

BRIDGWATER & TAUNTON COLLEGE **ACCOUNTABILITY STATEMENT & LOCAL NEEDS DUTY** 2025-26

Transforming lives and communities
through innovative learning
and partnerships



BRIDGWATER
& TAUNTON
COLLEGE

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[Link to Accountability Agreement on Website](#)

Statement of Purpose

Bridgwater & Taunton College launched a new five-year strategic plan in September 2022.

Our Vision and Mission statements have evolved to more clearly articulate our strategic direction and purpose.

Our four overarching strategic aims have been developed in response to the current context and our overall Vision. In addition, the framework identifies three cross cutting themes that will influence our response to the climate emergency, digital transformation, and our continued work to strengthen equality, diversity, and inclusion for all.

The safe delivery of inspirational teaching, learning and assessment will remain our core priority. We will continue to inspire all our students to achieve their full potential, through delivering a high- quality inspirational experience. As an anchor organisation embedded into our community, we commit to working in partnership with all our stakeholders to deliver our Vision.



CROSS CUTTING THEMES

The three key themes are:



MISSION STATEMENT

As a leading college of further and higher education, we will:

- Deliver inspirational teaching, learning and skills development
- Maintain a culture that promotes a supportive, inclusive, and safe environment
- Build highly effective partnerships that positively impact our students
- Positively influence the educational landscape.

OUR VALUES

Together, we are:

- Passionate and excited about learning
- Inclusive and supportive
- Responsive to student, employer, and community needs
- Always aspiring to the highest standards
- Professional and enterprising
- Innovative and creative
- Friendly and welcoming

Context and Place

Bridgwater & Taunton College is scheduled to merge with Strode College on August 1st 2025. At the time of writing this the College alongside Strode College will submit two individual Accountability Statements. As part of the merger the Colleges will form a new education group to be known as University Centre Somerset College Group (UCS College Group.) Within the new group we will operate as four colleges, Bridgwater College, Cannington College, Strode College and Taunton College.

Within this context a decision has been made by the board, following discussion with the DfE to postpone the review of the Local Needs Duty. This review alongside development of a new group strategic plan will take place in 2025-2026.

Bridgwater & Taunton College (BTC) is a large tertiary college providing education, skills, and training to over 25,000 students across all provision types in 2023/24.

The College occupies three main sites: Bridgwater, Taunton, and Cannington, including the National College for Nuclear (NCfN) (Southern Hub). The college is a cornerstone skills hub within Somerset, and beyond, delivering upon LSIP regional skills initiatives, as well as maintaining a prominent role in the delivery of nationally influential projects

Bridgwater and Taunton College provides outstanding provision built upon the vision statement, 'Transforming lives and communities through innovative learning and partnerships'. The ethos of this is reflected and embodied through the quality of partnerships, skills development, and position of the college as a springboard for high quality destinations and development of the student community.

The College underwent an Ofsted inspection in the academic year (24/25) receiving a grade 1 outstanding for all areas, and a strong outcome for skills. The report noted:

- Leaders and managers make excellent use of labour market intelligence and work effectively with employers to meet the training needs of large-scale projects in Somerset. For example, they help to meet the skills needs of the nuclear energy and engineering sector for Hinkley Point C nuclear power station through strong partnerships with EDF Energy and the Mechanical, Electrical, and Heating Alliance. Senior leaders ensure the college is well positioned to meet future training demands in Somerset, including being the lead training provider for employers at the Gravity Smart Campus. Leaders work closely with stakeholders, such as Agratas and the University of Bristol to design future curriculums to meet green energy and digital skills needs.
- Leaders and managers successfully involve stakeholders in the design and implementation of curriculums to ensure they meet both local and national training needs. Leaders and managers respond quickly to community demands by offering courses, such as degree apprenticeships and T levels. For example, staff help to meet the training needs of the health and care sector

through strong collaboration with the University of the West of England, Somerset NHS Foundation Trust, NHS Somerset Integrated Care Board, Somerset Training Hub, and Somerset Care.

- Leaders and managers work very effectively to meet acute skills needs. Staff provide a responsive and inclusive curriculum by collaborating closely with local partners, such as Barclays Bank, Bridgwater Chamber of Commerce, and Taunton Chamber of Commerce. Staff offer community-based courses that support local volunteers, such as those in the carnival club, as well as Skills Bootcamps to help adults improve their career prospects. For example, staff very successfully provide a curriculum that meets an identified need to support local women to gain employment. Leaders and managers use the local skills improvement fund to work with employers, such as Baileys Digital Classroom, to provide digital training for students with high needs.

The College offers high quality courses in all 15 subject sector areas, designed to engage and develop the knowledge, skills and behaviours from Pre-Entry to Post-graduate level. The campus offerings reflect the specialist provision, with Land Based Studies based in Cannington, A Levels based in Bridgwater, and T levels at Taunton (the college was an early adopter of T levels). The majority of study programmes for all other disciplines, except Land Based, are offered across the Bridgwater and Taunton Campus sites. The Cannington campus also has student accommodation, which was graded outstanding by Ofsted in autumn 2022. In addition to the Land Based provision, the Cannington Campus maintains a dedicated civil engineering department (CSIC) and National College for Nuclear (NCfN) Southern Hub.

The volume of students engaged in adult learning (Skills Fund) activity totalled 13,646 in 23/24 including; a large and highly successful flexible learning programme, and active tailored learning. Class-based adult education made up 55% of the total learner numbers. In addition, 19.6% of adults engaged in full cost learning programmes, meeting local industry skills needs through bespoke packages, supporting key local infrastructure projects and regional businesses.

The ongoing growth in apprenticeships has seen the college deliver to over 3100 apprentices in 23/24 with the volume representing the highest volume of levy funded apprenticeships provided by an FE college nationally. Apprenticeships represent 12.1% of the total learners, now 0.3% higher than the volume of EPYP students (based on headcount). There has been an increase in the volume of high-quality degree apprenticeships delivered for the NHS and nuclear industry enhancing the contribution of highly skilled individuals to the region and demonstrating the development of partnerships in key skills shortage areas.

In 2023/24 there were 3051 students on education for young people programmes across levels from entry to level 3. This included 302 High Needs students, of these high needs students 183 followed bespoke programmes, whilst 119 engaged in cross-college courses, with each student benefitting from an appropriate and ambitious college programme.

Within the 10 quartiles of deprivation (Q1 most deprived to Q10 least deprived) the MiDES data indicates within our 16-19 cohort some noteworthy remarkable trends. The large majority of our 16-19 student cohort (70.4%) are associated within Band 6 or below, significantly band 4-6 evidences a vastly different dataset to the national averages. At level 3 within this data, between band 2-6, our cohort within this dataset is 6.2% higher than the national averages. Furthermore, within our A Level cohort within band 2-6, we are almost 7% higher than the national average, with 62.6% of the 16-19 A Level cohort indicated between band 2-6. Leaders and Governors will continue to position the college to ensure the opportunities for higher-level study is available to the local student community, further enabling high quality destinations. The performance of our students therefore needs to be put into context, and the positive impact of the holistic approaches taken to prepare our students and apprentices in transforming lives is consequential.

Somerset is a region long characterised by its dispersed rural geography and lack of major cities or traditional university campuses. Perceived as relatively affluent, it is nevertheless home to pockets of deprivation that are among the worst in the country with 47,000 of its residents living within the 20% most deprived areas of

England, including the worst performing area for social mobility in the entire country. This, combined with an ageing population and a high percentage of young people who leave the county to pursue education and career aspirations elsewhere, means that skills at Level 4 and above are in short supply and overall productivity low.

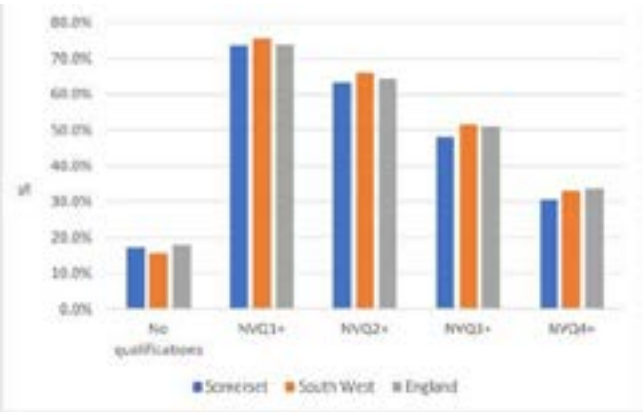


Figure 1 Highest level of qualification by area (%): (Source: Census 2021)

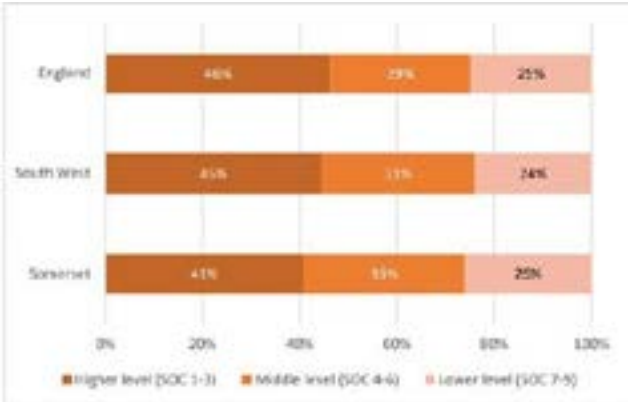


Figure 2 Resident occupations by Skills Level (Source: Census 2021)



Figure 3 Somerset Unitary Authority

Key Characteristics

- Somerset has lower levels of minimum attainment in all NVQ categories compared to the South-West region and England;
- A higher proportion of Somerset’s resident workforce are employed in lower skilled occupations than both the South-West and England;
- A lower proportion of Somerset’s resident workforce are employed in higher skilled occupations than the South-West and England;
- Somerset has a higher proportion of employees that are not appropriately skilled for their job compared to the South-West area and England.

Bridgwater & Taunton College serves a wide geographic area spanning as shown in Figure 3 below, which combined in April 2023 into one unitary Somerset Council.

With three campuses located throughout Somerset in Bridgwater, Cannington and Taunton and national coverage for many of our courses, our work benefits not only our students but also the wider community. The potential of the merger with Strode College broadens the reach of education to support and transform the communities we serve.

In the academic year 2023/24, a total of 1,364 students were enrolled in Higher Education (HE) and higher-level technical programmes at University Centre Somerset (UCS), defined as those at Level 4 and above. Of this cohort, 503 of these were students from direct entry programmes with our HEI partners or Pearsons at Level 4 and above. UCS continues to experience substantial growth in higher and degree apprenticeships, with 644 of these being classified as apprentices. Additionally, 217 students enrolled in professional courses during the same period. In the current academic year, 2024/25 UCS has 1,296 students, 389 of these are enrolled on a direct entry programme with our HEI partners or Pearsons at Level 4 and above. 703 students are enrolled on a higher and degree apprenticeship, with 204 students being enrolled on a professional course.

UCS’s curriculum encompasses a broad range of subject areas, across multiple campuses; At Cannington, the National College for Nuclear Southern Hub offers specialised programmes in Nuclear Engineering, whilst the Animal Management Centre and Agriculture Innovation centre house our Animal Management and Wildlife Conservation, and Agricultural Management provision, respectively. Bridgwater Campus houses our Engineering provision which includes Mechanical and Electrical Engineering as well as our Motorsport programme. Taunton is where the largest of our HE provision is located where our provision includes Construction and the Built Environment, Civil Engineering, Digital and Computing, Sports, Public Services and Criminology, Early Childhood Education and Care, Adult and Mental Health Nursing, Student Nurse Associate, Teacher Training and Make Up Artistry, Prosthetics FX and Wig Making. The curriculum offering, as approved through Academic Planning and Curriculum Development, remains closely aligned with

regional and local skills needs. Moreover, UCS has responded proactively to the expansion of Higher Technical Qualifications (HTQs), with eight programmes available for the 2025/26 academic year.

In contrast to national trends in HE, UCS sits in complete opposite to traditional HE providers attracting a significantly higher proportion of students from POLAR4 Quintiles 1, 2 and 3 compared to Quintile 4 and 5. The participation of local areas (POLAR) classification groups areas across the UK is based on the proportion of young people who participate in higher education. Quintile 1 shows the lowest rate of participation. Quintile 5 showing the highest rate of participation. Analysis of our data indicates that, for academic year 2024/2025 the percentage of first year HE students from Quintiles 1, 2 and 3 was around 64%, whereas for Quintiles 4 and 5 it was 36%.

Similarly, our TUNDRA data, which is an area-based measure that uses tracking of state-funded mainstream school pupils in England who participate in higher education aged 18 or 19 years, again illustrates that UCS student profile is opposite of the national picture. It highlights that our students, across all our courses, mainly coming from Quintiles 1-3 (78%) and therefore from areas that the least likely to access Higher Education.

The inward investment and employment opportunities arising from the new nuclear power station at Hinkley Point C (HPC) in Bridgwater has greatly boosted the local economy. As the primary training provider, we have introduced and delivered programmes supported by all funding streams.

The increasing use of technology has meant that BTC serves people and businesses across the UK and wider region, and this is particularly true of our curriculum focused on adult students. However, most students and businesses remain within a commuting distance of less than an hour from the College.

Historically the Heart of the South- West Local Enterprise Partnership (HoSW LEP) coordinated the region’s skills response. As part of the response The Heart of the South-West produced a Local Industrial Strategy (‘LIS’) and Local Skills Launchpad report 2022-2024. This document sets out a shared ambition to transform the local economy through clean and inclusive growth. Whilst the LEP is no longer in existence the priorities remain, and are reflected in the Devon and Somerset Local Skills Improvement Plan Progress Report June 2024 and The Great South West Independent Economic Review- Securing The UK’s Economic Future November 2024.

The Accountability Agreement takes into account the journey towards Devolution in Somerset.

Key economic features and challenges include:

- Mix geography-and most diverse encompassing, significant rural and coastal areas, alongside core urban centres
- Low productivity, overall, but significant diversity across the Southwest geography
- A small business, self-employed economy
- A shrinking working age population
- Larger low value sectors and lower proportions of people undertaking higher level rules.
- A mixture of qualifications and education capacity.
- Significant clusters of localised deprivation, which includes West Somerset.
- High levels of overall economic activity and employment, but low levels of average pay
- Difference in physical financial and virtual access to learning

Key strengths and skill needs

- High-tech specialisms in aerospace, photonics and marine, but restricted by digital skills
- Opportunities in advanced engineering and manufacturing
- Significant demand for skills in health and social care
- High levels of employment dependence on hospitality and tourism
- Transition to net zero and a low carbon future
- Skills demand for the south-west can be summarised into three areas.
- Sectors within an ongoing and cyclical recruitment and skills need bracket some exacerbated by the pandemic. These include the skills trades care sector, leisure sector and across the generic service sector.
- Growth sectors with expanding future demand for which skills will need to be developed. These are a mixture of vocational, creative, and academic skills in occupations corresponding with health and social work, professional services, accommodation and food, construction, and support services Sectors, restaurants bracket chefs, management bracket
- Localised gaps within specialised occupations. These include demand within professional occupations, transport and storage information and communications construction, manufacture and production, and specialist health and social care work roles within the heart of the Southwest.

Focusing upon sectoral demand, it is currently anticipated that the following sectors will remain areas of specific heightened need as well as skills and labour demand into the medium term.

- Health and social work are currently predicted to create

more new jobs than any other sets are locally over the next 10 years,

- Professional support services and digital technology are predicted to be the key source of job growth locally over the next 10 years and depending on demand for a range of mainly high skilled occupations
- Farming and food production agricultural vacancies in 2021 were nearly double the rate for 2019 and food manufacturing job vacancies having increased 20% over the same period of time.
- Construction in the heart of the Southwest 13% of organisations within the sector had vacancies in 2019 compared to 9% in England
- Production, manufacturing and science technology engineering and math-based employment (STEM) is currently expected to be an area of significant replacement demand

Meeting Local, Regional, and National Skills

Our curriculum offer is designed in collaboration with industry and employers and in response to sectoral need. It provides a clear path for our students to progress from FE at Bridgwater & Taunton College to HE at University Centre Somerset and further into employment in industry. Our unique BTC Advantage sets us apart from other FE providers and gives our learners the best chance of success.

Whole College Head Count

2023/24: Whole College Head Count

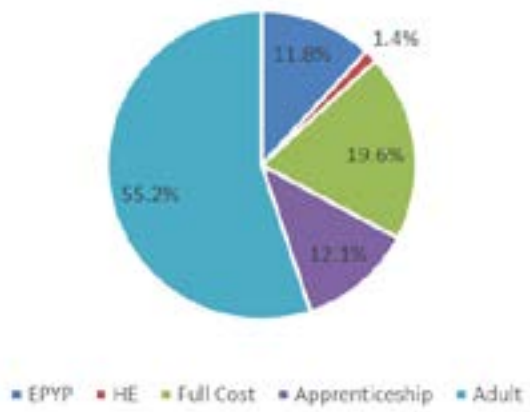


Figure 4 Student numbers by provision type for Bridgwater & Taunton College 2021/22

The above clearly shows the diverse nature of the Bridgwater & Taunton College provision. There is a high volume of learners overall, including a very high proportion of adult students. Due to the nature and scope of the industry led provision, full cost training and development make up the second largest provision type, which demonstrates the context within which the college operates meeting the needs of the industry both locally and regionally.

BTC is clear of the significant changes going forward in local and regional changes to facilitate regional skills developments. The class-based provision for 16-18-year-olds (navy in the table above) is highly important representing 11.8% of all college provision type and in a tertiary system provides the 16 plus offer for local students. Apprenticeships represent 12.1% of all provision, illustrating the rapid growth over the last few academic years and importance of this provision. Adult provision remains the largest provision at 55.2% with excellent outcomes.

BTC as a 2020 T Level provider continues to grow and strengthen the position of this new government flagship qualification. As numbers and pathways increase our young people are benefitting from a high-quality experience, strong industry links and positive progression into careers and higher education.

The College has a strong track record of early engagement and bespoke training delivery for major infrastructure projects, and local employers, for example Morrisons, Hinckley Point C, Mulberry, and the NHS. BTC plays a leading role in developing implementing a coordinated, multi-provider, regional and national responses focused on the development of new curricula and training methodologies to support employers.

The College's strong track record of early engagement and bespoke training delivery for major infrastructure projects has led to an invitation to work directly with 'This is Gravity Ltd. The partnership with Gravity focused on a skills training strategy, supporting the delivery of the project whilst securing beneficial outcomes for the local community. BTC as an ambassador for skills and innovation, forged strong networks within this new initiative, leading, developing and implementing a coordinated, multi-provider regional and national response, focused on the development of new curricula and training methodologies to support 'Agratas', a subsidiary company of Tata & Sons. This is a significant multi-billion-pound investment in battery manufacturing and processing, the first Gigafactory in the UK in which BTC, through the planning consent, has a strategic leading role in implementing the Skills Charter.

BTC works effectively with a wide range of employers of all sizes covering most key industry sectors, engaging with them to understand the skills needs and working with them to design and implement a relevant and effective curriculum offer. The offer supports employers and stakeholders on local, regional, and national levels to meet identified skills gaps and offer progression opportunities into – or within – employment

In 2023/24 Bridgwater & Taunton College was the largest provider of levy funded apprenticeship nationally whilst also ensuring local needs are met with the significant proportion of apprentices coming from SMEs.

As part of our commitment to supporting career progression and addressing skills gaps, we have introduced a range of Skills Bootcamps – flexible, employer-led bespoke training programmes designed to equip individuals

with industry-relevant skills in areas such as digital, construction, business, engineering, and more. To date, we have successfully delivered 13 Skills Bootcamps, supporting over 120 learners in gaining practical skills and job-ready skills. These programmes have had a meaningful impact, with many participants upskilling within their current roles, achieving promotions, securing interviews, and progressing into new career pathways and apprenticeships.

Local Skills Improvement Fund

We are proud of the progress we have made through Year 2 of the Local Skills Improvement Fund (LSIF).

The investment has enabled us to grow our delivery capacity, modernise our teaching environments, and respond directly to the skills needs of our region. This agreement outlines the impact we have made so far and how we are continuing to build on innovation from the LSIF.

Building Capacity and Capability

One of the most significant developments has been in our pipefitting and welding provision. We have grown from four mobile extraction units to 18 fixed points, allowing us to safely train more students and in turn meet employer demand. This expansion has directly supported our successful bid for the ECTIB scholarship, enabling learners to complete assessments on-site and progress into high-demand roles. Our facilities now reflect industry standards, and employers like HPC have actively used our spaces for filming training content, reinforcing the strength of our partnerships.

We have extended our digital transformation. Staff are embedding tools such as iPads, Apple TV, and Apple Pencil into their teaching, improving engagement and efficiency. The Student Digital Ambassador programme has empowered learners to support peers and staff, while also developing their own digital confidence and leadership skills; In 24-25 the college had 19 Student Digital Ambassadors from the LSIF Year 1 pilot programme and a further 27 students completed the training ready to become our 25/26 Ambassadors.

Innovation and New Delivery

Through collaborating with different suppliers, we have introduced new technology into different sectors, including digital applications into Sport. In automotive, we have delved into hydrogen awareness and battery manufacturing, working with UKBIC to ensure our offer is future-facing. Across the College, digital tools are reducing paper usage, reducing our energy consumption, improving visibility of student work, and supporting more independent learning.

Collaboration and Efficiency

As LSIF lead provider in Somerset, we have worked closely with Strode College and Yeovil Colleges to share learning and align investment. Our early adoption of iPads for SEND learners helped inform Strode Colleges own rollout. Internally, cross-departmental collaboration—like the BTC Local Shop—has brought together Foundation Studies, Creative Arts and ESOL learners in a real-world setting that supports both skill development and progression.

Meeting Skills Needs and Looking Ahead

The LSIP has helped us focus on priority sectors—engineering, digital, and energy—and align our curriculum accordingly. Our provision is now more unified, employer-informed, and accessible. Students are clearer on their progression routes and more confident in their next steps, whether that’s into work, further study, or apprenticeships.

In addition, the Local Skills Report also identifies core sectors that will be areas of specific heightened regional need / demand into the medium term. These are crucial to our region’s economy and require a discrete focus:

- Health and social work are currently predicted to create more ‘new’ jobs than any other sector.
- Accommodation and food, arts, and entertainment, along with other services and wholesale and retail trade
- Agri-Tech and Food and Drink Production
- Construction both at professional and associate professional and managerial level and construction trades
- Professional and support services and information technology
- Production, manufacturing and Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths (STEM) will have a significant replacement demand.

Overview of key curriculum provision linked to skills priorities

As a strategic priority we have aligned provision to meet eight of the ten priority areas as identified in the Skills England Report, Industrial Strategy Priorities and Plan for Change.

Engineering

From an initial £8m investment in an Energy Skills Centre (ESC) the College has invested in ever- more sophisticated training facilities and equipment that align to new and emerging technologies in aerospace, nuclear, welding, composites, advanced manufacturing and sustainable engineering. The ESC houses three large welding workshops alongside a redeveloped pipefitting workshop allowing local industry to thrive with highly skilled employees. A £6m Advanced Engineering Centre (AEC), fully equipped with the latest CNC machines aligned to bespoke CAD suites allowing learners to create and manufacture in one space. A composite workshop housing industry specific additive manufacturing equipment, materials testing lab and both electrical and mechanical engineering maintenance workshops. These resources provide valuable experiences to the college’s high-level engineering provision.

Nuclear

The Government flagship National College for Nuclear (NCfN) has been established at the College’s Cannington campus. NCfN represents a joint venture between the College, EDF Energy and Bristol University to the south and Lakes College, Sellafield Ltd and the University of Cumbria to the north

BTC also proactively plays a central role in the national agenda around Green Skills by sharing knowledge, curriculum, and staff resource with the NCfN and the National Energy Skills Consortium via our participation in the National Electrification Skills Framework and Forum. Additionally, the College’s partnership with the HPC MEH Alliance has strengthened, bringing together employers such as Balfour Beatty, NG Bailey, Cavendish Nuclear, Altrad and Doosan. A Welding Centre of Excellence was designed and built-in direct response to industry demand, providing Virtual Reality simulation technology in advanced welding techniques for the training nuclear apprentices at Hinkley Point C (HPC).

Construction

The College’s investment in ‘live’ workplace training environments is not confined to nuclear and engineering. Its £2m Construction Skills and Innovation Centre (CSIC) is hugely important to the regional economy. This 8-acre outdoor area, with industry-standard plant, machinery, and materials, replicates a live construction site and offers pre-employment programmes, Apprenticeships and specialist skills training in Water Utilities, Construction Plant,

Construction Operations, Scaffolding, Concrete Pouring, Form Work and Steel Fixing Operations, with a clear line

of sight to employment with companies such as ByLor, Laing O’Rourke, Kier Bam, Wessex Water and Costain. The knowledge and experience gained through developing the apprenticeship programmes has enabled the College to also develop fast-track accreditation for experienced workers, and 1500 workers are expected to undertake this process for HPC alone.

Automotive

BTC has invested significantly in its Automotive Engineering curriculum over the last two years. A project alongside the Heart of the South West’s Strategic Development Fund (SDF), for which BTC is the lead provider within a consortium of nine training providers in the South West, is allowing the college to invest further into new sustainability technology, supported by qualified staff.

The college has placed itself ahead of the curve in this arena for future training needs. Funding has allowed us to invest in equipment that includes an Advanced Driver Assistance System (ADAS), calibration and diagnostic equipment available at both our Bridgwater and Taunton campuses for the benefit of our students, apprentices, and local employers. The college works closely with the Institute of the Motor Industry (IMI) to inform our curriculum as it gives us insight into the significant skills gap within the trade. With the investments made, BTC is ready to plug this skills gap and deliver world-class education to its stakeholders with the intention of nurturing highly productive, knowledgeable students who will add value to their employer post-qualification completion.

Land-Based

The College’s Land-Based studies department offers outstanding experience to a diverse range of students and provision is intent on developing the next generation of professionals, leaders, and managers through the development of knowledge, skills and professional behaviours supporting growth and prosperity in the sector. The suite of programmes offered reflects the skills need in relation to land-based employment opportunities and is enhanced by the LEP funded Environmental Living Lab project which provides students with the opportunity to engage in research to tackle environmental challenges within Somerset; including a new research hub.

The Land-Based studies department offers a diverse range of apprenticeship standards meeting the requirements of the national, regional, and local sector. The breadth of provision also encompasses the Food and Drink industry as well as the more traditional land-based subjects and Veterinary Nursing.

The College works with a wide range of employers including levy-paying employers and SMEs. Working relationships with large national and international organisations continue to be successful and include the National Trust, Environment Agency, and the Canal, and River Trust.

Digital

The College provides bespoke facilities designed to replicate those of industry and a real working environment, including specialist Virtual Reality (VR) equipment- an omnidirectional treadmill, a suite of high-spec computers, and cyber security simulation facilities.

BTC hosts Somerset’s first Apple Authorised Training Centre for Education (AATCE), one of the first in the UK approved to deliver training in Swift coding, the powerful and intuitive programming language of iOS, iPadOS and macOS.

The College has invested £650k enabling us to provide all study programme students with portable digital devices that significantly enhance their overall learning experience whilst reinforcing our unswerving commitment to break down barriers to achievement and ensure equality of opportunity for all. There has been positive growth in T Levels in this area with the significant majority of students progressing into higher study or apprenticeships, or employment.

Health and Social Care

The Colleges unique achievements mean that individuals of all ages and abilities – some already employed in the sector – can now access a raft of career pathways into healthcare that can take them from an Internship, Level 2, Access to HE qualification and Level 3 programmes that include a T-Level in Health, right through to qualifications at Levels 4, 5 and now a locally owned and managed BSc, that are wholly delivered on their doorstep. The growth in T Level health continues and places this provision as one of the top recruiting areas at level 3.

The college’s partnership with NHS Somerset represents a system-wide ‘home grown’ approach that links learner numbers to workforce plans and ensures that local talent is retained within Somerset, whilst also reducing reliance on expensive external and international recruitment.

Nursing

Health and Social Care is the second largest sector in the South-West economy, and although health outcomes are good and life expectancy high, too many people develop avoidable long- term multiple conditions which affect both the quality of their lives and their ability to work. Within Somerset there is an acute need for trained nurses, arising from a combination of an ageing workforce, the demise of nursing bursaries, a dearth of university provision, the migration of young people and organizational structure within the NHS which limits progression from junior roles.

Our successful and long-standing partnership with the NHS in Somerset has developed further in recent years and together we have designed programmes that meet a range of future skills needs, most notably direct delivered Nursing degree apprenticeships that address the acute regional and national shortage of trained nurses. The College is also working with the NHS to understand their digital strategy for the coming years and design roles which will address their future needs.

The college has invested £3.2m in new facilities, including a fully equipped Clinical Skills & Simulation Suite. The College was awarded a Queen’s Anniversary Prize for its nursing provision in 2024. This area remains the largest and most likely to grow in response to skills needs, with new courses related to Allied Health professionals planned for a 2026 start.

Hospitality

The College’s work across the Food and Drink Sector continues to strengthen which includes the Food and Drink Skills Network UK hosted by the College and designed to engage local and national employers across the sector in discussions on critical topics and challenges in their industry.

The surge of business coming into Somerset brings with it a raft of opportunities for training in support functions, and the College’s work with facilities management consortiums and other umbrella organisations is supporting the growth of provision in this area.

A £1m refurbishment of this full-scale restaurant and commercial kitchen has resulted in an outstanding training facility for Hospitality and Catering students who, by opening to the public on a regular basis, acquire the teamwork, communication, and people skills that employers and customers expect.

Sport & Uniformed Public Services

BTC is the first college to work in partnership with a national governing body for sport. Since 2016 we have held the national contract with British Gymnastics to deliver Apprenticeships that enable aspiring gymnasts and those nearing the end of their career to be redeployed as coaches and instructors in gymnastics clubs throughout the UK in addition, we work closely with a wealth of SMEs under the British Gymnastics banner to offer coaching apprenticeships at Levels 2, 3 and 4.

Creative Arts

BTCs Creative Arts provision continues to play a vital role in enriching the local cultural landscape while providing students with real-world, community-facing experiences that support personal development and progression into further study or employment. The College is deeply connected to the local creative economy through investment in resources such as the McMillan Theatre in Bridgwater and use of external exhibition venues including the Brewhouse Theatre, East Quay, and the Museum of Somerset.

We maintain strong employer and community partnerships across both campuses. Examples include recent partnerships with organisations such as Climate Action Taunton which has helped shape curriculum planning and supported learners to deliver a public exhibition focused on climate futures and civic engagement. Our students contribute to high-profile public events such as the Taunton Together Festival, where they have co-created installations, fashion shows, and promotional media in collaboration with national retailers, local councillors, and the World Arts Games. In Bridgwater, learners benefit from a growing partnership with East Quay and the Onion Collective with exhibition curation and enterprise experience.

Students are engaged in live briefs and community projects, including immersive environments for local early years settings, live recording work with Muddy Road Studios, and professional theatre and musical theatre training with Somerstage Theatre School and other industry professionals.

Approach to Developing the Plan and Stakeholders

At the heart of this agreement is a strong approach to strategic planning underpinned by robust mechanisms for monitoring and high expectations.

The Governing Body has continued to strengthen with the addition of the addition of new members of the board from key strategic positions from our stakeholders, securing the diverse skills base, experience and links to local business and community. The composition of board members has continued to evolve and incorporate the skills and experience required across a broad range of disciplines to further enhance a highly effective board with an excellent mix of skills and experience. The governors take a lead in setting a clear strategic vision, which is articulated through a robust annual strategic planning process, involving consultation with teams across the College. The governing body play an active role in The Association of Colleges, which provides a link into the local, regional and national FE sector.

The College has consistently had a strong contribution to the local, regional and national skills agenda for many years, with it being strategically woven into the fabric of college developments across the curriculum. Large infrastructure and healthcare projects are the most visible representations of the collaboration, however, as an anchor organisation within the community all elements of the skills agenda are embraced.

Civic Somerset County Council Great South West Bridgwater Chamber of Commerce Taunton Chamber of Commerce Somerset Chamber of Commerce
Community Women's Work Lab Bridgwater Carnival Club Somerset Care Skill Up Somerset Bridgwater United Women's Bristol Bears Cannington Parish Council
Education University West of England (UWE) BTC Multi Academy Trust National College for Nuclear University of Bristol Exeter College Strode College City College Bristol
Employers EDF Energy MEH Alliance Yeo Valley Submarine Development Agency North York Moors National Park Authority A vast number of SMEs

Figure 5 Examples of stakeholders working with BTC

Civic

The College has a range of close relationships regionally. In partnership with the Chamber of Commerce, Devon and Somerset LSIP and other key stakeholders, it has worked tirelessly to respond and lead the drive to meet skills needs. Members of the Business Development team sit on both the Taunton and Bridgwater Chamber committees to understand the employer community on a local level, and the College works more widely with the Somerset Chamber to understand and support future skills needs from a County-wide perspective. The partnership with the Dorset and Somerset Training Provider Network (through their Skill Up initiative) is highly effective in supporting students who are on full-time programmes or seeking an apprenticeship opportunity to build relevant skills into employment.

The College's strong track record of early engagement and bespoke training delivery for major infrastructure projects has led to an invitation to work directly with 'This is Gravity Ltd,' an exciting and innovative Smart Campus that forms part of the HotSW Enterprise Zone, as previously mentioned. The partnership with Gravity centres on a skills training strategy that supports the delivery of the project whilst securing beneficial outcomes for the local community. BTC as an ambassador for skills and innovation forged strong networks within this new initiative; leading, developing and implementing a coordinated, multi-provider regional and national response, focused on the development of new curricula and training methodologies to support the client's significant investment in leading edge technology.

In 23/24, BTC achieved the Queens Anniversary prize for its Nursing provision, further evidencing our role as a skills ambassador.

'Achieving a Queen's Anniversary Prize for Education is a tremendous achievement, and all involved should be congratulated. I am delighted that they have rightly been recognised for their ground breaking work being the first college in the country to develop and deliver nursing degrees; and so have become a pioneering force in helping to address workforce challenges in Somerset.'

Taunton Deane MP, Rebecca Pow

Employers

Work with employers is exceptionally well established and consistently evolving in driving the regional response to the major infrastructure and commercial activity based within the areas surrounding Bridgwater and Taunton, much of which has a national impact. BTC delivers its environmental training offer country-wide and has achieved considerable growth over the past year; a partnership with the Environment Agency and National Trust has developed three core programmes to meet national skills gaps, which BTC is now delivering on a national basis.

This is similar to the contract the College holds with British Gymnastics, whereby it works closely with a wealth of SMEs under the British Gymnastics banner to offer coaching Apprenticeships at all levels.

Through its participation in the National Energy Skills Consortium and the National Electrification Skills Framework & Forum, BTC is successfully promoting its Power and Utilities

training offers – through the National College for Nuclear (NCFN) and the Construction Skills and Innovation Centre, respectively.

BTC continues to support the work being undertaken at Hinkley Point C (HPC). Working with local and national employers, the NCFN has developed and delivered a varied and comprehensive curriculum for the UK's nuclear sector, ranging from L2 Apprenticeships, such as Nuclear Operative and Health Physics Monitor, to the L6 Nuclear Science/ Nuclear Engineer Degree Apprenticeships and full-time study programmes. The College is continually designing and reviewing qualifications and training courses in partnership with HPC and supply chain employers, responding to client and contractor demand to deliver training and education that is attractive to students, addresses the skills shortage in the nuclear sector and offers access to exciting and rewarding long-term careers. BTC has worked in collaboration with HPC client, MEH Alliance, Sector Skills bodies (ECITB) and local engineering employers to build and manage three Centres of Excellence, not only delivering engineering construction skills for HPC but also attracting inward investment and further supporting our drive to maximise the positive impact of HPC on local and national skills and career opportunities.

Our work across the food and drink sector continues to strengthen. Our Food and Drink Skills Network UK, hosted by the College and designed to engage local and national employers across the food and drink sector in discussions on critical topics and challenges in their industry. The forum enables curriculum teams to proactively develop programmes and delivery models that fit employer partners' current and emerging skills needs.

The College's partnership with the Submarine Development Agency has developed yet further to now include the L3 Engineering Technical Support Apprenticeship and the L6 Nuclear Scientist, tailored to their specific requirements.

The College continues to forge and develop its partnerships across Somerset NHS, collaboratively designing programmes that meet a range of future skills needs, most notably the delivery of Nursing Degree Apprenticeships, in addition to the Trainee Nursing Associate Apprenticeship, that address the acute regional and national shortage of trained nurses. This programme has been further rolled out extensively over the past year and is now offered to primary care, in addition to hospital wards. The College has also worked with the Somerset NHS to understand their digital strategy for the coming years and design roles which will address their future needs.

Students benefitted from our partnerships with employers, further building upon these collaborations to add value to learning within high-quality employer interactions.

'Going to the new Tesla showroom was an insightful experience. It gave me more knowledge of how advanced Tesla is as a company. I got to see inside the Tesla workshop, and the employees were enthusiastic to answer our questions. The entire experience was exciting and engaging overall (an automotive student).'

Education

The College worked with four Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) in 23/24 through its University Centre Somerset (UCS); The Open University (OU), Oxford Brookes University (OBU), the University of Plymouth (UOP), and the University of the West of England (UWE), as well as Awarding Organisation Pearson and a number of professional organisations for provision at level 4 and above. A number of Higher Technical Qualifications (HTQs) are embedded within our HE offers, including Higher apprenticeships. UCS works as a national provider, in partnership with UWE, on a number of Degree Apprenticeships across Nursing and Nuclear.

BTC is the sponsor of the Bridgwater College Trust, a thriving Multi Academy Trust comprising of eight secondary/primary schools. The engagement of the College in supporting attainment from school, via college into HE, was documented (September 2022) in an Office for Students (OfS) publication on attainment, recognising the role in education and attainment value attached to the strategic direction and activity of the College.

The College has an excellent reputation for supporting vulnerable students and is the largest provider of High Needs learning in Somerset, both within its specialist provision and by supporting students across wider College study programmes, some of whom have complex social and support needs.

To ensure students and apprentices transition effectively, a team of staff work closely with schools and multi-agency teams in order to gain detailed levels of information and understanding, ensuring education programmes are appropriate and ambitious. In addition,

the College works directly with Somerset County Strategic Boards to inform and influence direction.

The College has always engaged with a wide diversity of students. Despite Brexit, the very close relationship with the institution in St Lo, France, continued to bring students to study on land-based courses at the Cannington campus, living on site in the residential accommodation. In addition, the extension of the Turing Fund for 23/24 secured funding to support enriching educational visits to places such as South Africa, Hinds College in Mississippi, Vietnam, and Los Angeles, to gain cultural awareness, educational insight, work experience and community support activities.

Educational partnerships are a key part of BTCs collaborations, further supporting Somerset to achieve regional ambitions.

'We are delighted to enter this agreement, which further strengthens our relationship with Bridgwater & Taunton College and will play a vital role in developing the regional workforce as well as driving forward innovation. The Gravity smart campus offers a key gateway to progressive research, advancing the journey towards net-zero while also supporting training and careers in energy futures. We look forward to working with the College to nurture local talent and help deliver sustainable, inclusive growth to help meet the pressing challenges posed by climate change.'

Professor Evelyn Welch, Vice-Chancellor and President at the University of Bristol

Community

The College has a significant role within the community it serves and is fundamentally linked to the three communities that nestle around its three campuses, with a wider reach embedded throughout Somerset, which will be particularly important when Somerset becomes a unitary authority.

These three communities are very distinct and BTC's response and engagement is unique in each. Cannington sits in the heart of the farming community and within close proximity to Hinkley Point. Bridgwater, through its links with Carnival and the rugby and football clubs, extends access and learning to a very diverse body of students who may not otherwise participate with a diverse range of businesses. In Taunton, the close partnership with the NHS Trust has successfully brought the two major institutions together, with Senior teams meeting to understand the strategic importance of the service for the community, support for housing through the use of Canonsgrove, in Taunton to provide accommodation for nurses. Students engaged in a number of projects within the communities around the campuses. However, there is still work to do to further engage the local community more widely.

Our work within the community is frequently acknowledge, further cementing our role as an anchor organisation for Somerset.

'I had time to reflect on what you (BTC) do, how you do it and the amazing results you achieve. Enclosed is a small token of my gratitude to you and your team. A Commissioners Coin for services to a Community of Avon and Somerset.'

The Police and Crime Commissioner, awarded the Commissioners Coin for Services to the Community and Improving Safety

As the College moves towards the merger with Strode College and the formation of a group structure the potential to extend the education offer in Somerset grows. The first twelve months will focus on the reviewing and production of a new strategic plan in consultation with stakeholders to ensure the vision and mission of the new college group can be achieved

Case Study: Example of working with employers to meet regional, national and international need: Gravity Project

Bridgwater & Taunton College (BTC) has been on an innovative journey with the Gravity Enterprise Zone since 2018, initially arising from its highly practised work with its local council and other key stakeholders, playing a vital role in shaping the skills landscape both locally and regionally to support the UK’s Clean Growth agenda. As the country’s largest Further Education Apprenticeship provider, BTC has established strong, lasting strategic partnerships with key employers to develop technical skills across various workforce levels. These collaborations include notable names like EDF Energy, Ministry of Defence, NHS and the Environment Agency.

BTC’s unwavering commitment to workforce development is nationally acknowledged. Its history of training initiatives goes back to 2012 with DHL/Morrisons. This dedication continued through a 12-year partnership with EDF Energy at Hinkley Point C (HPC), leading to the latest partnerships within the Gravity Enterprise Zone.

The Gravity Smart Campus, central to the Southwest and part of the HotSW Enterprise Zone, is poised to become a hub for clean energy, with BTC as the education and skills lead by working from the beginning through the planning approval and supporting of the site owners and the planning authority to shape the “Skills Charter”. Through this charter, the college is responsible for developing a skilled workforce to support international investment in decarbonising transport through battery manufacturing for electrification. This initiative will create over 4,500 new jobs in 2-5 years.

BTC’s employer-centric approach emphasises positivity, commitment, and optimism. This includes the college’s unique BTC Advantage programme, which helps the future workforce develop personal, transferable skills such as resilience, communication, teamwork, community engagement, and confidence, preparing them for fulfilling and productive working lives.

In conclusion, BTC’s journey with the Gravity Enterprise Zone has been characterised by proactive leadership in coordinating skills responses, developing employer-centric training plans, and preparing for the future of the UK’s clean energy sector. The college’s proactive engagement and customised training delivery for major infrastructure projects have positioned it as a leader in developing the necessary skills for tomorrow’s workforce



Annual Objectives

Progress made against last Accountability Agreement

- 16-18 student numbers grew by 5% in 2024-2025
- High grades for 16-18 year olds improved by 8%
- Flexible learner numbers continue to be the largest cohort (55%) of all cohorts, enabling the College to respond to sector skills gaps in areas such as health and social care.
- The Level 2 16-18 offer has been extended for the forthcoming year to respond to growth and national priorities such as bricklaying, plumbing and carpentry. This supports internal progression which has increased by 4%
- T Levels offer was extended to include Creative Arts and Engineering growing this successful high performing level 3 offer. Outcomes for T Levels were strong with 81.5% high grade pass rate
- ESOL adult provision continues to grow (116% on previous year) responding to the change in demographics in the county
- The College successfully introduced Bootcamps in 2024-25 with 120 learners in 13 events benefiting from bespoke provision which has impacted positively on them individually and their businesses
- Free Courses for jobs increased by 60% in funding values, ensuring national priorities
- Apprenticeship outcomes improved in 2023/2024 by 5.9% to 70.4%. In year predictions suggest they will improve by a further 2% in 2024-2025
- The apprenticeship budget has grown by 5% and in response to sector and skill gaps the level 4 apprenticeship offer has grown by 11% in year
- The College continued to be the largest provider of levy apprenticeships whilst ensuring SMEs in Somerset are well served (75% of all provision is SME)
- The College underwent the assessment for New Degree Awarding Powers and we await an outcome- June 2025. We are on target to validate degrees in Motorsport and Sports & Exercise Science for delivery in 2026, followed by degree apprenticeships in Nuclear Engineering and Allied Health Professions

Aim	Link to Strategic Ambition/ Vision	Link to Strategic Priorities	Actions	By when
Develop and grow our ASF (Adult Skills Fund) offer to meet skills needs and the needs of the community to enable adults to move into employment and improve in-work opportunities.	Deliver high quality proactive and flexible learning programmes to support adults.	Innovate and grow our curriculum for adults in response to local, regional and national demand. Develop and deliver high quality re-skilling and up-skilling programmes which enable businesses and adults to thrive. Develop and deliver courses to engage adults in learning and support well being and community cohesion Continue to partner with key stakeholders in our community to ensure opportunity for all	Continue to achieve 110% of overall ASF budget - Target national priority sectors - Achieve FCFJ budget Increase opportunities to deliver and grow bootcamps – by further 20% Digital – data analysis and web design Leadership and management Health and Social Care Engineering – nuclear, project controls, lifting and automotive Construction – plant operations and highways Continue to respond to growth in ESOL numbers – 20% growth	July 2026

Aim	Link to Strategic Ambition/ Vision	Link to Strategic Priorities	Actions	By when
Increase 16 – 18 Students	An inspirational experience for school leavers.	Invest in and grow our high-quality academic programmes including A Levels and T Levels. Engage with our school partners to ensure students and our community can realise the full benefit of the Tertiary education system. Ensure all students have access to a digital device to support and energise learning. Deliver high quality support and personal development to develop life skills and resilience.	Grow 16 – 18 by 5% Increase % of students achieving high grades by 5% Improve further GCSE outcomes Continue to grow the supported internship model by a further cohort enabling greater progression into employment for high needs students. Grow our higher education offer to enable positive progression within Somerset, supporting raising low HE participation rates – increase applications to HE by 5%	July 2026
Continue to grow high quality apprenticeship and work based provision to meet employer needs	Transformational change for employers and apprentices	Equip apprentices with the high quality industry knowledge, skills, and behaviours to achieve and thrive in their chosen career. Work in partnership with employers to provide a safe, inclusive and supportive experience for all. Match businesses and future talent to unlock their potential Continue to grow our apprenticeship programme in response to regional and national needs.	Increase apprentice income by 5% annually Maintain position of provider of choice and largest FE provider of levy funded apprenticeships Increase provision in degree and higher apprenticeships linked to employer needs Introduce Foundation Apprenticeships	July 2026
Grow higher education numbers and offer	Transforming Somerset through University Level Education	Establish UCS as the leading provider of university-level education in Somerset Deliver an enhanced student experience	Achieve year 1 plan for new degree awarding powers Validate UCS degrees in Motorsports and Sports & Exercise Science. Recruiting 24 new HE students. Progress NDAP plan in developing new degree apprenticeships profession in nuclear engineering, occupational health and paramedic science	July 2026

Corporation Statement - confirmation of Governor sign-off

On behalf of Bridgwater & Taunton College, it is hereby confirmed that the Corporation conducts reviews in line with the local needs duty, as such resulting this plan. The annual accountability statement sets out an agreed statement of purpose, aims and objectives as approved by the Corporation at their meeting 19 June 2025.



Denys Rayner
Chair of Governors



Andy Berry CBE
Principal & CEO

19 June 2025

Associated Links

Link to latest Ofsted Report

[Bridgwater and Taunton College - Open - Find an Inspection Report - Ofsted](#)

[Link to Accountability Agreement on Website](#)

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