

Annex 13

Shrewsbury Colleges Group working to meet employers needs



SHREWSBURY COLLEGES GROUP

Working to Meet Employer Needs

1. Shrewsbury Colleges Group's Strategic Plan 2021-2025 places significant focus on responsiveness, to students, education and skills policies and to the needs of local regional and national employers.

Strategic Goal 1: To deliver a high-quality impactful student experience identifies priorities of providing a broad curriculum to meet individual, local, regional and national needs, including implementing new national initiatives, and to ensure that students are prepared for the world of 2025 in terms of their employability.

Strategic Goal 2: To create a strong culture and reputation identifies the priority of meeting the needs of local stakeholders through collaboration and partnerships.

Strategic Goal 3: To build capacity to meet the growth in demand identifies the need to develop new facilities to meet the demand for skills training in priority areas including construction, health and STEM

Strategic Goal 4: To innovate and shape the future identifies the need to develop a digital curriculum and partnerships to meet local needs

2. The college identifies employer needs through:

- The principal chairing the Marches LEP Skills Advisory Panel which produced the 2022 Skills Report
- Membership of key employer bodies, including the Chamber of Commerce, CITB and the Health Board
- Membership of key strategic boards, including Shropshire Economic Partnership and the LSIP
- SCGs Skills Advisory Panels for Health, Construction and Digital skills. These panels are chaired by the Vice Principal for Vocational and Technical Education and bring together a group of 4-6 key employers with college Curriculum Directors with the aim of reflecting current sector needs in the design of the curriculum, building capacity for T Level work placements and facilitating upskilling of teachers.
- Labour Market Intelligence from Lightcast LMI in relation to Shropshire and Telford and Wrekin occupational vacancies, most recent review period August 2022 to March 2023. This assessment identified the top ten occupation areas in Shropshire and Telford and Wrekin and mapped these occupational areas to the college curriculum, evidencing that the college delivers courses designed to meet 44 out of the top 50 in-demand occupations in Shropshire, Telford, and Wrekin. Furthermore, analysis of the top 50 occupations requiring higher level qualifications shows that the college advanced level offer matches all 'in demand' occupations nationally in terms of facilitating progress to higher level study.

3. The college has a mature process for reviewing the appropriateness of the curriculum and for responding to needs.



This process is bottom up, focusing on yearly review of provision by the curriculum lead with middle and senior managers, including the principal. The review considers the effectiveness of the provision by considering student feedback, quality of outcomes including critically the quality of destinations, employer feedback and the soft intelligence from the curriculum team who are responsible for developing relationships with strategically important employers for their curriculum area. This is augmented with insight from the senior team based on their engagement with stakeholders. Curriculum reviews consider the line of sight between the provision and sector needs and job opportunities. Vocational and technical courses demonstrate this line of sight through:

- curriculum adaptations to meet employer needs, for example teaching hybrid technology in motor vehicle courses to meet this demand despite this having been removed from the awarding body specification
- co-designing curriculum with employers, for example specialist provision for an international engineering company
- through co-delivery with employers, for example in Health, Engineering, Construction, Catering and Hospitality, Travel and Tourism, and Hair and Beauty
- through working with employers to upskill teachers, for example in Plumbing and Electrical
- through students successfully completing extended Industry Placements, work placements and work trials.

4. Examples of the Impact of Employer Engagement on the investment strategy and curriculum

- Investment in Brickwork, building two brick workshops and growing student and apprentice numbers from 30 to 120
- Investment in Motor Vehicle Engineering, building the new Automotive Centre and growing students and apprentice numbers from 50 to 150. The Automotive Centre was a collaborative project with the Marches LEP and four regional employers.
- Shrewsbury Colleges Group is one of the three members of the Marches Education Partnership (MEP), along with Hereford, Ludlow and North Shropshire College and Telford College. The MEP have worked in collaboration to deliver two Strategic Development Fund projects, in Health (SDF1) and in Renewables (SDF2) with a combined value of £3.8mn.

5. Collaborative Curriculum Planning

The Marches Education Partnership has worked collaboratively to plan provision across the Marches area. This planning has to reflect the geography of the Marches region which requires provision to be available in different geographical locations because of prohibitive travel to learn times. It also reflects the decisions which have been taken by MEP to develop certain specialisms in each geographical location where this is appropriate.

Shrewsbury Colleges Group is specialising in L3 sustainable construction qualifications in Electrical (Battery Storage, EV Charging and Solar Panels and Installation and Maintenance of Air Source Heat Pumps. Hereford, Ludlow and North Shropshire College is specialising in Solar PV and Air Source Heat Pump Installation. Telford College is specialising L3 Installation and Maintenance of Small-Scale Photovoltaic Systems, Design, Installation and Commissioning of Electrical Energy Storage System and Installation and Commissioning of Electric Vehicle Charging Equipment. The MEP will signpost employers and individuals to the specialist offer of the individual colleges. Finally, the MEP are jointly developing training for professional digital skills for full-time students in response to LSIP priorities.

Contribution to Skills Needs – External Views

The Ofsted inspection reports of March 2020 and January 2022 both judged there to be significant strengths in providing a broad curriculum that met the needs of a wide range of stakeholders, including key local and regional skills needs.

The March 2020 report judged:

Leaders and managers are clearly focused on delivering a wide-ranging curriculum. They work effectively with local schools, employers and other stakeholders to ensure that the curriculum offer is broad enough to meet the identified local and regional skills shortages. The offer includes, for example, a specific curriculum to meet the local skills shortages in the NHS and an increasing demand for construction skills – particularly in bricklaying – to address an identified need for additional housing.

The January 2022 report judged:

Leaders and managers, including governors, have used their extensive links with a range of stakeholders, including local schools, other colleges and employers, well to develop and deliver a broad and rich curriculum. Staff ensure that regional employers' needs are considered in the design of vocational courses, apprenticeships and adult programmes. Consequently, the curriculum meets the needs of students, apprentices, employers and local communities very well.

Staff design apprenticeship and adult learning programmes well and ensure that these are flexible to meet the requirements of employers. A range of engineering apprenticeships suit the various specialist requirements of regional employers, such as a shortage of skilled maintenance technicians.

The college commissioned an **external stakeholder review** as part of the preparation of the Annual Accountability Statement. The report concluded:

SCG's employer responsiveness is excellent and stakeholders clearly value the relationships they have with the College and the skills provision that they experience. College staff proactively build partnerships with employers and employer-facing organisations in the region, strengthening these relationships to deliver what is right for the local business community and aligning this to the needs of the wider region.

The report identified strengths in the college approach to working with employers on the design of training:

Employers' experience is clearly underpinned by SCG's Business Engagement team; their positivity and efforts to constructively meet employer-specific needs is evident throughout all the stakeholder feedback we received.

"We have strong, pragmatic relationships with the Business Engagement team, always mindful of ambition but realistic about resources and funding. Shrewsbury are open to ideas, never blocking conversations, always willing to explore and examine the business case for new opportunities"
(Construction employer)

The professionalism and expertise of college teachers was noted by employers as a key strength of provision:

"The background of their instructors is impressive and added to the decision to choose Shrewsbury for delivery of this provision" (Engineering employer)