

Employability and Careers Strategy

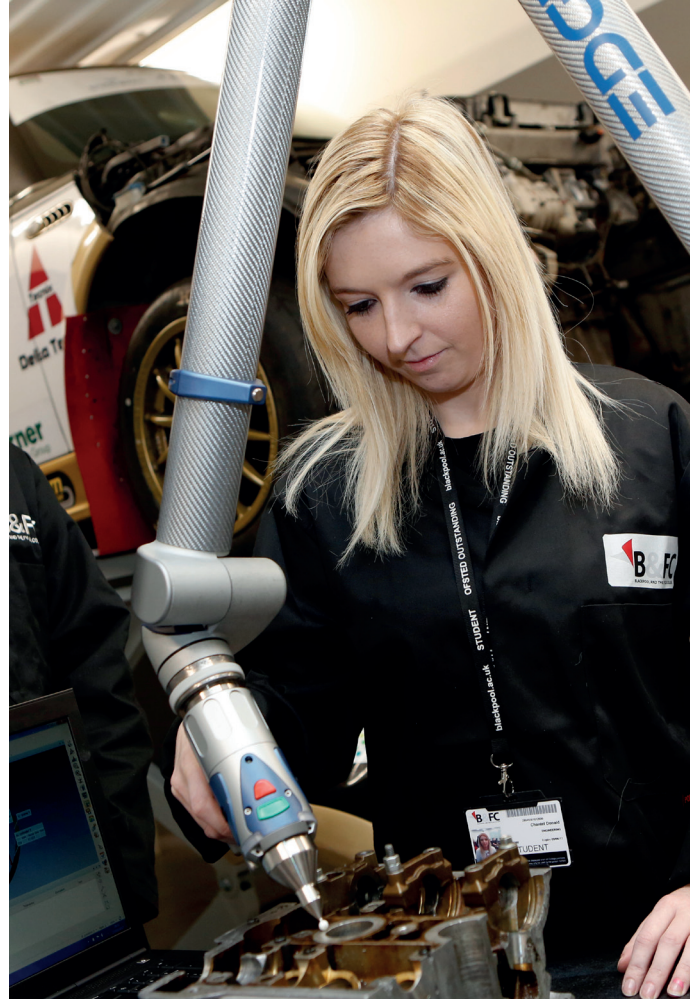
2020-2023



“

We ensure that every student who chooses to study at B&FC, at whatever level, successfully develops the knowledge, skills, behaviours and attitudes which will enable them to secure meaningful, sustainable and highly skilled careers.

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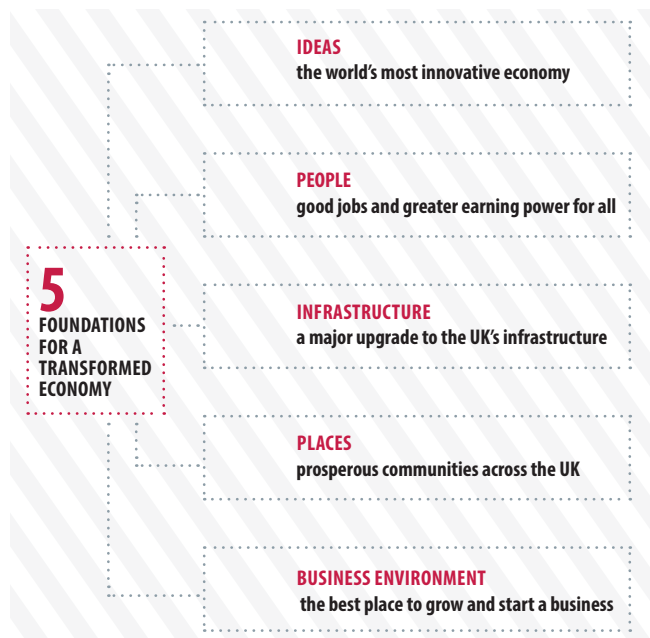
Introduction

The Blackpool and The Fylde College Employability and Careers Strategy is an organisation-wide approach requiring close partnership working across all areas of the College's business and throughout the student life-cycle. It provides an overarching central framework of key priorities upon which curriculum and service areas can build and tailor to industry and sector needs.

Context

In the "Industrial Strategy: building a Britain fit for the future" (ref 1) "The Government identifies how it will help young people develop the skills they need to do the high-paid, high-skilled jobs of the future. It aims to create the conditions where successful businesses can emerge and grow and sees partnerships as critical components in nurturing the talent that will propel Britain to global leadership in the industries of the future. The strategy acknowledges that productivity in the UK is well below what can be achieved and lays five foundations for a transformed economy.

- **Ideas** – the world's most innovative economy
- **People** – good jobs and greater earning power for all
- **Infrastructure** – a major upgrade to the UK's infrastructure
- **Places** – prosperous communities across the UK
- **Business environment** – the best place to grow and start a business



The Government acknowledges the importance of improving work-ready skills alongside a central focus on technical and professional education this is part of a much broader plan to increase productivity. Key to this is driving a cultural change where apprenticeships are seen as 'a high quality and prestigious path to successful careers, with opportunities across all sectors of the economy, in all parts of the country and at all levels' (ref 2).

The compulsory apprenticeship levy requiring large employers to invest in their own future is radically and dynamically changing the education and skills landscape. Generating expected revenue of over £3 billion which can only be spent on apprenticeships, the impact is being felt by students, by employers themselves and by organisations, responding quickly and effectively to the challenges and opportunities is essential.

B&FC Commitment and vision

Our commitment is:

That every student, irrespective of background or starting point, who chooses to study at B&FC, at whatever level, successfully develops the knowledge, skills, behaviours and attitudes which will enable them to secure meaningful, sustainable employment, self-employment and lifelong career opportunities.

Our vision is:

That every student, irrespective of background or starting point, has opportunities for a personalised service that embraces curricular, co-curricular and extra-curricular opportunities.

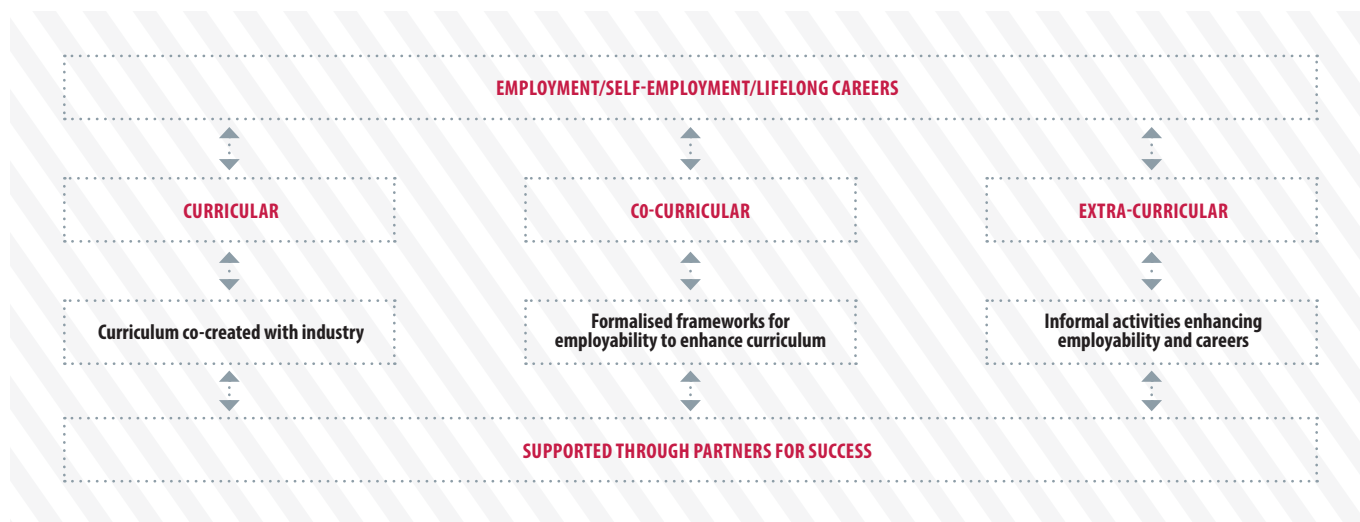
This ambitious and progressive vision for supporting the career journey of all students aligns to the Good Career Guidance benchmarks proposed by Sir John Holman in 2013 on behalf of the Gatsby Foundation (ref3).

A formalised approach ensures that learning and teaching (curricular) is strengthened by formalised frameworks (co-curricular) driven through Partners for Success and supported by informal study opportunities and activities (extra-curricular) to enhance students portfolios which promote employability and lifelong careers. The mapping of industry specific skills, attitudes and behaviours follows every student as they progress between levels.

Definitions

B&FC acknowledges the wide range of skills, attitudes and behaviours that are required to prepare students for life long and sustainable careers four definitions provide the basis for this strategy

- The Office for Students defines employability as "the additional skills and competencies that an individual gains as they progress through higher education, which improve and enhance their employment and career." (ref4)
- The Higher Education Policy Institute (HEPI) adds that employability consists of "knowledge, skills and social capital". (ref5)
- The Education and Training Foundation regard employability as 'the ability to gain initial employment, the ability to maintain employment and make 'transitions' between jobs' (ref 6).



The Confederation of British Industries (CBI) emphasise the same point “over the years, our research has consistently shown that the attitudes and aptitudes that will enable graduates to be effective in the workplace rank ahead of formal qualifications. Students and higher education institutions must not lose sight of the importance of all-round development” (ref 7).

This all – round development concept aligns directly with B&FC’s Partners for Success Framework, this full suite of activities runs throughout the student life cycle and across all provision providing a joined up inclusive careers and employability strategy. In terms of enterprise and entrepreneurship, B&FC does not just define enterprise as starting a business and generating profit, it can include this, but it is also defined as being proactive, taking initiative, taking risks, overcoming adversity, innovation, invention, ideas generation, creativity, seizing opportunities, finding solutions, entrepreneurship and business skills, entrepreneurship skills (being enterprising within an organisation), as well as social enterprise and innovation.

Objectives

We will continue to:

- Have a sustained focus on technical professional education and knowledge and skills development throughout the organisation
- Be ambitious in providing the opportunities for our students to develop the skills, behaviours and attributes that will enhance their employability / entrepreneurship
- Provide a cohesive and co-ordinated approach to student employability across the range of our activities
- Ensure B&FC’s programmes are shaped to promote employability from entry level to graduate careers and which are recognised by employers as reflective of their needs
- Provide students with an increased range of industry relevant opportunities for work experience and/or placements which enhance their employability

- Provide the highest standard of professional support through effective careers information, advice and guidance provision
- Provide students with access to a range of experiences that encourage personal growth in a broader context than academic study
- Ensure that students understand their own responsibilities in developing and maintaining personal career plans and engaging with opportunities provided
- Communicate employability opportunities and clear career pathways in all marketing materials
- Recognise and enhance the valuable experience and insight that employers provide to all our students

These key objectives will be achieved through four focussed and interconnected areas:

1. Maintain an accessible high quality careers advice service for all students including CV and job application support, graduate assessment centre workshops, mock interviews with employers, interview coaching technique workshops and 1:1 careers guidance interviews from highly trained careers advisers
2. Work through the Partners for Success framework ensuring all students have a clear and deliverable career plan with access to up to date labour market intelligence to make informed choices
3. Align career planning tools to government strategy ensuring all students have positive destinations whether into sustainable employment, self-employment or lifelong career opportunities
4. Ensure all students have access to advice and guidance on financial support to enable them to successfully attend college and achieve to their full potential.

Seven Key Employability Skills

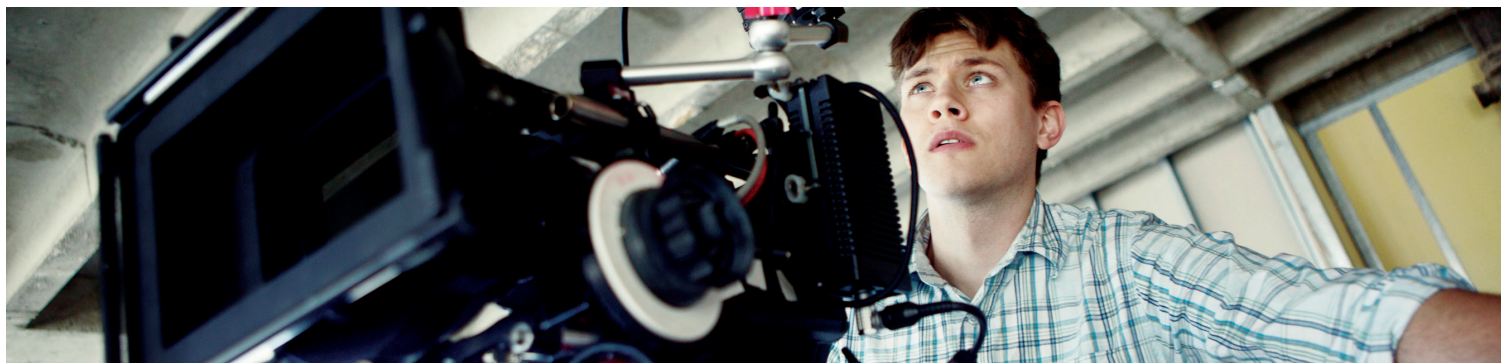


The CBI has identified a 7 point framework for Employability Skills where positive attitude sits at the centre (ref 8).

The CBI identifies a pressing need to improve the literacy/ use of English and numeracy skills of school and College leavers, as well as self-management, business and customer awareness.

For graduates, team-working and problem-solving skills and inadequate work experience are perceived weaknesses.

Far more businesses expect to increase the number of jobs requiring leadership and management, and higher level skills in the future. Therefore in addition to subject-specific and industry/sector specific hard skills and knowledge across different levels, B&FC has identified nine essential skills, behaviours and attitudes which will equip students for the future. These are mapped across curricular, co-curricular and extra-curricular activities throughout the student life cycle.



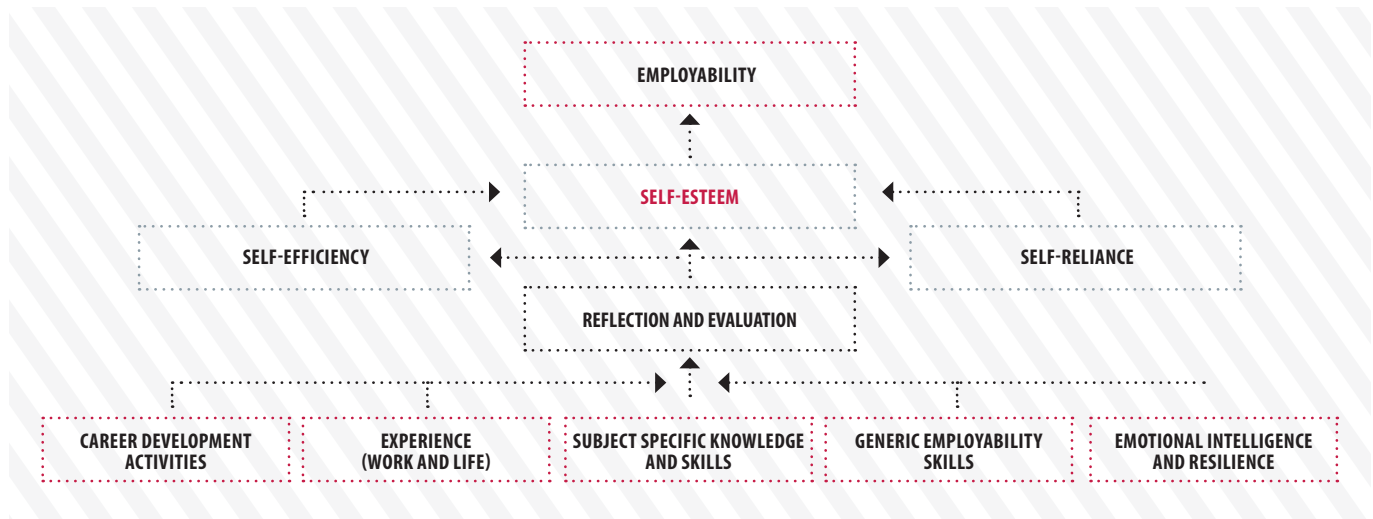
At levels one, two and three these can be defined as:

- A commitment to lifelong learning and a positive 'can-do' attitude (readiness to take part, openness to new ideas and activities, desire to achieve)
- Collaborative teamwork (respecting others, cooperating, negotiating/persuading, contributing to discussions)
- Self-management (readiness to accept responsibility, flexibility, time management, readiness to improve their own performance)
- Ethical, social and professional understanding (equality and diversity awareness, application in the workplace, professional standards of behaviour)
- Communication and literacy (application of literacy including digital literacy, ability to produce clear, structured written work and oral literacy, including listening and questioning)
- Application of numeracy (manipulation of numbers, general mathematical awareness and its application in practical contexts)
- Problem-solving (analysing facts and circumstances and applying creative thinking to develop appropriate solutions)
- Business and customer awareness and capabilities (basic understanding of the key drivers for business success and the need to provide customer satisfaction)
- Creative thinking and problem solving

At levels four, five and six these can be defined as:

- A commitment to lifelong learning and career development
- Collaborative teamwork and leadership skills
- Personal and intellectual autonomy
- Ethical, social and professional understanding
- Communication, information and digital literacies
- Global citizenship
- Research, scholarship and enquiry skills
- Enterprise and entrepreneurial awareness and capabilities
- The ability to solve complex and unforeseen problems with creativity and imagination

The skills, behaviours and attitudes can be summed up by reference to the careerEDGE8 model of employability (ref 9).



Employability - Four Focused Areas

1. Careers Information, Advice and Guidance

Dedicated, pro-active careers information, advice and guidance are fundamental to improving student employment prospects (ref 10). Underpinned by the Gatsby review (ref 11) which reiterates the continuing importance of the identified 8 benchmarks (see appendix 1) and the centrality of employer engagement with particular reference to STEM, apprenticeships and technician level roles.

The Careers Team are instrumental in working with curriculum areas to embed employability in learning and teaching and establish links with other internal and external stakeholders. Given the apprenticeships agenda, clear guidance on how to access this provision across all levels will be made available, seeking to raise the profile of this route to a sustainable career.

Many students seek part-time employment to supplement their income whilst studying and an increasing number are involved in volunteering activities within their community. Both offer significant opportunities for skills acquisition to enhance employability. B&FC is committed to growing these opportunities for students, including the development of an internship programme, and to working with organisations to maximise the potential for training and accreditation. The Careers Team will also continue to work closely with Progress Tutors across College in particular to ensure all students are able to access appropriate information, advice and guidance to make informed decisions about their next steps.

2. Employer Engagement

Employers are central to the effective delivery of the Employability Strategy. Direct and productive engagement with employers underpins many aspects of B&FC business and is characterised by the development of mutually beneficial relationships. These encompass the provision of student learning opportunities through industry placements, traineeships, apprenticeships, part-time jobs and volunteering as well as more directly through the availability of work ready students in the job market at all levels. Developing further productive relationships and co-ordinating all aspects of our employer engagement work is clearly paramount. We currently engage with employers in the following ways:

B&FC for Business

B&FC for Business is the commercial arm of the College, delivering effective workforce development solutions to organisations both locally, regionally and nationally. Working with over 1800 employers, B&FC for Business works with businesses both large and small to understand their organisational needs and to co-create a training programme bespoke to their requirements. This is linked to local, regional and national skills priorities and to ensure organisations are ready to adapt to changing market needs.

Industrial Placements

Students at all levels are supported to access relevant industrial placements. These placements are negotiated through consultation so that they have clearly identified aims and objectives. SMART targets are established, monitored and reviewed by the placement provider, student and progress tutor. This tripartite arrangement ensures clarity of purpose for all partners. Industry placements are designed to fully equip students for progression into highly skilled and highly rewarding careers.



Workplace Learning

Appropriate workplace learning opportunities enable students to develop and demonstrate the skills and attributes that they will need to be successful in employment. We are committed to providing all full time students with appropriate opportunities for workplace learning, including for 16-18 year olds where this is a mandatory requirement.

In higher education workplace learning may be as an employee, volunteer, in a self-employed capacity or through a work placement.

Curriculum Area Engagement

There is significant and sustained engagement with employers and sectors in individual curriculum areas. Many staff are dual professionals, with roles in their industry or sector, or are practitioners in their fields in addition to teaching. Other staff maintain vital relationships with industry through professional updating or secondments.

Specific and demonstrable employer engagement in the development of new or revised and updated provision is also a cornerstone, as is regular general engagement through employer fora for example. Live briefs and guest lecturers provide real world experience ensuring students can contextualise their learning. All of this ensures that curriculum is responsive, current and future-focused.

Customer Relationship Management

With a commitment to widening participation in education, B&FC works in partnership with organisations to co-create a workforce development programme that is flexible and supports access to high quality learning experiences. This enables us to develop a responsive curriculum that evolves and adapts to industry need. By undertaking Organisational Needs Analysis, B&FC can provide meaningful advice on various funding streams that may be available to businesses that will provide cost effective solutions to their training needs. By upskilling or re-skilling the existing workforce, this will support growth and productivity and ultimately will impact on the local, regional and national economy.

3. Curriculum Design and Development

B&FC works closely and collaboratively with employers to ensure that programme design and development is geared to meeting industry and sector needs. In order to better meet the challenges and opportunities ahead, B&FC will need to focus even more explicitly on developing the right products at the right time for all stakeholders. There are a variety of ways in which this will be further addressed as part of this strategy:

The demonstrable close involvement of employers in the design, delivery, validation and review of all programmes

A continuing strategic focus on Science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) Lancashire Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) and combined authority priorities

A strategic focus on apprenticeships, including higher and degree apprenticeships which must be explicitly considered in each instance of higher education curriculum development

Explicitly embedding local labour market intelligence (LLMI) data, Universities and Colleges Admissions Service (UCAS) Track data and clear demand analysis as appropriate throughout curriculum development processes

Building explicit ladders of progression to careers in all curriculum areas and across all levels

Liaison across all streams of B&FC's business when designing or developing curriculum to strengthen progression pathways and ensure the product is cohesive. For example this will involve the explicit inclusion of level 3 provision alongside levels 4-6 (and 7 in collaboration with our awarding body partner if required)

The opportunity for students to develop practical skills required by industry, particularly in technical, professional education

Embedding industrial placement opportunities where appropriate

A continuing emphasis on Personal Development Planning (PDP) which is incorporated into all substantive programmes

4. Cross College Collaboration

Cross college collaboration is key critical to maximise the potential benefits of this strategy. All stakeholders must understand the necessity of sharing information and working together to ensure student success. A key focus will be facilitating students' self-efficacy, resilience, self-esteem and self-confidence. This will involve all curriculum and corporate areas working in partnership with particular reference to some central roles or activities:

Progress Tutors

Our aim is that students consistently take ownership of their own employability and career development. Progress Tutors are central to facilitating this; making students aware of opportunities open to them, helping students to understand how their learning and teaching activities support their employability and progression.

Work with cross college services in partnership and across levels to provide seamless support for student and to enable students to develop self-awareness of their own employability skills, understanding what they have achieved, how they have achieved it and how to take action to bridge any evident gaps they encourage students to access the volunteering and industry experience opportunities available to them and help students to improve their self-confidence,

resilience and emotional intelligence (self-efficacy) particularly in relation to reflecting on and articulating their capabilities and attributes in a range of recruitment situations.

Progress Tutors ensure that all students are exposed to and engaged with enterprise, preparing them for the global labour market by enabling them to solve real local and global problems both within and outside of the curriculum.

They encourage a focus on specific career destinations and the pathway to get there including progression to higher education and maintain a record of the achievements of individual activity and subject/careers-related learning.

Cross College Events

A schedule of coordinated cross college events, appropriate to different cohorts will provide a central thread of employability running through the student journey. Students currently have the opportunity to participate in a number of activities:

- Careers and Industry week events
- National Apprenticeship Week
- National Enterprise Competition
- Enterprise Start up week
- HE Careers Fair
- FE to HE Transition events

These are incorporated into a holistic calendar of key events appropriately levelled if required, which will align activity to ensure effectiveness and reach.

Enrichment opportunities

Our extra-curricular provision is broad and varied, and mapped to key local, regional and national priorities. The purpose of this extra-curricular provision is to provide opportunities within a supportive environment for students who have real passion, drive and the commitment to further develop their employability skills.

As part of this strategy we will review the current offer with a view to developing an enhanced enrichment programme which encompasses all levels and which better co-ordinates activities and opportunities.

Progression

Building aspiration and facilitating achievement and success are central tenets of B&FC's mission. Progression between levels is fundamental to this. Currently individual curriculum areas have their own progression strategies, and there are instances where students may not wish to progress vertically within a particular curriculum and career area but horizontally between curriculum areas and directly in to employment where appropriate. Cross College strategies currently include early progression enrolment opportunities, and opportunities offered by both the FE and HE Admissions services to all existing students, this helps to keep progressing students motivated and enthusiastic. Internal progression routes are particularly key to ensure that students are able to access the right high quality provision locally, leading to the most appropriate career stepping off point for them. To facilitate this there will be a whole College approach incorporating a College Progression Week featuring a range of activities and providing an over-arching focus. Each level 3 student will receive a HE Guaranteed offer, subject to conditions, which will include a range of identified potential careers.

Recognising Students' Achievements

A key part of the strategy will be recognition for student's achievements. There are already various awards and prizes in place which recognise achievement, such as the Higher Education Achievement Report (HEAR) and Degree and FE Plus awards. These acknowledges achievements above curriculum and promotes cultural capital and wider social interactions.

Achieving Our Objectives

In order to achieve its objectives, B&FC will continue to:

- Clearly articulate the specific and interrelated roles of curriculum areas and central services in delivering the Employability Strategy through an implementation plan
- Increase the capacity to develop and maintain new employer relationships and maintain a College wide database of employer contacts to ensure we maximise the benefits for all stakeholders
- Maintain the centralised recording of employer information and interaction with employers at all levels
- Further develop relationships with employers from local, regional and national businesses, the public and third sector, building strong relationships with the Chambers of Commerce and Local Enterprise Partnerships to enhance opportunities for students
- Work with the Students' Union to promote accredited volunteering and active citizenship as a valuable and integral part of the student experience which will raise cultural capital

- Support the continuing development of degree and FE plus as a means of recognising extra-curricular activity and accredited qualifications

Curriculum areas will continue to:

- Record centrally all employer information and interaction
- Continue to proactively engage with employers in the ongoing development of dynamic and relevant curricular relevant to their needs and evolving trends in professional practice.
- Continue to facilitate staff's professional updating via the opportunity to spend up to 5 days in industry annually
- Develop and implement a higher/degree apprenticeships plan and re-design curriculum products accordingly
- Continue to ensure that students in FE have the ability and opportunity to progress to an apprenticeship at any point in the year as appropriate
- Continue to provide level 3 FE students with a clearly defined and communicated progression route to HE
- Review the embedding of key employability skills/attributes within the curriculum and that these are tested during programme approval/validation
- Incorporate opportunities for students to obtain relevant professional certification/ accreditation alongside their course wherever possible
- Further develop opportunities for students to undertake high quality workplace learning within their programmes
- Continue to ensure that students are exposed to specific career development sessions within their programme and are supported to develop personal career plans
- Personal Development Planning remains a central support for students in identifying the employment skills gained from their part-time work/volunteering experience
- Provide enhanced opportunities for all students in developing entrepreneurial skills and aptitudes and in planning and operationalising sustainable business ventures
- Develop an Alumni network to maintain, and benefit from, contact with graduates post graduation



The Careers Team will continue to:

- Maintain an accessible high quality employment advisory service for all students including support with CVs and job applications, assessment centres and interviews
- Further develop capacity to promote B&FC students externally and identify and maintain new employer/ organisation links
- Maintain and further promote an effective resource library on employment related opportunities and occupations that reflect student aspirations and needs along with a range of tailored guides and relevant case studies
- Enhance the use of destination data to inform action plans
- Develop an Alumni network that supports the development of links that can benefit the employability of current students
- Continue to use a range of digital and human career opportunities captured in a suite of linked procedures. These are reviewed annually with revision opportunities on a just in time basis.

Student Support and Wellbeing Service will continue to:

- Continue to help students to improve their self confidence, resilience and emotional intelligence (self-efficacy) particularly in relation to reflecting on and articulating their capabilities and attributes in a range of situations

- Facilitate additional support for students seeking to further enhance their transferable and employability skills
- Continue to effectively signpost to internal and external employability services and independent support networks for students with disabilities

Actively promote all services that support the Mental well being of all.

Learning Resources will continue to:

- Liaise further with schools and service areas on the integration of information and digital fluency in the curriculum
- Continue to provide opportunities for one to one and group support for students to empower them to achieve their potential
- Continue to facilitate delivery of high quality flexible learning environments
- Further develop technologies which can be used to enhance employment prospects

Appendix 1

Gatsby Foundation

1	A STABLE CAREERS PROGRAMME	Every school and college should have an embedded programme of career education and guidance that is known and understood by students, parents, teachers, governors and employers.
2	LEARNING FROM CAREER AND LABOUR MARKET INFORMATION	Every student, and their parents, should have access to good quality information about future study options and labour market opportunities. They will need the support of an informed adviser to make best use of available information.
3	ADDRESSING THE NEEDS OF EACH STUDENT	Students have different career guidance needs at different stages. Opportunities for advice and support need to be tailored to the needs of each student. A school's careers programme should embed equality and diversity considerations throughout.
4	LINKING CURRICULUM LEARNING TO CAREERS	All teachers should link curriculum learning with careers. STEM subject teachers should highlight the relevance of STEM subjects for a wide range of future career paths.
5	ENCOUNTERS WITH EMPLOYERS AND EMPLOYEES	Every student should have multiple opportunities to learn from employers about work, employment and the skills that are valued in the workplace. This can be through a range of enrichment activities including visiting speakers, mentoring and enterprise schemes.
6	EXPERIENCES OF WORKPLACES	Every student should have first-hand experiences of the workplace through work visits, work shadowing and/or work experience to help their exploration of career opportunities, and expand their networks.
7	ENCOUNTERS WITH FURTHER AND HIGHER EDUCATION	All students should understand the full range of learning opportunities that are available to them. This includes both academic and vocational routes and learning in schools, colleges, universities and in the workplace.
8	PERSONAL GUIDANCE	Every student should have opportunities for guidance interviews with a career adviser, who could be internal (a member of school staff) or external, provided they are trained to an appropriate level. These should be available whenever significant study or career choices are being made. They should be expected for all students but should be timed to meet their individual needs.





Degrees awarded by



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