

Accountability Agreement

Leeds College of Building 2024-2025

“Inspiring lives and building futures”.

[Mission, Values, Strategy \(lcb.ac.uk\)](https://www.lcb.ac.uk)

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Purpose of Leeds College of Building

The purpose of Leeds College of Building is to "to be the college of choice for construction and the built environment, making a difference to the lives of our students and the wider society".

We will do this through delivering responsive, construction industry leading, teaching, learning and assessment to our college community and we place skills at the heart of everything we do.

The current five-year strategic plan was approved in 2021, with six strategic aims.

- Provide a safe, supportive, and inclusive learning culture
- Deliver high quality education and training through enjoyable learning experiences
- Work with employers and progressive collaborations to develop the talents and skills to meet further workforce needs
- Harness the use of technology to support innovation in learning and smarter, more efficient working practices
- Attract, develop, and retain a highly skilled and responsive workforce
- Remain a financially sustainable and resilient organisation

The people at Leeds College of Building are fundamental to our success. Our highly skilled teachers, assessors, facilitators, support, and administrative colleagues are our greatest asset. The current economic climate of the cost-of-living crisis, economic uncertainty and the ongoing demand within the construction sector all combine to make recruiting and retaining people, exceptionally difficult.

Leeds College of Building has approximately 44% of its income from apprenticeships. This is unique for a General Further Education College. It means that the complexity of apprenticeship funding, bureaucracy and the continuing implementation and review of Standards impacts significantly. The processes within the College are being reviewed and improved for the employer, apprentice, and the College. Processes outside of the apprenticeship programme are being reviewed to improve effectiveness and efficiency.

Behaviour of students has changed post-pandemic. Positive behaviours such as the adoption of online technology, the willingness for the majority to return to normal educational environments, and the resilience of young people to adapt to significant change must be harnessed. Similarly, as the pandemic has significantly widened the disadvantage gap, the College must do what it can to effectively support all students to adjust and make significant progress towards their next steps, developing employability skills alongside construction knowledge and skills.

Local Needs Duty

Section 52B of the Further and Higher Education Act 1992 requires providers to review provision in relation to local needs, as introduced in the Skills and Post-16 Education Act 2022. Governing bodies of institutions within the further education sector must have regard to this guidance when discharging the duty to review how well the education or training provided by the institution meets local needs. The legislation requires governing bodies to consider, considering the review, what actions might be taken to better meet local needs. This Accountability Agreement addresses meeting local needs and given the College's specialism, and the collaborative relationship with Leeds City College as the main other provider in the city, no further action is required.

Reclassification of Colleges

In November 2022 the Government brought the college sector back to central Government control. As a result of this change, colleges are now required to adhere to the Government sector's funding rules set out in Managing Public Money. To support colleges with this change, the ESFA has provided the College Financial Handbook 2024. The handbook seeks to help colleges by bringing together the key financial requirements in a single place. It should be read alongside the College Accounts Direction, College Financial Planning Handbook and Post-16 Audit Code of Practice.

College corporations remain statutory bodies and exempt charities. The College's principal legal relationship with the Department for Education is governed by this document, the Accountability Agreement.

Who we are and where we work

Leeds College of Building is a General Further Education College based in Leeds, West Yorkshire. The College delivers programmes and qualifications predominantly from within the Construction and Built Environment sector. In 2023-24, there were 1,180 full time students on Study Programmes, and 2,717 apprentices, on Standards from level 2 to level 6. On WYCA funded AEB there were 414 students; on FCFJ Level 3 courses there were 16 students and 19 students on ESFA funded AEB.

West Yorkshire is the economic centre of Yorkshire and an essential city in the Northern Powerhouse, linking to Manchester and Liverpool. West Yorkshire is an internationally significant economy with pre-pandemic output of £55.4 billion, 2.3 million people, 90,000 businesses and a workforce of 1.1 million, alongside seven universities, 91,000 students and 30,000 graduates. West Yorkshire has a highly diverse population, with 18% of people coming from BAME backgrounds (14.5% nationally). West Yorkshire Combined Authority (WYCA) is the funding agency for adult education in West Yorkshire.

West Yorkshire has a high performing further education sector offering a diverse range of provision. It is also home to a large and diverse HE sectors, attracting a significant net inflow of students each year. Higher skilled jobs have been the main driver of recent employment growth, and this is set to continue.

Leeds is the UK's third largest city and has low productivity and low wages, lower employment rates and a deficit of high-level skills in comparison to the UK average. Disadvantaged groups face the greatest risk of exclusion from employment. Over 500,000 people live in areas defined as being amongst the most deprived 10% in England. Relative levels of deprivation in West Yorkshire have worsened from 2015. Skill levels at level 4+ are below the national average. There is significant over-representation of people with low/no qualifications in West Yorkshire and large numbers of people lack basic literacy and numeracy skills. Among the skills that employees need to support their career and employment development needs are basic digital skills, functional literacy, numeracy, and interpersonal skills.

Whilst the College operates nationally, attracting apprentices from across the country, most of its students and apprentices come from West Yorkshire. The Leeds City Region employs 66,000 people in its construction workforce, 5% of all jobs in the local economy. The West Yorkshire area has 9,830 construction businesses registered for VAT or PAYE, over 35% of which are in Leeds. Construction growth in Yorkshire and Humber, according to the Chartered Institute of Building Services (CIOB) has been driven by housing like most regions. There are more construction workers than people who are employed in construction and as such, the region is a net exporter of skills which is beneficial to the regional economy. Whilst this might mute the skills shortages in some respects, CITB's Construction Skills Network (CSN) puts the annual required recruitment rate at 2,010 per annum over the period 2019-2023 to fill the gaps made by those leaving the industry.

The prospects of future sustained growth are encouraging. The National Infrastructure Strategy confirmed the Government's commitment to major infrastructure projects in the region, and housing in Leeds and York. The Government also confirmed its commitment to expanding the devolution deal for West Yorkshire that will increase local decision-making.

Looking at current rates of pay, the average (median) male, full-time construction employee earns £37,173, which is approximately 17% more than the average male across all industries in Yorkshire and the Humber. This should assist with the task of increasing recruitment and enable the industry to compete for cross-cutting skills e.g., ICT and digital.

Demographics are an important factor in meeting the skills demands from across the city and wider Leeds City Region.

The key demographic is the birth rate as this highlights the growing demand for training that students leaving school at 16 will place on providers. This then transfers into older students through the years, impacting on higher education approximately two to three years later. The number of 16-year-olds in Leeds is due to increase by 33% in the 10 years between 2018 and 2028. Between 2018 and 2023, the number of 16-year-olds increases by 17%. Post-16 provision in Leeds will need to grow and change to accommodate additional student numbers.

The number of Leeds resident 16-to-18-year-olds participating in full-time education in schools and colleges in 2018/19 was 15,260 (Vector/DFE data). Increasing this number by 33% gives a raw number of 5,036 additional places required by 2028.

Leeds College of Building currently attracts 5% of the 16-18 market, which equates to approximately 900 new full-time students per year. A 33% increase on this means that by 2028, LCB would need to accommodate just short of 1,200 full-time students, which it is currently already meeting. Work is ongoing to accommodate more students on technical education routes as the demand for places rises. For apprenticeships, it would equate to an additional 400 apprentices studying at LCB.

These figures assume a similar market share percentage. To maintain and potentially increase the student numbers, which in turn then supports the construction sector by providing sufficient skilled workers for its demands, it is essential that the College provides high quality, relevant and industry leading training that effectively supports progression into the construction industry.

decline compared with 2019 (39%). The proportion that has a training budget is stable, at three in ten (29%). Training & skills plans are less common in smaller businesses, the private sector and in construction. The skills most commonly in need of improving continue to be sales and marketing (26%), other technical or job-specific skills (25%) and digital/advanced IT skills (22%). The skills most commonly lacking are other technical or job-specific skills (71%), which is in line with last year. The next highest proportion mention a lack of science, technology & engineering skills (8%). 57% of construction firms (115 companies) reported anticipating skills gaps in the next 12 months.

Engagement and partnerships

Leeds College of Building is one of seven colleges within West Yorkshire, who are part of the West Yorkshire Consortium of Colleges (WYCC). The consortium was set up to operate on behalf of the further education colleges in the region, to deliver training, predominantly funded by the European Social Fund (ESF), and now Department for Education (DfE) and WYCA.

The College was a founding member of the Leeds Learning Alliance, which is a Trust formed by like-minded Leeds educational organisations based upon a shared commitment to inclusion, close collaboration, and high-level ambition. Members of the alliance include Leeds City Council, Leeds Trinity University, Luminare Education Group, Leeds Rhinos Foundation, Carr Manor Community School, Bankside Primary School, Ahead Partnership, Wetherby High School, CATCH, Leeds Beckett University, Leeds United Foundation and Wellspring Academy Trust.

We have a long-standing agreement with Leeds City College, who are the only other vocational provider in Leeds. Leeds City College deliver other vocational areas and do not deliver construction related programmes. This agreement supports collaboration and reduces duplication of provision. Relationships between providers are collaborative and actively seeking ways to work together for the better of students, employers and wider stakeholders.

We are a member of the Leeds Inclusive Anchors Network, which is a group of the city's largest (mainly) public sector employers. They come together and focus on areas where they can make a difference for people as an employer, through procurement, through service delivery or as a civic partner. Anchors are locally rooted, have high spend, provide vital services and are influencers, enablers, and champions within the city. There are 13 anchor institutions in Leeds. These are Leeds College of Building, Leeds Teaching Hospitals NHS, Leeds Beckett University, Leeds City College, Leeds and York Partnership Foundation NHS Trust, University of Leeds, Leeds Community Healthcare NHS Trust, Leeds Trinity University, Leeds City Council, NHS Digital, Yorkshire Water, British Library and Northern Gas Networks.

The College has strategic partnerships with national employers such as NG Baileys, BAM Nuttall and JN Bentley, who all sit on the Colleges employer forum, which supports curriculum development, including the implementation of Degree Apprenticeships in Civil Engineering Site Management and Quantity Surveying. CITB and Leeds College of Building have a close working relationship, supporting development of appropriate Standards, and working together to reduce the skills gaps within the construction sector.

LCB is working with a small charity, The Joseph Aspdin Trust (JAST) who have been established to support the development of retrofit skills across Leeds, and specifically the area of Hunslet, which has long been one of the most deprived areas of the city. JAST have supported the College by funding a specific post to raise awareness of retrofit skills within our student population and this partnership is one which, although small in scale, is very important.

Contribution to skills priorities

The construction industry has an ageing demographic profile and is older than it has been in the past. This is further compounded by the outward migration of non-UK nationals following Brexit, who are typically younger and account for 8% - 10% of the construction workforce. In the third quarter of 2020, there was a 28% drop in the number of non-UK workers, greater than the 7% fall in total employment in construction over the same period. Of concern is the notably smaller proportion of UK born 16-34-year-olds in the industry to fill gaps left by the non-UK workers exiting the labour market. To meet future labour demands, the industry will need to upskill existing workers, attract new entrants and recruit from other sectors and/or people currently unemployed who will also require training and support to remove barriers.

According to data published quarterly by the ONS, there was an average of 802,000 self-employed construction workers October-December 2020, a 13% reduction on the same period in 2019, which could potentially impact the availability and supply of workers. The data indicates that 60% of the UK construction workforce is self-employed, becoming the norm following the 2008 financial crises. Having a self-employed workforce benefits clients and contractors by offering the flexibility to manage resources in line with workflows and to find skills from a large and dynamic pool of recruits. However, it is also considered one of the main barriers to workforce development in the construction industry because self-employed workers do not typically have access to training and apprenticeships and are less likely to invest in training.

The COVID-19 pandemic has also exposed the risk associated with this type of employment; during lockdowns and closures, self-employed construction workers were released without pay or entitlement to furlough. Many were not eligible for the Government's COVID-19 relief funds for the self-employed because they have not filed a profit in the previous year or been trading for a full tax year.

A substantial and long-term investment is needed to support the industry to increase labour supply, improve retention, address shortages, and develop the new skills needed to take advantage of technologies. The National Infrastructure Strategy describes how the Government will support industry to address its skills challenges, it will:

- Leverage public contracts to boost opportunities for construction apprentices, traineeships, and T levels in the construction industry, and to recruit a more diverse workforce.
- Improve apprenticeships for employers across the economy, which the construction industry will especially benefit from, allowing them to transfer more of their unspent levy funds before they expire and use more intensive apprenticeship training options.
- Introduce construction traineeships to bridge the gap between further education courses and entry to employment; and
- Allocate funding for adult learners to access short training modules (4-16 weeks) for upskilling and reskilling via the National Skills Fund investment⁴.

Local Skills Improvement Plan (LSIP)

LCB has been an integral part of the development of the LSIP, helping to shape its development, given our access and engagement with employers.

Construction has been identified as a sector of strategic importance in the region. There are over 70,000 people employed in the sector, and it is dominated by sub-contracting arrangements and self-employment.

There are significant shortages across much of the sector, with civil engineers, quantity surveyors, electricians, scaffolders, dry liners, fencing, and paving identified as the most severe.

LCB has been aware of the shortages in these areas and has responded through curriculum development. Civil engineering and quantity surveying have been part of the growth in Higher and Degree Apprenticeships over the last three years, and dry lining was introduced four years ago. In the UK Skill Build final, Leeds College of Building was successful with achieving a gold medallist in dry lining, demonstrating the quality of training provided.

The issues employers have raised are long standing and well known. Employers, due to the SME nature of the sector, do not have the time or funds to invest in training. Keeping employees once trained is a significant barrier, due to demands across the sector and employees moving for additional pay. The most significant issue for the College is our capacity to deliver. There is unprecedented demand for the skills, however, a significant lack of qualified people to deliver the programmes, particularly in a sector where pay in the sector is so much higher than for those in education.

59% of employers are reporting skills gaps and 8% have hard to fill vacancies. Upskilling of employees is also an issue due to time constraints.

Digitisation

The benefits of digital construction are well rehearsed, and adoption provides huge opportunities. Digitalisation is at the heart of the Construction Sector Deal and policies designed to raise sector productivity. The imperatives for change are also rooted in longstanding industry issues. Tight profit margins, high profile project overruns and issues with quality continue to dog the industry. More recently, Brexit and the potential impacts on the availability of labour have sharpened the focus on doing things differently. However, the pace of digitalisation is gradual.

The pandemic has accelerated the process of digitalisation due to the limitations on travel and face-to-face contact. Businesses are investing in e-invoicing, modernised Customer Relationship Management (CRM), workforce management systems, digital sales, marketing, and communication systems and are realising the improvements to efficiency and profitability.

The implication for the workforce is an increase in demand for workers with a wider skill base in Information and Communication Technology (ICT). Training for new entrants will need to reflect the new skills employers require and focus on people already in the industry who can develop their skills. The future construction areas will demand digitally literate, multi-skilled individuals. This requires industry to work with FE providers to deliver new upskilling routes for existing workforce and new entrants to the sector.

A quickening pace of innovation and technological progress is also an opportunity to improve the sector's image and attractiveness to young people and improve recruitment and diversity in the construction workforce by promoting the range of careers available and the opportunities related to the use of digital technology. Whilst competition with other industries for ICT recruits will be challenging, given that they are also in short supply nationally, construction pays well compared to other industries and has a healthy economic forecast and prospect of offering sustainable careers.

The CITB's research found that:

- Digital construction is understood to mean different things by different people. Many assume digital construction means Building Information Modelling (BIM) but it is wider than that. True understanding is concentrated on digital construction specialists. Those trying to implement digital methods felt frustrated when persuading others to take a 'leap of faith' because of the lack of understanding of how technology could solve problems.
- Much of the technology that is being used is not at the cutting edge of what is available. Drones, Lidar, smartphones, and tablets are increasingly widely used but innovative tech – if used at all - is generally limited to small pilots or trials, as investment in larger scale innovations is considered too risky. Sharing best practice will help industry evolve an understanding of the value of digital and the skills and training needed.
- Data and its effective collection, communication and management are central to digital transformation. Industry needs to demystify how data is used and the skills required across the entire workforce. Genuine understanding of what data management involves is limited.
- Tech-specific skills are not the problem – but broader skills and competencies at various levels need to be addressed. Leaders need skills in implementing digital change and creating the right structures and culture. Managers and operatives need problem-solving skills and greater digital savviness, not everyone needs to be at the same level. It is about enabling top-down and bottom-up change.

Digital construction comprises of new technology hardware and software, data-led processes and equipping staff with the skills needed to maximise digital applications. This research set out to explore the adoption, use and expected uptake of a broad range of digital technologies across construction, including:

- Augmented reality/virtual reality
- Drones/unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs)
- Artificial intelligence (AI)
- Wearable tech
- The Internet of things
- Productivity/planning apps
- Data Analytics

Sustainability

The LSIP also identifies “Green Skills” as a sector of strategic importance. This will be an important feature of the Colleges’ curriculum for the foreseeable future, and part of that is the implementation of the Retrofit Skills Advisory Panel, which has been a product of the Mayors Green Jobs Taskforce. This panel will produce a set of recommendations for WYCA as to the steps needed to be taken to meet the climate crisis, and the net zero targets. The UK target to reach ‘net zero emissions by 2050’ suggests there will be a continuing pressure to reduce the energy consumption in construction and improve the energy performance of buildings. Additional pressures to reduce waste will also drive the market for new skills. The implications for future skills requirements are very significant with changes in the building services.

A report by the CITB ‘Building Skills for Net Zero’ outlines the skills implications for the workforce of the Government’s commitment to achieve net zero by 2050. Most of the requirement for additional skills will come from addressing energy-related emissions from existing buildings. The UK Green Building Council estimates that up to 95% of emissions from the built environment over the next 30 years could come from buildings that exist today.

Most of the effort to decarbonise must therefore be focused on the energy efficiency retrofit of existing buildings. At least some retrofit work will be required on around 27 million residential and two million non-residential buildings to reduce emissions over the next 30 years. Even with new ways of working, we will need to recruit, train and in some cases retrain large numbers of people to do the work.

CITB estimate that an additional 59,000 plumbers and heating, ventilation and air conditioning workers will be required, primarily in the installation of heat pumps by 2028. The research also highlights that just over 86,000 project managers will be required by the same date, this includes specific roles like Retrofit Co-ordinator. The requirement for building envelope specialists, including insulation installers, will be 27,000 in 2028.

Modern Methods of Construction (MMC)

MMC is likely to grow in new-build work and have a lesser impact on the trades involved in repair and maintenance. The main skills implications are a reduction of trades on-site and increasing need for mechanical handling and a parallel growth in off-site trades and use of Computer Aided Design (CAD). This is likely to present challenges for companies to take advantage of the opportunities for MMC because of the low levels of tech integration in the design process. Causeway’s research into construction attitudes to design innovation has revealed little over a third of construction professionals have an integrated technology solution in place for infrastructure design.

Mass Transit

In 2028, a mass transit is due to start construction in West Yorkshire. This will require significant skills in an already challenging recruitment environment. WYCA and Leeds College of Building will work together over the next 12-18 months to determine the skills required and training requirements to support this.

Targets

Targets	Contribution towards national, regional, and local priorities for learning and skills
Ensure all programmes include the relevant ‘green skills’ to their trade or skill area.	<p>This will contribute to national, regional, and local priorities by targeting specific activities on the provision types.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Education Programmes for Young People – new entrants to the construction sector, supporting breadth of provision and opportunities for all students. • Adult Education – upskilling of the existing workforce and supporting access to ‘good jobs’ for unemployed residents. • Apprenticeships – full breadth of provision to meet the wider skills needs, and ensuring green technologies are included.
Continue to introduce higher and degree apprenticeships in identified skill shortage areas	Expansion of Higher and Degree Apprenticeships through validation of new programmes, in areas such as architectural technology, meeting identified skills shortage areas and providing a route to Degree Apprenticeships for those from low-income backgrounds.

Continue to increase apprenticeship starts, focusing on supporting 16 –18-year-olds to access employment successfully	With the apprenticeship reforms in 2017, the college has continued to work with employers, government bodies and awarding bodies to continue the progression of the apprenticeship agenda locally, regionally, and nationally. Apprenticeships are vital for social mobility and the governments levelling up agenda.
Increase study programme numbers to meet local needs driven by demographic growth.	100% of our programmes are in LEP priority areas, with construction having significant skills gaps. Demographic growth in Leeds is maintained for the next five years, and to support local needs, the curriculum needs to provide the best progression route into a sustained career.
Provide effective support for all students to access all provision types, ensuring equality of opportunity and a reduction of barriers to progression.	Supporting students with various needs, difficulties or disabilities, post pandemic and to support levelling up, is a national priority.
Develop a Digital Strategy to ensure that students learn the required skills for successful employment.	Digital skills are a key feature in national skills plans, and as such this action will address a national agenda.

Corporation Statement

On behalf of Leeds College of Building, it is hereby confirmed that the college plan as set out reflects an approved accountability agreement as approved by the Corporation at their meeting on 19 March 2024.

The plan will be published on the College’s website within three months of the start of the 2024-25 academic year.

Mark Roper
Chair of Governors

Nikki Davis
Principal and Chief Executive Officer

Dated: 19 March 2024

External links

Leeds College of Building Accountability Agreement

Strategic Plan

<https://www.lcb.ac.uk/media/3013/strategic-plan-2021-2026.pdf>

2022-23 Accounts

[lcb.ac.uk](https://www.lcb.ac.uk)