

2025/26

ACCOUNTABILITY AGREEMENT

1. Purpose

1.1 Strategic Objectives and Mission

The College's purpose is set out in its mission statement contained within its latest strategic plan, which was finalised in February 2023. Our mission is to deliver **learning that works**.

The College's curriculum and provision derives from its mission to deliver **learning that works** which:

- provides learners with the opportunities, experiences and skills to move into their intended career destinations
- promotes social mobility
- enables employers to access the skills needed for Gloucestershire to be prosperous for all

Providing learners with the opportunities, experiences and skills to move into their intended career destinations.

Gloucestershire College (GC) has a broad offer encompassing full time programmes for 16–18 years olds, a large adult provision, and a significant Apprenticeship provision as well as other workplace learning. The offer is inclusive and responds to all types of learners, such as those with learning difficulties/disabilities, provision for the unemployed, education and training, and higher education (HE). The focus of provision is principally technical education and training, taking into account local skills strategies and needs in particular those identified by the LEP/LSIP.

Promoting Social Mobility

The College exists for all learners to give them skills to be successful in their future lives and careers, with a focus on developing practical, professional and technical skills. Social mobility is a key ambition so in particular we support learners:

- a. who have been less academically successful at school
- b. are from disadvantaged backgrounds
- c. who may have not achieved grade 4/C in English and maths at KS4
- d. who have special educational needs – both in foundation learning and across mainstream curriculum

GC does not deliver A Levels but works in partnership with Dene Magna school to provide an A Level offer as part of a longer-term ambition to raise aspirations and attainment in the Forest of Dean. Amongst adults GC has a wide-ranging offer that supports them back into work or to enable them to progress in their careers. This extends to work in prisons, supporting offenders into careers and reducing re-offending.



1.1 Strategic Objectives and Mission Continued

Enabling employers to access the skills needed for Gloucestershire to be prosperous for all.

The College works with local employers so that they can access required skills through:

- a successful AoC Beacon Award recognised apprenticeship provision
- developing the professional and technical skills of our learners to prepare them for the local and national workforce
- supporting in the training and upskilling of the current workforce
- working with agencies such as GFirst LEP and Gloucestershire Skills Advisory Panel to identify and address local skills needs

GC has embraced many of the government initiatives to raise skills levels and respond to the pandemic such as 'Kickstart' and 'Bootcamps' in areas such as digital and HGV. The College's Institute of Technology offer, focusing on cyber and engineering, opened in 2021. GC has worked with partners to position its Cheltenham Campus as a cyber training hub within the proposed Cyber Business Park in Cheltenham. Our Cyber Degree Apprenticeship (developed with UWE) is the first in England endorsed by the NCSC.

In order to realise our mission, six over-arching strategic goals have been set for this plan period, covering:

Skills and Purpose:

"...Work with key partners to enrich the curriculum and meet skills needs, enabling and facilitating economic development and prosperity ..."

Strategic Position, Recruitment and Reputation:

"...Position the College to take advantage of opportunities to grow in our areas of expertise..."

Learner Experience, Progress and Achievements:

"...Teaching, learning and the learner experience will continue to be central to everything we do. We will provide a safe, stimulating and challenging learning environment rooted in outstanding teaching and learning, with a curriculum offer that enables learners to achieve and promotes social mobility..."

People and Culture:

"...We will develop as an employer of choice that attracts and retains talented, motivated individuals..."

Finance, Resources and Facilities:

"...We will ensure that our financial position continues to be robust, enabling us to continue to invest in staff and physical resources..."

Social Value:

"...We will continue to be driven by social purpose, aligning our activities to the UN Sustainable Development Goals..."

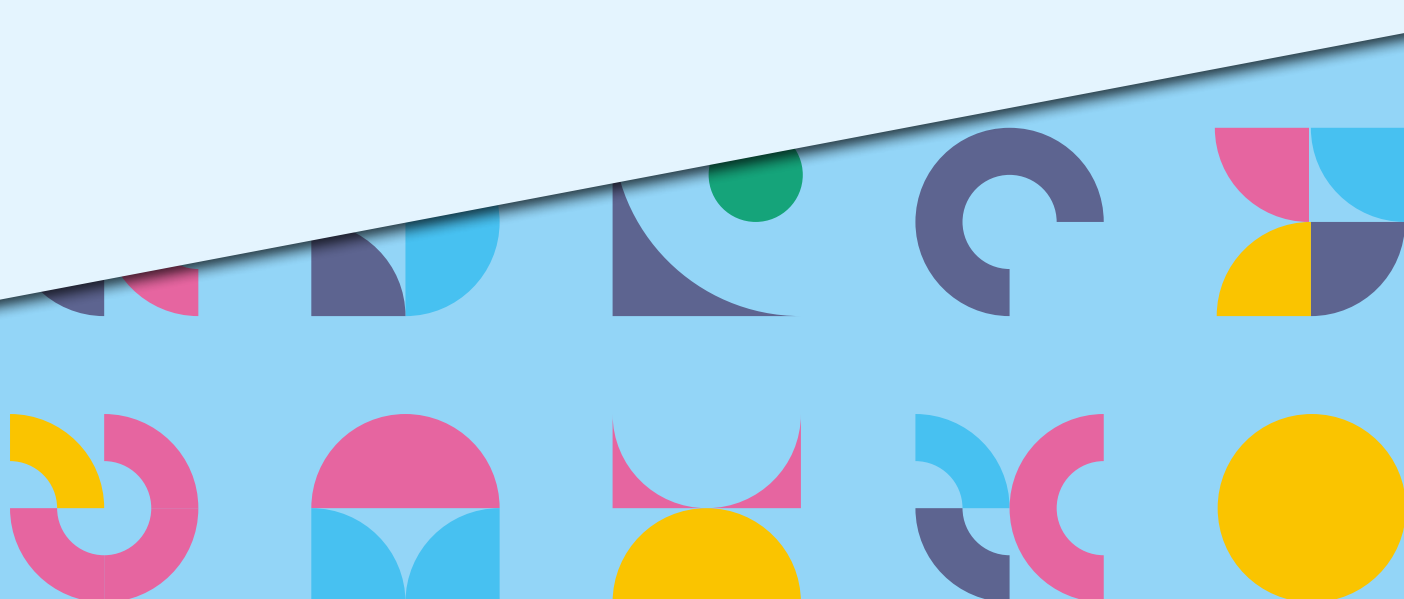
1.2 Our Provision

Our provision is important because:

- we provide the largest FE offer in the county, preparing people to enter the labour market, enhance their prospects and play an active part in our community
- we are the primary destination for those who have been less successful at school, providing opportunities to develop successfully in their lives
- we provide the largest employer offer in the county

1.3 The Contribution that it Makes

The Colleges has assessed the contribution that it makes to meeting skills needs in line with the statutory Local Needs Duty, and this is set out in section 4.



2. Context and Place

2.1 Gloucestershire

The College is the largest provider of FE within the county, with a significant offering to employers. In addition, it has contracts to deliver key government priorities with authorities in areas such as London, Manchester, Lancashire and the West of England.

The College's catchment is characterised by a high proportion of private and selective schools. Whilst overall attainment across the County is broadly consistent with the national picture, attainment and social mobility amongst disadvantaged groups is amongst the poorest in England.

In common with other areas, the Gloucestershire Skills Strategy 2022-2027 identified skills shortages in a number of sectors, with these shortages forecast to become more acute. Central to this shortage is the demographic change being experienced. Whilst the population of the County will increase by 7.1%, the working age population is only projected to increase by 0.9%, which is far below the expected growth in demand across the local economy.

There has been some turbulence within the County following the absorption of the LEP into the County Council and the Government's White Paper on Local Government Reform. This has two impacts:

- It is creating uncertainty as there is not yet political agreement on the way forward with either unitary status or devolution
- There has been a redevelopment of the Gloucestershire Growth Plan. This will have key ambitions about skills but has not yet been completed or priority sectors determined

2.2 Our Provision

The make-up of the College's provision is different to the sector with a lower % of 16-18 work than most Colleges. The College's income is split as follows:

Learner Group	Income %
Programmes for Young People	32%
Adults	18%
Employers	20%
HE	8%
High Needs Learners	16%

The core groups we work with in each are set out below:

Market	Description
Programmes for Young People	<p>As above we take learners on a wide range of vocational programmes. We do not offer A Levels ourselves but work with Dene Magna school to provide this offer in the Forest of Dean.</p> <p>We have an offer for learners of all abilities and are the primary destination for learners who have been less successful at GCSE. Recruitment patterns are characterised by low prior attainment in maths and English, and social disadvantage.</p> <p>Learners benefit from our extensive networks with employers and the work placement opportunities that provides, as well as the close links and knowledge that our tutors possess.</p>
Adults	<p>We work with adults across the county on programmes to get them into employment, facilitate their progression in employment, or enable them to retrain into other sectors. Programmes range from ESOL and courses for the unemployed, to intensive programmes for retraining through e.g. HGV Bootcamps.</p> <p>We also offer programmes beyond the county through contracts with WECCA, Greater Manchester and London. These programmes meet a range of needs for these authorities, but of particular note is the Rail Engineering offered in prisons, which enables learners to transition into secure employment and reduce reoffending rates whilst providing employers with much needed staffing.</p>
Employers	<p>Our employers programme is based on an extensive apprenticeship offering but also full cost, professional and HE programmes. Whilst the bulk of the work has traditionally been at Levels 2 and 3, the offer at higher levels has expanded significantly.</p> <p>Our work is predominantly with businesses (rather than public sector etc.), with 70% within construction and engineering. We have seen significant growth in cyber and digital in line with local priorities.</p>
HE	<p>The College's full-time HE offering has traditionally been to provide progression routes for our Level 3 learners. With the removal of the student number cap on universities, it is becoming increasingly challenging to maintain this offer in some areas. Our part-time offer focuses on meeting the needs of employers e.g. construction, engineering, computing etc.</p>
High Needs Learners	<p>We work closely with the local authority on our high needs programme. The discrete provision has been remodelled in recent years and expanded by introducing provision for learners with more complex needs, at the request of Gloucestershire County Council. Support also exists for high needs learners on mainstream programmes across the College.</p>

2.3 Our Campuses

The College is the largest provider of FE training to employers within the county. Whilst it serves the whole county, its campuses are set in the primary conurbations of Gloucester and Cheltenham, and across to Cinderford in the Forest of Dean. Each of the campuses have been built in the last 20 years, and each located as part of regeneration schemes in those areas.

Gloucester Campus

Our Gloucester Campus is set in a prime location in the heart of the city, as the anchor tenant within the Gloucester Quays regeneration scheme.

Around 70% of our work is delivered from Gloucester, with provision across all curriculum areas except hospitality and agriculture.



Cheltenham Campus

Our Cheltenham Campus is located next door to GCHQ and is focused primarily on adult, professional and higher-level programmes. It is home to our cyber provision and IoT facilities, and comprises several zones occupied by employers, including start-up innovation space operated by Hub 8. A new Green Construction Centre was opened in September 2024.



Forest of Dean Campus

The College's Cinderford Campus was opened in 2019 and provides a broad 16-18 offer. The campus also makes an A Level offer, provided in conjunction with Dene Magna school.



3. Approach to Developing the Annual Accountability Statement

From 2022/23 colleges have a new statutory obligation to consider how well they meet skills needs, and this is assessed through the new Enhanced Inspection Framework. This Accountability Statement is one of the outputs within the government's framework for meeting skills needs.

The College has been a member of the Gloucestershire Skills Advisory Panel (SAP), which was responsible for developing a 2022-2027 skills strategy for Gloucestershire for GFirst LEP. As part of this work, the SAP engaged with stakeholders including employers, community bodies and government agencies across all aspects of the Gloucestershire economy, as well as drew input from sectoral boards operated by GFirst LEP. The LEP has been subsumed into the County Council and the College represents the FE Sector on the new Gloucestershire Economic Growth Board.

Since then Business West have developed the LSIP for Gloucestershire and we have worked with them throughout every stage of that process. The LSIP focuses is not a comprehensive review of the entire economy instead focussing on four key sectors. However, in conjunction with our other work there is a robust evidence base around the skills needs in the markets within which we operate.

These pieces of work have formed the basis for the College to identify needs, and supplemented by:

- Involvement with employer representative bodies, such as Constructing Excellence, CyNam and others
- Feedback from our business consultants and other staff who are in regular contact with employers
- Analysis of local skills reports
- Consultation with other education providers, including schools, colleges and universities
- Feedback from community groups such as GARAS and Job Centre Plus

In addition, we have reviewed the key priorities articulated by the government.

The FE colleges within Gloucestershire have exchanged and discussed each other's accountability statements as part of this process.



4 Local Needs Duty

The College has undertaken a detailed assessment of how well it meets needs, using the criteria used in the Enhanced Inspection Framework, and concluded as follows:

Criteria	How well we meet
Engage our community to understand skills needs and how we have planned our curriculum accordingly	Strong
Involve employers and other stakeholders very effectively in the design and implement of the curriculum to prepare student for future education, employment or work	Reasonable
Are very clear how we contribute to skills needs	Strong

The College makes a very effective contribution to meeting skills needs – including the following:

Strategic overview: The College is closely connected to the local community and responsive to skills needs.

- It has identified strategic growth sectors for the County and developed programmes to meet their needs
- The College has engaged effectively with Business West as the ERB leading on the LSIP for Gloucestershire
- The College is well connected with other key agencies a myriad network of employer and community groups. It responds well to needs of groups other than employers e.g. HE Business offered through CLC, work with GARAS, working with the County Council on High Needs provision
- The College has been a key anchor partner in arguably the most high profile skills development within the County – the Golden Valley Cyber Park

Capital investment: It has been successful in securing capital investment to develop facilities for the local community. In particular, in 2024/5 the College opened its new £5m Construction facility in Cheltenham.

This has enabled us to develop and deliver new programmes including,

- Cyber Degree Apprenticeship recognised by the NCSC
- A range of new IT apprenticeships at Level 3 and 4
- Top up computing degree in partnership with UWE
- New HTQs in Construction and IT
- New courses in electric vehicles
- Short courses in Construction aimed at the unemployed

Responding to Government priorities to meet skills

needs: We have responded to a range of Government initiatives designed to better meet skills needs including Bootcamps wave 2 and 3 – Digital, Motor vehicle (EV), Construction and HGV.

Curriculum changes: We have developed a range of new programmes often with partners to meet skills needs.



4 Local Needs Duty Continued

Embedding employability in the curriculum – this is a strong feature of the curriculum:

- a. There is good development for all teaching staff and opportunities to share good practice through learning communities. This supports the development of TLA and this is reflected in feedback from external reviewers and learners
- b. Tutors have spent a development day visiting employers, identifying skills needs and adapting the curriculum
- c. Meeting skills needs has been embedded into the College's Self-Assessment Process
- d. Embedding of employability is a strength across the college. Teachers are making better use of the experience of learners as well as their own industry experience. In many sessions both learners and tutor experience are used effectively to engage and add real world examples
- e. The college has received external accreditation of its CEIAG through QCS and Matrix

Volumes: against the sector trend, volumes of employer work have continued to grow. In addition, our annual report on destinations shows that very many learners go onto excellent destinations making a real difference to employers. As set out in 5.2 below, the overwhelming majority of provision is focussed on local and national priorities.

Balance: This contribution has been achieved by Governors while balance priorities of quality, meeting local needs and maintaining financial viability of the College. The College can demonstrate areas of provision which have been continued in spite of their challenging financial position e.g. Hospitality.

Innovation: The College has identified innovative ways to support community needs e.g. Rail Engineering in HMPs; new HE programmes in BAME communities; HUB 8; Launchpad.

Against this there are some areas for development which form part of our accountability agreement:

- a. Whilst in many curriculum areas there is strong involvement of employers in design and / or delivery of the curriculum, in other areas further development is required. We have incorporated meeting skills needs into our Self-Assessment Review process but this requires further embedding in 25/26
- b. The which three skills programme was launched in 23/4 to help develop work readiness skills amongst full time learners – this will need further development in 25/6; and there is a need to develop the foundation IT skills required in the workplace across programmes
- c. Our ability to meet employer needs is necessarily limited by market demand, but also our ability to recruit and retain staff in key sectors
- d. Further work is needed to systematically share employer needs information with curriculum heads that is captured through e.g. business consultant visits
- e. Employability skills need further development within elements of the curriculum for High Needs Learners



5 Contribution to National, Regional, Local Priorities

5.1 Background

This section provides a summary of our main objectives for 2024/5 to contribute to national, local and regional priorities. It is not intended to provide a comprehensive statement of all our initiatives for 2025/6.

5.2 Progression and Position

The College has attempted to map its provision against the new national priority sectors and local priority sectors identified in the Gloucestershire Skills Strategy, and also against other government priorities such as NEET and SEND, using the primary learning aim of each learner.

Growth in the period from 2022/23 to 24/5 (YTD) is summarised below:

Full Time programmes – 74% of learners follow programmes in priority sectors and 87% in either priority sectors or other government priority areas. There has been an increase of 32% in learners on programmes in the priority sectors, with significant increases in Construction, Digital and Engineering.

Apprenticeships – 88% of learners follow programmes in priority sectors and 98% in either priority sectors or other government priority areas. There has been overall no change in numbers with Construction being flat and growth in Advanced Manufacturing offset by declines elsewhere, reflecting the current economic challenges facing businesses.

Part Time programmes – 75% of programmes are in either priority sectors or other government priority areas. Numbers have declined reflecting changes to adult education budgets.

The College is planning changes to many the content, sequencing and implementation of many existing programmes in 2025/6 in response to feedback from employers. However, the analysis above does not suggest the need for a large shift in programmes at the College to better meet priority areas, but to increase numbers on programmes. There are a number of challenges to this:

1. The introduction of T Levels is expected to result in fewer learners on programmes in some of the priority sectors
2. Increased capacity is required in both facilities and staffing to meet demand in key areas, especially Construction
3. Reductions in adult education budgets necessarily limit growth
4. The impact of the economic situation and fiscal policy has resulted nationally in fewer employers taking on apprenticeships.

This is the context for our aims for 2025/6.



5.3 Aims for 2025/6

For the purposes of the accountability statement, our initiatives to help meet skills needs include the following aims:

Theme	Accountability Statement Goals for 2024/25
Strategic Developments	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Continue to work with Business West, GCC and other providers to identify solutions to needs identified in the LSIP 2. Work with GCC to develop an effective adult skills system for the County following any devolution deal for Gloucestershire 3. Develop plans to increase capacity by redeveloping the 125 Business Park, subject to capital funding becoming available. This will enable us to increase capacity for Construction and associated renewable technologies, and also address issues of NEET
Employer engagement	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 4. Extend and deepen the involvement of employers in the design and delivery of the curriculum so that is effective in all areas, and embed assessment into the Self-assessment process
Core workplace skills	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 5. Further develop and embed the “which three skills” programme to enhance workplace skills
NEET	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 6. Increase capacity in First Steps provision – to accommodate a further 30 learners
SEND	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 7. Introduce a supported internship programme in Gloucester, targeting 12 learners.
Net Zero and Construction	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 8. Develop a range of short courses in construction green skills, targeting 40 learners. 9. Work with employers to establish demand for heat pump pathways within apprenticeship programme for 26/7 10. Introduce dry lining programme in Forest of Dean campus, targeting 15 learners 11. Increase capacity in electrical installation to accommodate a further 20 learners
Digital	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 12. Continue to work with the Golden Valley Delivery Group to support the development of the Cheltenham Cyber Park 13. Introduce AI Bootcamp offer, subject to successful funding bid 14. Plan for the introduction of T Levels in 2026/7 and removal of alternative qualifications.
Health and Social Care	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 15. Plan for the introduction of T Levels in 2026/7 and removal of alternative qualifications.

Underpinning all of these ambitions will be our ability to recruit and retain staff with key technical skills.

These ambitions are set out in more detail on the next page.

5.3.1 Strategic Developments

There are a number of strategic developments we need to play a key role in as the largest skills provider in Gloucestershire.

We need to respond to national skills policies so we will continue to offer a programme of Boot Camps and will bid for other programmes the Government may introduce; and we will continue to plan for the significant programme of curriculum reforms including potentially significant changes to Level 3 provision in Digital and Health and Social Care. Our analysis suggests that these reforms will lead to a reduction in numbers in these priority sectors.

We will continue to work with other key partners to meet local skills policy including with:

- Business West on the next phase of LSIP work
- GCC to shape a possible devolution deal and how that may best support economic growth ambitions
- DFE to ensure sustainability of effective education system across the Forest of Dean
- GCC to meet their long term requirements for High Needs across the County

In addition, we have applied for planning permission to remodel the 125 Business Park surrounding the College's Gloucester campus to expand construction capacity, to enable delivery of associated green skills programmes and to provide increased capacity for NEET learners.

5.3.2 Employer Engagement

Our Ofsted report identified a need for greater involvement of employers in the design and delivery of the curriculum in some areas.

Detailed reviews during the year demonstrate that in most areas there has been significant progress and employer engagement involvement is strong. However, in a minority of areas there is further development required.

This is now forming a key part of the annual Self-Assessment process in curriculum teams, supported by greater opportunities to engage with employers.

5.3.3 Core workplace skills

Core workplace skills is identified as a common theme across the LSIP. In 2024/5 we looked to further develop employability skills of learners entering the workplace by embedding and refining our “which three skills” programme. Mapped to the National Skills Builder, this embeds three transferable skills in each programme (**confidence** plus two specific to the subject sector) and gather evidence of distance travelled.

In addition, we will further develop work experience, CPD activities and social action projects for Full Time learners. Our CPD programme will be revamped to ensure all full time Learners have the opportunity to develop the foundation IT skills required in the workplace.

Significant progress has been made in some but not all curriculum areas so further focus is needed.

5.3.4 NEET

The College has seen an increase of 700% of learners on programmes targeting NEET over the last two years and the national challenges are well-documented. We have been increasing capacity and will further increase capacity in 2025/6 within our First Steps provision to accommodate a further 30 learners.

5.3.5 SEND

Numbers of SEND learners have increased by 21% over the last two years. We continue to work with GCC to meet needs. In 2025/6 we will introduce a supported internship programme in Gloucester targeting 12 learners.

5.3.6 Net Zero & Construction

Numbers of Full-Time learners on construction programmes have increased by 43% over the last two years.

In September 2024 we opened our £5m Sustainable Construction Centre in Cheltenham, which immediately provided additional capacity in wood occupations, plumbing and electrical and together with our existing provision represent a comprehensive offer in Cheltenham for both emerging net zero skills and also existing shortages for the industry.

As above we are now developing plans for a similar expansion in Gloucester.

In addition, employer forums have confirmed a desire for short courses in green skills such as, Solar PV installation, EV charging points, heat source pumps (ground and air) and in retrofit drylining, plastering, and switching from gas boilers to heat source pumps in older social housing developments. Specialists such as the fire service will receive training in 25/26 on electric vehicles and battery safety.

Within the 16-18 curriculum there is a focus on green skills, either as a separate unit or embedded within other units and this is the same for apprenticeships, although within electrical Solar PV, EV charging points and theory around connecting heat source pumps are within the “Knowledge, Skills and Behaviours”.

For 25/26, resource has been identified to deliver a range of short courses to support the demand for green skills, targeting 40 learners. In addition, the College will:

- Work with employers to establish demand for heat pump pathways within apprenticeship programme for 26/7
- Introduce dry lining programme in Forest of Dean campus, targeting 15 learners
- Increase capacity in electrical installation to accommodate a further 20 learners

5.2.5 Digital

Numbers of Full-Time learners on digital programmes have increased by 20% over the last two years.

Digital Skills are a key priority area for the college and in demand by local employers, especially with the proximity to GCHQ, its supply chain and other key defence and engineering industries. Digital skills are embedded across the curriculum as staff teach and use the digital technologies relevant to their sector and underpinned by their next steps tutorial programme.

We have been working with partners towards the vision to position Cheltenham as a centre for excellence nationally and internationally for all things cyber. The College's Cheltenham campus is adjacent to GCHQ and the proposed cyber business park. We have made strides securing £3m of Institute of Technology funding to develop Cyber Training facilities; secured £1m of LEP funding to create an innovation zone for start-up cyber businesses; and worked with UWE to develop a range of programmes up to level 6. We offer the only Degree Apprenticeship in Cyber Security in England that is endorsed by the National Cyber Security Centre.

Provision for full time 16-18 starts at Level 1 and provides progression pathways to Level 6 in key areas, such as Cyber, software, general computing, games design and networking. We offer the T Level in digital support but are introducing the new digital software development T level to appeal to a wider range of learners and increase enrolment numbers.

There is a well-established and growing apprenticeship provision with strong employer input into programmes.

For 2025/6 the focus will be on preparing for the Government withdrawal of funding for existing level 3 programmes and the introduction of T Levels which is expected to reduce numbers on these pathways.

5 Corporate Statement

On behalf of the Gloucestershire College corporation, it is hereby confirmed that the plan as set out above reflects an agreed statement of purpose, aims and objectives as approved by the corporation at their meeting on 2nd May 2024. The plan will be published on the College's website within 3 months of the start of the new academic year.

Our accountability statement can be found at:
www.gloscol.ac.uk/accountability-agreement

