



Hereford College of Arts Annual Accountability Statement 2023/24

College Purpose

Hereford College of Arts (HCA) is this year celebrating 170 years of creative education in Hereford, since the opening of the first government funded School of Art and Design in the city in 1853. Today's college is focused on creative education that supports students to thrive in the modern world, both to their benefit and that of wider society.

Our 5-year strategic plan was approved by the Board in 2018 and we are now in the process developing a new 10-year vision and 5-year plan. Together these will form a new strategic plan that will be ratified by the Board before December 31, 2023.

The current strategic plan articulates the mission and purpose of the college as empowering creativity and enriching our world through transformative arts education.

Creative education brings value to individuals and to wider society:

- It prepares students to succeed in careers in the creative and cultural industries that are integral to economic development both locally and nationally, and which also deliver value to society in many other ways – from placemaking to innovation and wellbeing.
- It supports the development of transferable skills that are widely recognised as critical to current employer needs, and to emerging job roles, inside and outside the creative industries.
- It promotes personal development and wellbeing.

The college has a reputation and record of accomplishment for delivering high quality creative education through short courses, post-16, and degree programmes. Amongst our degree programmes, we have an international reputation as a leading provider of degree level education in Artist Blacksmithing and are ambitious for all our provision. The strategic vision is to be widely recognised as a leading arts school, rooted in place but connected to the world, where students are empowered with skills for life and work, to succeed in education, employment, and entrepreneurship, and to have a positive impact on the world.

To realise this vision the strategy identifies four central pillars for development:

- A modern, creative curriculum to support student success in their qualifications and beyond
- A dynamic, collaborative, inclusive community
- An inspiring campus and learning environment
- Support for students to excel in their careers and enterprise.

These pillars are underpinned by four cross cutting enablers:

- A community of staff supported to achieve excellence
- Sustainable operations
- Outstanding storytelling
- A values-driven ethos.

Annual KPIs and objectives are agreed by the Board each year in line with the strategic plan and progress is reported to the Board at every full Board meeting.

Within the curriculum pillar, the strategy identifies the development of digital skills and programmes as a strategic priority for a modern creative curriculum.

Within the pillar on student careers and enterprise, the strategy identifies the development of employment and enterprise skills, with high quality industry advice and pathways to employment, a key area of focus.

In addition to setting and monitoring annual KPIs and objectives, the Board has also undertaken several reviews since 2018 on whether the strategy overall has remained fit for purpose.

In April 2021 the Board carried out a wide-ranging reflection on college performance given the impact of Covid, and other changes in context, and agreed a strategy reset. This strategy review and reset endorsed the key pillars and enablers of the core strategy with an increased strategic focus on the following:

- Environmental sustainability and aspiring to become carbon net zero
- A review of efficiency
- Collaboration and partnership between regional education institutions and other organisations as a critical enabler
- A still more connected and strategic focus on promoting wellbeing including equality, diversity and inclusion.

These reset decisions have since been reflected in the annual objectives.

This accountability statement aligns with the college's strategic annual objectives agreed for 2022/23 and ongoing strategic themes.

Response to the Skills and Post-16 Education Bill and Act

Since the strategic plan was written in 2018 the Skills and Post-16 Education Bill and Act has been passed, placing a statutory duty upon the college to ensure our curriculum contributes towards meeting local, regional, and national skills needs. In May 2022, the Board approved a new Employer Engagement Strategy, an ambitious plan to increase and amplify the impact of our ongoing engagement with employers including at local, regional and national level.

The Board has since approved a new Course Development and Monitoring Policy and Procedure (March 2023). This embeds consideration of how the college is meeting skills needs, locally, regionally and nationally into the heart of course development and strengthens Board monitoring.

It also recognises that whilst HCA's portfolio includes courses directly relevant to the region's economic development and skills needs, the curriculum will also be designed with national and international skills needs and future skills needs in mind. The college will seek to take account of relevant data available including the Local Skills Improvement Plan (LSIP). It will also build on existing relationships and make new contacts with local and national employers and deepen their engagement in curriculum development.

In December 2022 the Board approved investment in a new Vice Principal role to help drive this step change in industry engagement.

The majority of independent Board members have a business background, ranging from large multinationals to local microbusiness.

Context and Place

Profile of Hereford College of Arts

Hereford College of Arts is a dedicated arts college with a specialist focus on art, media, design, craft, music and performing arts. It offers undergraduate and postgraduate degrees alongside further education and short course programmes. The development of higher education provision alongside post-16 is an important part of both the college strategy and Herefordshire Council's economic development vision for the county, in order to contribute to the skills ladder for local students and to attract students from the wider region for specialist FE programmes and residential HE.

The college operates as a hub for the region's professional creative community in several ways. For example, its print and illustration festival CMYK, attracts professionals from across the region to promote and sell work alongside students, while creating a platform for artists and designers to form professional connections in a sector that is predominantly independent freelancers. The college also supports creative organisations with campus resource when appropriate, for example hosting the local BBC office and recordings of BBC Introducing sessions. Early consultation on its new strategy is pointing to the value of growing this role through, for example, more formal learning and informal networking opportunities for local creative industry professionals.

Key facts

- HCA is constituted as a further education college, and is an exempt charity (i.e. regulated by the ESFA rather than directly by the Charity Commission)
- Turnover £6,122,000 (Financial Statements 21/22)
- Students enrolled: FE 520 FTE / HE 329 / Short Course 235 (May, 2023)
- The majority of FE students are 16-18

- Staff c.116 FTE (May 2023)
- Operates across two campuses in Hereford City, within walking distance of each other and the city centre
- Both campuses support FE and HE students with shared facilities.

Curriculum

At FE we offer University of Arts London qualifications in four curriculum areas from Level 2: Art and Design, Music, Performing Arts, Digital Futures and Interactive Media (UAL Creative Media Production and Technology). The UAL qualifications we deliver are classified as Alternative Academic Qualifications in the government's review of post-16 education.

The college also supports students in Maths Functional Skills and GCSE Maths and English. At HE we offer 11 BA (Hons) degrees, and two new degrees that expand our digitally focused curriculum are currently going through validation. All our HE provision is validated by University of Wales Trinity St David.

As an education institution we are committed to promoting British Values but have also identified the following as HCA values to inform our operations and provision. We support students and staff to be:

- **Collaborative:** we believe creative collaboration gives people the power to change the world
- **Inquisitive:** we urge people to question, seek the wider context, think critically and use arts to engage with society
- **Brave:** we support individuals to achieve their ambitions, to tackle important issues and take bold creative risks
- **Inventive:** we encourage an appetite to take on problems, and a resourceful, creative approach to solving them
- **Individual:** we respect the individual needs and interests of all members of our creative community, and provide a safe space for unique creative voices to develop and thrive.

The explosion of government sponsored arts schools in mid-Victorian Britain was driven by a concern to compete commercially with European design and manufacturing. Whilst the college has since gone through many iterations, we are again putting the connection between arts and business at the heart of our strategy.

HCA works with a wide range of businesses to support students' personal and professional development. Real world commissions from external clients, or 'live briefs', have long been at the heart of its provision and feature across all curriculum specialisms and levels. Traditional work experience placements are hard to secure in the creative sector, particularly in a rural area, however the college has been working inventively with external partners to design off-campus projects to develop student confidence outside the

studio/workshop, and this is a development priority. Furthermore, the college is increasingly looking beyond the creative industries for its partners, demonstrating the impact creative skills can make in many different professional contexts. For example, Performing Arts students have been working with SEPAR International Hereford which specialises in training professionals for challenging environments and locations. Students role-play crisis situations for participants in their training programmes, including demanding kidnap and hostage situations. The students support the company in its frontline business whilst learning to work with a wide range of people under pressure and perform to a professional brief under exceptionally intense conditions. Alongside technical performance skills, the commission requires problem solving, listening skills, and commitment to task completion.

Wye Valley NHS Trust is another important partner and HCA works with several departments. Performing Arts students have again proved a valuable resource for the Trust when, for example, they were briefed by a team of consultants to help in the training of Foundation Year doctors, performing patient scenarios in Hereford County Hospital's simulation suite. Students were then invited to debrief with the doctors and clinical team and were encouraged to ask questions and share their insights from the simulation process. This was an exceptionally high-quality professional learning experience for the students whilst the doctors fed back how lucky they were to have professional actors involved and how much it added to the scenarios.

Students on HCA's Digital Futures and Interactive Media programme have been supporting the Wye Valley Trust in a range of recruitment campaigns. This year they are working on two separate digital media promotional recruitment campaigns to attract different audiences to the Trust's Youth Volunteer IMPACT and Adult Volunteer Programmes. This project is not only helping the hospital meet its immediate volunteer resource needs but is supporting students to develop digital and marketing skills that are in demand from businesses regionally and nationally.

Meanwhile, Art and Design diploma students are being engaged by local charity Vennture to support the redevelopment of their substantial city base, through interior and exterior design work. Students will be working on location to help understand the charity's ethos and operating needs.

Progression

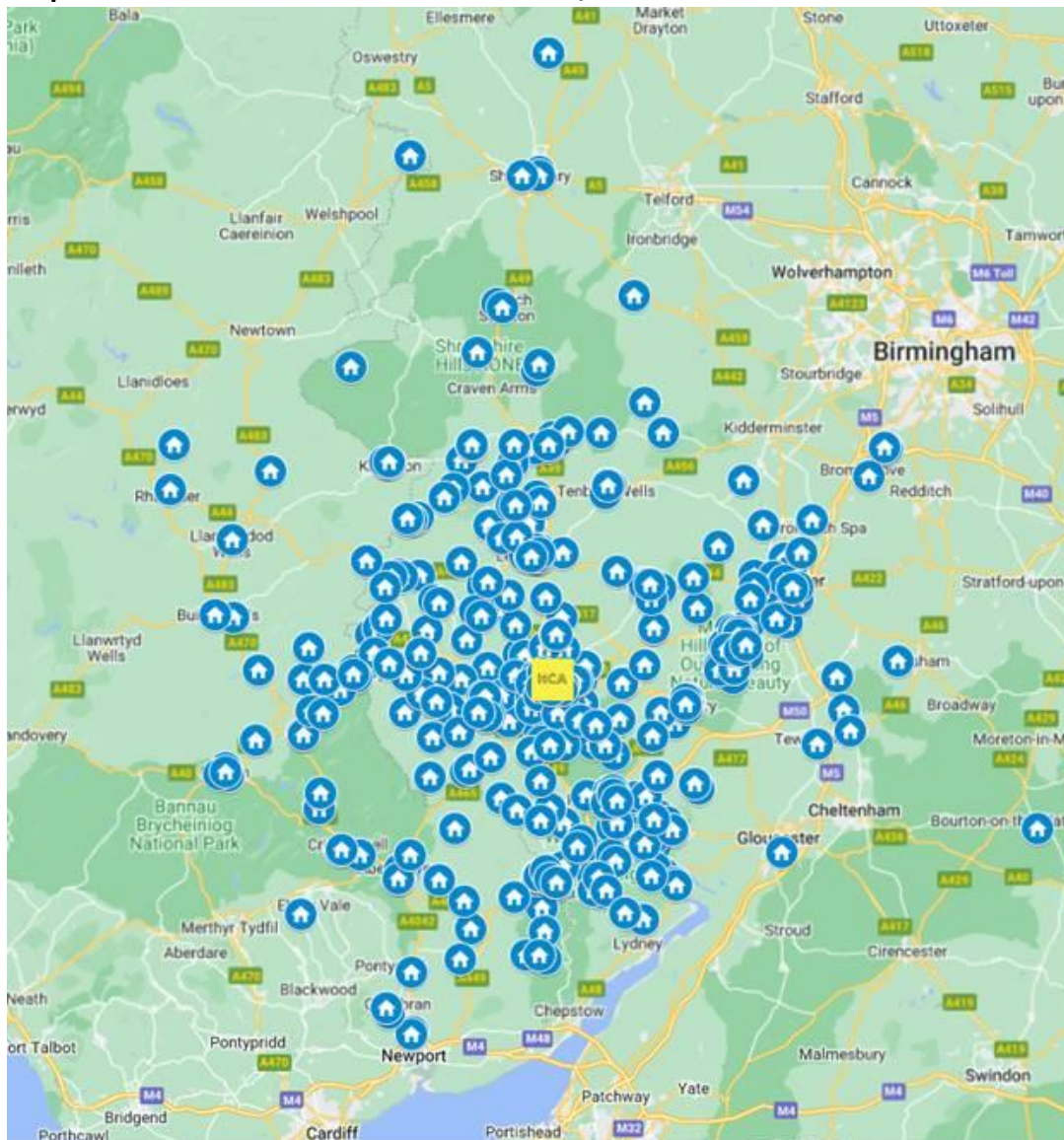
The majority of FE students, around 70%, progress to Higher Education. Of these, most progress to degrees directly related to the creative industries although some students, often those from the L3 (post-A Level) Foundation Diploma Course, have selected the qualification with the intention of taking their creative skills into other study such as medicine. The college also supports students to go directly into employment or other positive progression routes.

Student travel to study

Hereford College of Arts' creative specialism attracts FE students to travel to college from across a wide area with only 58% from Herefordshire, 15% coming from Worcestershire, 7% from Powys and Monmouthshire respectively and 6% from Shropshire, with smaller groups from other counties (data May 2023).

The travel to study area only partly aligns with the Marches LSIP area which includes Herefordshire, Shropshire, Telford and Wrekin.

Map of FE student recruitment to HCA 2022/23



Of the college's 329 HE students approximately 44% are commuter students, from a similar radius as FE students, and 56% come from out of region and are residential. A very small number of these are international.

Place

The college is in Hereford, a compact, historic city set in the midst of exceptional countryside. Herefordshire has a population of around 187,100 and along with neighbouring Shropshire is one of the least populated areas of England. It borders a

similarly rural area of Wales. Hereford is the largest centre with around 64,000 residents followed by three larger market towns of between 10,000-12,000 residents each. Many of the college students come from smaller towns and villages or in ultra-rural areas; many have very limited access to public transport.

Economy

Herefordshire has relatively low unemployment rates but economic output is also low. The county also has a lower than national average proportion of the workforce possessing higher-level qualifications and average wages are lower than the national and regional average. Eleven Herefordshire neighbourhoods are in the most deprived 25% nationally, many in the south of Hereford, Leominster and Ross-on-Wye.

The largest business sectors in Herefordshire are currently manufacturing, defence and security, food and drink production, agriculture and tourism. The health and care sector is also amongst the larger employers.

Rates of self-employment are higher than regionally and nationally. Micro businesses and SME's make up 99.7% of the business base. Many of the businesses are home grown and the county has a higher than national survival rate for businesses after five years.

Herefordshire Council recently convened representatives across the public, private, voluntary, community and social enterprise sectors in The Herefordshire Sustainable Growth Strategy Board. In March 2023 this Board published a vision for Herefordshire in 2050 that gives an overview of some of the opportunities and advantages of the area alongside the challenges above.

The 2050 vision highlights the role of creative and cultural industries in Herefordshire's future growth in innovative and productive businesses. It calls out the importance of the area's growing arts and cultural scene as part of a growing visitor offer, for example through festivals. Herefordshire is also roughly equidistant to Birmingham, Cardiff and Bristol which are all fast-growing centres for film and other creative content production, which offers opportunities for Herefordshire-based businesses.

The Herefordshire Big Economic Plan also highlights the role of higher education in the city's development, with Hereford College of Arts, alongside new engineering HE provider NMITE, and Herefordshire and Ludlow College, helping create a higher skilled population, retain talent and attract more people and investment to the city.

Education at school level is also seen as a strength of the area with secondary schools mostly judged good or outstanding by Ofsted, alongside five distinctive post-16 colleges in Hereford.

The Marches

Regarding the wider Marches area, the Marches Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) has identified core, emerging and enabling sectors in The Marches LEP Strategic Economic Plan 2019:

- Core economic sectors are advanced manufacturing, business and professional services, and food and drink
- Emerging sectors which have high future economic and productivity growth potential comprise innovative health and social care, environmental technology, cyber security and resilience, and agri-tech
- Enabling sectors: visitor economy, retail, logistics, construction, health and social care, education and voluntary, community and social enterprise.

The Employer Representative Body (ERB) has focussed research for the LSIP into current skills needs in the following sectors: Engineering and Manufacture including Food, Construction and Environmental Technology, Health and Social Care and Professional Services.

Approach to developing HCA's annual Accountability Statement

We have identified key priorities aligned with college strategy and with local, regional and national skills priorities.

In addition to the Herefordshire Big Economic Plan, we have considered the draft findings of the Marches LSIP which identifies 'soft skills' for employment as a cross-sector concern. This aligns with national feedback in the DfE guidance on Accountability Agreements for 2023 to 2024 (April 2023) around transferable skills.

The draft LSIP also highlights employer concerns about careers guidance and understanding of the workplace.

Regionally our priorities align with the Marches prioritisation of Professional Services (with regard, for example, to professional services around marketing and creative content for marketing) as well as the Marches identification of digital skills needs within the Marches LEP Local Skills Report Jan 2022.

The potential for economic growth in the creative sector has also been recognised in the wider West Midlands area. A key goal of the wider West Midlands Combined Authority is to harness the potential of the creative sector to drive further growth.

Nationally our priorities align with various government policies including the environmental goals and growth in the creative industries. The DfE guidance on Accountability Agreements identifies green jobs as a national priority and, with creative industries, as a key growth area. It also lists Digital and Technology as a priority sector.

Key external stakeholders informing our priorities include:

Business and employers

- Engagement with the ERB in the development of the LSIP

- Ongoing curriculum level liaison with a wider range of industry contacts from both the creative industries and other sectors
- New industry consultation meeting for local digital creative industries
- Active membership and dialogue with the Herefordshire Business Board and other business networks such as Hereford BID

Additionally, the Principal is chair of the Stronger Hereford Board overseeing the delivery of Hereford's £22.4m Stronger Towns Grant to deliver Hereford's Town Investment Plan. The Board brings together city and county council, business, voluntary and community sectors.

As part of the Town Investment Plan, HCA is working with Hereford's new engineering HEI, NMITE in the Skills Foundry coalition of college, HEI, business and community groups in order to develop new ladders of opportunity between some of Hereford's more deprived areas. HCA has been awarded a Towns Fund grant for the creation of a new Digital Skills Centre to support creative digital skills development.

Curriculum teams also work closely with charities and other community groups which informs and supports their understanding of skills needs.

How we are working with other education providers to meet skills needs

There are five post-16 education colleges in Hereford making a distinct contribution to the range of opportunities available to young people and adults:

- Hereford College of Arts(HCA)
- Herefordshire, Ludlow and North Shropshire College(HLNSC) – High quality vocational and technical education
- Hereford Sixth Form College(HSFC) – Academic A Level provision with limited applied vocational
- Royal National College for the Blind (RNC)– Specialist SEND provision
- The Beacon College – Specialist SEND provision

The colleges work closely together to ensure curriculum planning is complementary. HCA collaborates particularly closely with HLNSC in the delivery of our HE Artist Blacksmithing provision. The colleges also collaborate in careers and progression information for students.

Members of all the college Boards are also invited to meet in an annual development session and have begun consideration of how to collaborate around formal curriculum reviews.

The college Principals also meet regularly with Herefordshire Council's CEO and other officers with responsibility for economy and skills.

HCA is a member of a Herefordshire and Worcestershire college group that meets regularly to share insights and strategy. Recent meetings have included discussion of the new Accountability Agreements and plans to continue to work together across LSIP boundaries. Historically HCA has had less direct connection with Shrewsbury College Group and Telford

College but has initiated new contact as part of the process of developing this Accountability Agreement and seeks to further these connections to facilitate collaborative planning.

HCA is a member of the county High School Head Teachers' group which helps the college keep in touch and with High School concerns at a senior level. In addition, there are multiple contacts between teaching and outreach staff. The college supports High Schools in developing student understanding of creative careers and post-16 options. The college already works with a number of schools to support teacher CPD and plans to expand this work.

The college has a direct relationship with the main local independent training providers and the Principal is a member of the Herefordshire Skills Board that includes representation from across skills providers and business.

At a national level HCA is an active member of GuildHE, which represents small and specialist HE providers including many in the creative sector, and the UK Arts and Design Institutions Association which regularly engages with industry bodies on skills.

University of Arts London also works closely with industry in the development of its qualifications and shares industry insights.

Further consultation

Active consultation across industry and local authority contacts, as well as other skills providers, will continue as HCA develops its new college strategy. The college will embed liaison on its annual priorities into its year-round stakeholder engagement as relevant. This wider group of external stakeholders includes parents and alumni.

Contribution to national, regional, local priorities

AIM	Current position	Outcomes	Target date	Skills Priorities
Support students to develop creative digital skills				
Objective				
Successfully deliver the refurbishment of the new digital skills centre on the College Road campus as part of Hereford's Town Investment Plan	Digital facilities housed in poor condition and uninspiring rooms	Expanded digital skills facilities in industry standard studio space used by for FE, HE and prospective students	End of March 2024	Local/regional/national digital skills priorities
AIM				
Turbo charge our student professional development and employer engagement				
Objectives				
Develop a cross college student personal and professional development strategy for careers, enterprise and employability including 'soft' and transferable skills, digital skills and sustainability across all main programmes	Student issues around wellbeing, confidence and communication have massively increased; college professional development activity takes place across different	A cross college strategy to develop personal and professional skills is recognised and has engagement from cross college staff, student and external stakeholders including parents and industry stakeholders	Evaluation of first year of new framework by end of July 2024 with internal and external stakeholder input	Local and National identification of soft skills and transferable skills priorities

	programmes but could benefit from more strategic planning, delivery and evaluation			
Continue to extend the range of employer encounters for FE students	All courses offer a range of employer encounters through the year including some off campus but college ambitious to extend	All FE students have a minimum of 3 quality employer encounters a year; significant increase in off campus work experience	Evaluation of first year of new framework completed by end of July 2024 with internal and external stakeholder input	Local and National identification of soft skills and work ready skills
AIM Maximise local skills development through collaboration				
Pilot soft and transferable skills development project with school partners	The pipeline of skills from schools is critical to post-16 and we realise schools face many similar challenges	A pilot has been co-designed and delivered with school partners to explore the impact of post-16 students helping develop younger students' soft skills, for example through performance, whilst at the same time developing the older students' skills	Pilot devised, delivered and evaluated by end of June 2024	Local and National identification of soft skills and transferable skills priorities

<p>Deepen employer engagement in curriculum review and design</p>	<p>Whilst all main programme curriculum areas have extensive industry contacts the college is keen to develop the engagement more strategically</p>	<p>The 2022/23 pilot industry liaison work has been expanded with the establishment of at least 4 liaison groups or larger industry partner agreements, to facilitate ongoing collaboration between the college and industry partners</p>	<p>A schedule of industry liaison agreements in place by December 31 2023</p>	<p>National policy to deepen industry involvement in curriculum design and delivery</p>
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Corporation Statement

The Accountability Statement was approved by the Board of Hereford College of Arts Corporation on July 10th 2023. The plan will be published within three months of the start of the new academic year.

Key Supporting Documentation

Hereford College of Arts Strategy 2018-23: [HCAStrategy2018-23](#)

Hereford College of Arts Financial Statements 2021-2022: [HCAFinancialStatements](#)

Herefordshire Big Economic Plan: [Big Economic Plan – Herefordshire Council](#)

Stronger Hereford Town Investment Plan: [HerefordTownInvestmentPlan](#)

The Marches Local Skills Report: [The Marches Local Skills Report 2022 - Marches LEP](#)

West Midlands Combined Authority: [Culture and Digital \(wmca.org.uk\)](#)

LSIP [Marches LSIP Stage 1 Report \(shropshire-chamber.co.uk\)](#)

Document control	
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