

Accountability Agreement

Leeds College of Building
2025-2026

“Inspiring lives and building futures”.

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What is an Accountability Agreement?

The purpose of an **Accountability Agreement** for Further Education (FE) providers is to clearly define and communicate how a college or training provider will meet its strategic objectives while responding to **local, regional, and national priorities**. It acts as a public-facing document which:

1. Demonstrates Alignment with National Policy

It ensures the provider aligns its curriculum and operations with national skills priorities, such as:

- Filling critical skills gaps (e.g., green skills, construction, digital)
- Supporting the UK's Net Zero targets
- Advancing employability and lifelong learning

2. Shows Responsiveness to Local Needs

The agreement shows how the college is addressing **local labour market needs** and working with regional partners like local authorities, employers, and community groups, as required under the Skills and Post-16 Education Act 2022.

3. Promotes Transparency and Accountability

It publicly outlines:

- The college's mission and strategic goals
- Targets and performance measures
- Contributions to economic and social outcomes

4. Enables Monitoring and Funding Decisions

Government bodies like the Department for Education (DfE) and Ofsted can use it to evaluate whether public funding is being used effectively to deliver high-quality, impactful education and training.

5. Strengthens Stakeholder Confidence

Employers, students, funders, and local communities can see how the college is contributing to workforce development and community wellbeing.

Purpose of Leeds College of Building

Leeds College of Building will be recognised as the leading provider for construction and the built environment education and training, for all our students.

The College will contribute to social, economic and environmental values, by ensuring our students are highly skilled, curious, responsible, resilient and respectful people, who recognise that with dedication, they can achieve more than they thought possible.

We will develop our students to become critical thinkers, creative problem solvers and professional communicators, able to work within any organisation. The leaders of the future.

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.

Since the 2024-25 Accountability Agreement, a new Strategic Plan 2025-2030 has been developed to deliver our vision, which is *“Leeds College of Building will be recognised as the leading provider for construction and the built environment education and training, for all our students.”*

We will do this by achieving our six strategic aims:

1. The recognised leader for construction and the built environment education and training for 16-19 students and for apprenticeships
2. The recognised leader for construction and the built environment education and training for adult students supporting people to enter the industry and for upskilling the existing adult workforce
3. A go-to partner for the construction and built environment sector when seeking out development and training opportunities
4. The employer of choice and recognised as a great place to work, delivering a supportive and ambitious culture
5. An engaged and valued part of the local and regional community, supporting and enhancing wider opportunities for all
6. Providing excellent and sustainable facilities for our students, colleagues and partners, whilst maintaining financial stability

Supporting strategies within the plan focus on our people, our curriculum, Digital and AI, Sustainability and Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Belonging. These strategies will drive developments over the next five years and reflect the construction and built environments main priorities.

In addition, the College also commissioned an Economic and Social Value Report which showcased the positive impact of Leeds College of Building, locally and regionally.

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, what actions might be taken to better meet local needs.

Leeds College of Building supports the national skills priorities by delivering qualifications and programmes solely focused on the construction and built environment sector. 84% of all

provision delivered meets one of the seven national skills priorities, the highest percentage for any Further Education College in the country.

Whilst this may seem narrow, our curriculum underpins a wide range of sectors. For example, health, through the new development of an apprenticeship with the NHS to support building services; clean energy industries through delivery of heating and ventilation apprenticeships and digital technologies through the construction of mass data centres to power the IT sector. The Colleges reach and impact is far wider ranging than one sector. For example, Leeds College of Building delivers a £31.5 million total annual economic contribution, supporting 460 jobs across Leeds and the wider UK. Our initiatives such as the Low Carbon Heating Technician Course and Green Rail Skills Programme have trained over 4,000 students in sustainability-focused areas, equipping them for future-ready careers.

Our provision does have a national footprint for apprenticeships – for example, the College is the only provider of Transport Planning Apprenticeships in the country, and students travel from across England to study at Leeds College of Building. Our broad range of programmes, and our flexible delivery models mean that apprentices nationally, can access our specialist provision, and this accessibility is directly impacting on skills shortages in the UK construction sector. Our growth from just nine Degree Apprentices to over 250 in three years is testament both to the need, but also our high quality, specialist provision.

Within Leeds we do not compete with Leeds City College on the curriculum outside of the construction and built environment sector. We use our convening power to maximise our collective impact on the mayoral pledges, and we are advocates for FE within the business community, funding bodies and government departments. In West Yorkshire, this is embodied in the WYCC FE Compact. The new agreement is based upon key themes and reflects correlation and response to the West Yorkshire Mayor's pledges and priorities alongside the new Skills and Post-16 Education Act 2022.

Who We Are

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. Students are predominantly from West Yorkshire; however, the College has a national offer for apprenticeships, with almost 50% coming from outside the region.

In 2023-24 (R14), there were 3,740 students enrolled, with 2,160 apprentices and 1,630 education and training students.

Within education and training, 50.3% of students are from IMD1, 18.6% more than the comparator FE position. 92.6% of our students are male, 74.7% are white and 35% have a learning difficulty or disability, which is 10.2% above the comparator.

For apprenticeships, 35.4% of all apprentices are 16-18, with 51.4% being 19-24. Apprentices are much more evenly spread across the IMD categories, with 23% being in IMD1. This is 3.1% above the comparator. Apprenticeships are less diverse with 90.2% being white, and 90.7% are male. 21.7% of apprentices have a learning difficulty or disability. This reflects the national position in construction.

For provision types, 50.9% of apprenticeships are at L3, whilst 55.5% of education and training programmes are at level 2, reflecting the route into industry at this point, and then progression via the sector.

More importantly for our students, graduates from Leeds College of Building command an average £6,000 wage premium compared to non-graduates, contributing an additional £14.5

million annually to the UK economy, and directly lifting many individuals and their families out of deprivation.

Within Yorkshire and Humber, Leeds College of Building scores +7 on the skills measure, 5.9 above the next placed FE College, and second highest in the country (based on 21/22 data). This represents the rate of progression into sustained employment and preparation for students for being economically active.

For progression, the College scores 62%, with only 12 FE Colleges in the country scoring higher. This score represents the percentage of the cohort who are achieving their highest level of learning to date.

Where We Work

West Yorkshire is the economic centre of Yorkshire and Leeds is 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, 2.4 million people, 95,000 businesses and a workforce of 1.2 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). The WYCA Growth Plan identifies manufacturing, digital, healthcare, finance and the third sector as strategically important features of our regional economy.

There are five missions within the Growth Plan: -

1. A prosperous West Yorkshire – an inclusive economy with well paid jobs
2. A happy West Yorkshire – great places and healthy communities
3. A well-connected West Yorkshire – a strong transport system
4. A sustainable West Yorkshire – making lives greener
5. A safe West Yorkshire – a region where all can flourish

The College has a role to play in supporting the achievement of each mission, and our new strategic plan will ensure an alignment with the both the Growth Plan for WYCA and the Inclusive Growth Strategy for Leeds City Council.

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, and the growth of the age group at 16-18 is most concentrated in areas of deprivation.

Skill levels at level 4+ are below the national average and there is significant over-representation of people with low or no qualifications in West Yorkshire with large numbers of people lack basic literacy and numeracy skills.

Yorkshire and Humber have 14,750 construction employers, representing 13% of all employment. Construction growth in Yorkshire and Humber, according to CITB will be 2.6% per year, which means an additional 26,600 workers are required in the region between now and 2028. [ctb1003_csn-rep_regional_yorkshire-and-humber_aw2.pdf](#)

Nationally, the picture remains the same. 251,500 extra workers are required to meet UK construction output by 2028. Growth is expected to increase from 2025 onwards, with the major sectors for demand being private housing, infrastructure and maintenance. If the growth is met, 2.75m people will be employed within the construction sector by 2028.

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. This has led to enhanced working between partners on school exclusions, racism and peace building. The College has shared best practice with and from partners, regarding attendance strategies which has resulted in improved attendance year on year at the College. This is directly leading to higher achievements amongst our student cohort, enhancing their progression opportunities and future careers, with progression to positive destinations standing more than 90% across provision types.

The College has 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. This verbal agreement will be formalised via a memorandum of understanding during the 2025 calendar year.

The College has strategic partnerships with national employers such as BAM Nuttall and JN Bentley, who all participate in the Colleges employer forum, which supports curriculum development, including the implementation of Degree Apprenticeships. 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. This close working relationship is an important feature of Leeds College of Building, which has developed and been enhanced over years. Engagement with employers is an organic development of the close links we have with the industry we serve. Employer Boards are a formal way of capturing employer views; however, the informal routes are much more prominent. This is teacher to employer, assessor to apprentice, direct and productive feedback. Examples are the changes made in curriculum, supported by our extensive number of teaching staff who are still working in the industry – this experience is invaluable and allows the College to make rapid changes to curriculum, ensuring students are learning the most valuable skills. In roofing, a new member of the teaching team, still working in industry has contributed ideas direct from his experience on sites, leading to the addition of lean-to roof training, and making this possible in an area with limited capacity. In brickwork, the curriculum for 2025-26 is being developed by teachers who have just come into teaching, building on the curriculum delivery experience of long-established teachers, ensuring that deliverable but highly relevant knowledge and skills are being learned by our students. Our long-standing relationship with BAM is now developing into groundworks, providing more opportunities for young people to enter construction with a full five-year development plan.

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 accounted 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 crisis. 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.

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.

More recently (March 2025), the government has announced significant investment in construction skills training, with £600m of investment being provided to recruit and train an additional 60,000 construction workers. Whilst detail is not yet published (at the time of writing), the headlines are: -

- Boosting teachers in further education: We will announce partnerships with local bodies to broker arrangements with employers to get more people from industry into teaching, opening opportunities for people with construction experience to train the new generation.
- Boosting FE learners: Paying providers to create links with employers and pay their costs to put up to 40,000 students per annum on placement to get them industry experience.

- Introducing Technical Excellence Colleges: Giving further education colleges additional funding to create specialist facilities, equipment, and curriculum for construction courses to directly meet industry needs.
- New construction foundation apprenticeships: This is to help increase the numbers of young people applying to get them into industry ahead of specialising in more specialised or advanced apprenticeships.
- Incentives for employers of foundation apprentices: If the young person is participating in a construction foundation apprenticeship there will be an employer incentive of up to £2k.
- Incentives for FE providers: To expand their delivery of construction courses.
- Funding for providers to help learners get placements: To fund providers to engage with employers to improve learner site readiness.
- Expanding Skills Bootcamps: To increase the number of new skilled construction workers by up to 15,000 and upskilling people with a base knowledge.
- Creating a capital pot for employer led/match funded projects
- Construction Skills Mission Board: The proposed Construction Skills Mission Board aims to work with construction industry leaders to collaboratively secure the workforce needed to meet future demand and commitments to deliver the infrastructure and built environment announced by government.

As the only College in the country, to focus on construction and the built environment, we will endeavour to position the College as a leading voice in these developments. This is being achieved through representation in the right places, securing investment which will make a real difference to the skills shortage, and ultimately to growth and productivity.

Local Skills Improvement Plan (LSIP)

Construction has been identified as a sector of strategic importance in the region. There are over 70,000 people employed in the sector regionally, 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.

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.

Digitisation and AI

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 with digital skills. 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.

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.

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 approximately 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 by 2028.

Targets

Strategic Aim 1: The recognised leader for construction and the built environment education and training for 16-18 students and for apprenticeships

Measure (national rate)	Target 2025-26
16-18 qualification achievement rate	82%
16-18 attendance rate	90%
Overall apprenticeship achievement rate	68%
Progression to a positive destination (16-18)	93%
Progression into sustained employment (Apprentices)	93%
To become the largest provider of Apprenticeships in Construction and the Built Environment*	1

*Based on starts within Construction, Planning and Built Environment SSA

Strategic Aim 2: The recognised leader for construction and the built environment education and training for adult students supporting people to enter the industry and for upskilling the existing adult workforce

Measure (national rate)	Target 2025-26
Adult qualification achievement rate	91%
Progression to a positive destination (19+)	91%

Strategic Aim 3: A go-to partner for the construction and built environment sector when seeking out development and training opportunities

Measure	Target 2025-26
Employer survey: providing the right training at the right time*	100%
Employer survey: improving apprentice skills*	100%
Apprentice survey: relevant training that helps you perform your job better**	90%
Apprentice survey: learn new skills and develop existing ones**	100%

*% of employers who said this was a strength

**% of apprentices who said this was to a reasonable standard

Strategic Aim 4: The employer of choice and recognised as a great place to work, delivering a supportive and ambitious culture

Measure	Target 2025-26
Percentage of employees who feel valued in the College	88%
Percentage of employees who are not thinking of leaving the College	92%
Percentage of employees who agree there is an opportunity to progress within the College	68%
Presenteeism rates	96%

Strategic Aim 5: An engaged and valued part of the local and regional community, supporting and enhancing wider opportunities for all

Measure	Target 2025-26
Percentage of female students on Study Programmes	10%
Percentage of minority ethnic Apprentices	25%
Number of schools being classified as 'feeder' schools (15+ students)	15%
Increasing the volume of Leeds based students on Higher and Degree Apprenticeships (postcode data)	22%

Strategic Aim 6: Providing excellent facilities and resources for our students, colleagues and partners, whilst maintaining financial stability

Measure	Target 2025-26
Cash balances	£9,194
Pay as a percentage of income	65%
Adjusted cash days in hand	133
Financial Health	Good or Outstanding

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 24th June 2025.

The plan will be published on the College's website within three months of the start of the 2025-26 academic year.



Steve Carmody
Chair of Governors
Dated:

Nikki Davis
Principal and Chief Executive Officer
Dated:

External links

1. [Leeds College of Building Accountability Agreement](#)
2. [Strategic Plan](#)
3. [2023-24 Accounts](#)
4. [Leeds College of Building Economic and Social Value Report](#)