically accessible and that incorporates student focussed learning and teaching approaches using a range of digital technologies (Appendix C).

This strategy has been refreshed to reflect the revised college strategic plan 2022 – 2025. We reviewed the strategy to reflect our college digital ambition and embrace our findings after evaluating the ongoing impact, challenges and opportunities resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic. One of the fundamental opportunities that was seized, was the acceleration of the course design principles. The design principles have been enhanced and stretched further to be future facing.

Scope

This strategy covers all modes of curriculum delivery, across all subjects and all SCQF² levels, and includes qualifications, industry certification, vocational and non-vocational courses. The term “Curriculum” is used within this strategy in the broadest sense. It covers further and higher education courses, postgraduate study, business training, work-based learning, apprenticeships, professional development, school-based learning (senior phase and broad general education), bespoke learning episodes and learning for interest and leisure. Throughout this strategy, the terms “learner” and “student” are interchangeable and are used to cover the terms candidate, trainee, school pupil, client and customer.

¹ Ensure the right learning in the right place, Deliver excellent learning for all, Enhance the well-being of our communities, Enable and Support digital transformation, Champion action to tackle Climate Change

² Scottish Credit Qualification Framework

Key Aims and Objectives

We have reviewed and refined our aims and objectives to further strengthen this strategy taking account of the foundation of curriculum and experience that was already in place. The development of our digital ambition and evaluation of learning, teaching and support for learning are reflected in these changes.

Key Aim 1: Systematically plan and review curriculum

To do this, we will:

1. Plan for and provide a responsive and modern curriculum based on research and market intelligence, which meets the needs of individuals, schools, employers, and communities at local, regional and national level.
2. Plan for sector relevant curriculum to include a choice of academic, vocational, work-based, training and community courses.
3. Review and plan curriculum by making systematic use of multiple sources of market intelligence including engaging with employers, schools, community groups, UHI partners and stakeholders.
4. Ensure all areas of curriculum provide clear and appropriate progression pathways to meet learner and employer needs.
5. Be agile and responsive to changing market conditions and adapt curriculum accordingly.
6. Ensure curriculum remains relevant to the needs of industry sectors and adapts to changing factors relating to community, economy and national, regional and local priorities.
7. Embed reflective practice to ensure the ongoing review and refresh of a modern curriculum.

Key Aim 2 Design curriculum for a modern workforce and for future learning

Objectives, we will:

1. Ensure courses are designed to be inclusive, responsive to individual needs and to address gender imbalance.
2. Maximise and incorporate work-based learning opportunities within the design of courses.
3. Work with schools, DYW, UHI partners and stakeholders to widen access to learning and to provide a greater subject choice to students.
4. Incorporate evidenced based educational practice and blended learning approaches to enable accessible and individualised learning.
5. Design curriculum to make best use of technologies to enable a choice of learning modes, flexibility and to reduce barriers to learning.
6. Ensure progression pathways and opportunities offer appropriate entry and exit points based on individual need, with transition and articulation links for learners at any stage of their learning and development.
7. Embed skills+ portfolio³ within courses to develop confident individuals and to engage our students as researchers through enquiry based learning

³ See skills+ portfolio

Key Aim 3: Deliver a sustainable curriculum

To do this, we will:

1. Provide a tertiary curriculum across all SCQF levels including ongoing development of postgraduate study.
2. Work with UHI partners and local and regional stakeholders to align curriculum with local and regional needs.
3. Further develop innovative and creative delivery approaches taking full advantage of digital technologies.
4. Develop and design specialist curriculum in line with identified demand and the unique characteristics of the college's area.
5. Work collaboratively in partnership with schools, employers, UHI partners, national and regional stakeholders to develop and deliver integrated and sustainable curriculum.
6. Ensure that the curriculum portfolio remains financially sustainable.

National, Regional and Local Strategic Drivers

This strategy is cognisant of national, regional and local drivers including the Scottish Funding Council's (SFC) review. It is based on educational, economic policies and initiatives, and the Regional Outcome Agreement for the University of the Highlands and Islands. It also reflects feedback from a range of stakeholders and partners, including employers, community partnership groups, SDS, the Highland Council, NHS and the West Highland DYW Group.

Key drivers currently include:

- COVID pandemic and impact of Brexit
- Demographic trends in the area
- Coherence and Sustainability, SFC funding review
- Climate Change and Net Zero
- Local and regional economic development
- Rural health agenda and hospital developments
- Widening access
- Ongoing growth of Apprenticeship programmes
- National agenda for STEM and digital
- Requirement for additional early learning and childcare professionals, and social care professionals

These drivers inform our curriculum development and delivery priorities for the College over the next 3 years on the next page.

Curriculum Development Priorities

1 Continued Development of the STEM curriculum

This will involve:

- Prepare the next steps for an engineering curriculum and continue to review.
- Continue the expansion of the construction and built environment curriculum and apprenticeship programmes.
- Review and consolidate the successful expansion of computing and digital curriculum and progression pathways.
- Develop the health curriculum in line with UHI strategy for health and to support the College's role as a UHI hub for the School of Health.
- Development of science programmes, such as environmental science, renewables
- Pilot and progress the inclusion of iSTEM within primary and secondary education

2 Strengthen Tourism and Hospitality provision

Establish a collaborative industry sector group working with existing connections such as Skye Connect , Lochaber Chamber of Commerce ,FSB, HIE

- re-establish current and future needs
- review and develop hospitality and cookery provision more closely aligned to industry needs and working patterns
- better support the industry in relation to the challenges of BREXIT and COVID-19.

3 Strengthen and diversify the Adventure Curriculum

This will involve

- Build on our 'Inward attractor' status and look to draw more from the UK and international markets
- Continue to build strong progression pathways from school level through to post graduate level
- Offer a diverse adventure tourism programme that is high quality and reactive to current and future market demand
- Continue the development of relevant, accessible and flexible learning for the adventure sector including CPD, short courses and work-based learning.
- Improve the numbers and diversity of student recruitment including articulation arrangements
- Continue to develop the postgraduate provision
- Increase flexibility of provision and UHI networked modules

4 Growth of work-based learning, business training and CPD

Continue the development of CPD and training opportunities which will include

- deliver retraining - a pathway into the workplace
- Provide courses to upskill existing staff for staff development
- increase relevant industry 4.0 training and micro credentials
- expand work-based learning opportunities through Foundation Apprenticeships (FA), Modern Apprenticeships (MA) and SVQs and scope Graduate Apprenticeship (GA) options.

5 School-College Partnerships

Continue the close partnership work and the ongoing development of Highland Senior Phase between the three UHI partners and the Highland Council to:

- sustain and enhance opportunities through senior phase and broad general education
- sustain and increase the provision of Foundation Apprenticeships
- enhance and expand Highland Virtual School and the Virtual School model.

6 Enhancement of curriculum delivery

Taking cognisance of the College's Research and Knowledge Exchange Strategy 2022-2027, the importance of the linkages between curriculum and research are acknowledged, with potential benefits for both staff and students in terms of:

- cutting edge research informing curriculum content
- involvement of lecturers in applied research or knowledge exchange projects that seek to develop training materials to benefit both businesses and students
- opportunities for students to get involved in the delivery of research projects, and
- collaborative possibilities of the publication of academic articles and the presentation of original research at conferences.

Improve the flexibility in how courses are delivered, to take better account of individual student needs and circumstances. Courses will be developed so that more aspects can be accessed by individuals or class groups on an 'anywhere, anytime' basis.

- Increase the provision of courses that can be delivered fully online
- Scope and consider different blends of practical learning workshops and online delivery to take forward.

7 Review of curriculum planning, design and delivery

We will continue to embed our sector-planning approach, which will take account of the needs of employers and inform planning for community engagement, academic, vocational and commercial curriculum development and delivery.

We will review existing curriculum, and develop new curriculum, in line with the regional review of curriculum is taking place across the partnership. The refreshed Course Design and Delivery Principles will initiate our comprehensive and ongoing review, planning, design and delivery of curriculum. These Course Design and Delivery Principles provide the framework for all teams to refer to.

which aims to:

- A. Embed the use of digital technologies in learning which will:
 - widen access to learning
 - promote individualised learning
 - assist in the development of student digital literacy skills and 4.0 skills
 - provide anytime and anywhere access to learning materials
- B. Incorporate learning and teaching approaches to ensure that learners have ample opportunity to develop skills+ portfolio:
 - metaskills, digital skills, work-readiness skills and essential skills
 - problem solving and collaborative working through project-based, inter-disciplinary learning and work-based experiences
 - environmental awareness and personal responsibility to net zero
- C. Establish collaborative approaches to delivery of FE programmes to increase viability and sustainability.
- D. Design curriculum to maximise progression pathways and transition across all SCQF levels.

This strategy is operationalised through the College 3–year curriculum plan, together with all relevant action plans.

The framework for ensuring implementation of the strategy includes the College curriculum planning and approval process, the College annual Quality Enhancement Dialogues, Curriculum Area Improvement Plans and College toolkits for curriculum design and delivery.

Appendix 1:

Key Stakeholders

- Scottish Funding Council
- The Highland Council
- Highlands and Islands Enterprise
- Education Scotland
- UHI
- UHI Regional Strategic Board
- West Highland Developing the Young Workforce Group
- School partners
- SDS
- Highland Science Skills Academy

Related Strategies and Plans

- DYW: Scotland's Youth Employment Strategy
- Skills for Scotland: Accelerating the Recovering and Increasing Sustainable Economic Growth
- Curriculum for Excellence
- 15-24 Learner Journey
- A Blueprint for Fairness: Commission on Widening Access
- The STEM Strategy for Education and Training
- Education Scotland: Career Management Standards and Work Placement Standards
- WHC UHI Strategic Plan 21-24
- WHC UHI College plans and strategies:
 - College 3 year plan
 - STEM Curriculum Plan
 - Estates Strategy
 - Excellence for All
 - Learner Engagement Strategy
 - Access and Inclusion Strategy
 - Gender Action plan
 - Equalities plan
 - Essential skills
- UHI Strategic Plan
- UHI Curriculum Strategies and plans
 - Computing
 - Engineering
 - UHI School of Health strategy and plans
- UHI Regional Outcome Agreement
- Highlands and Islands Regional Skills Investment Plan