



Annual Accountability Statement

Academic Year 2023/2024

Date: May 2023

College Mission and Purpose:

At USP College, we are on a mission to connect young people to great career pathways, through exciting work and learning opportunities. We have researched job opportunities in the UK and have a good understanding of local career options in Essex. This is further supported through engagement with local employers. With this combined knowledge and our expertise in training, it has enabled us to shape professional education into career pathways for the young people and adults we serve. Our strategy has been extensively informed by regional and national career growth opportunities, using the latest Essex Skills plan, national business organisations (e.g., CBI and Chamber of Commerce) and the government's skills strategy.

We have an eye on the future, and we recognise that everyone needs a range of skills to be prepared for work and life. Therefore, we have invested in technology and infrastructure to immerse USP students in our pioneering delivery models, ensuring they gain the skills that will give them the edge to succeed. We want our students to thrive and achieve their full potential. We are therefore focusing on career pathways, not individual courses, to best prepare students for employers' requirements, and the competition they will face.

Context and Place – Communities we serve:

The communities we serve are located within the Local Skills Improvement Plan (LSIP) area incorporating Essex, Southend-on-Sea, and Thurrock. USP College serves the local community and works collaboratively with other providers to meet local stakeholder needs as well as both local and national priority areas. We are a Further Education College and have a responsibility to offer a broad curriculum that provides our learners with not only qualifications but the relevant transferrable 'soft' skills, technical skills, and experience to thrive in the world of work supporting the local economy.

The college has three sites in Essex connected via the A13. The two larger campuses are the Seevic campus in Benfleet and the Palmer's campus in Grays. A third, smaller site (the Xtend campus) in Canvey Island has subsequently been opened with a focus on digital technologies and virtual and augmented reality. All three campuses deliver to specific student cohorts from the respective surrounding areas. The vast majority of learners are local to the specific campus they study at with some using college funded and public transport to attend.

The college has approximately 3,500 learners from a range of socio-economic backgrounds including a moderate number with Educational Health Care Plans (EHCP's) and a considerable number with Exam Access Arrangements and/or Additional Learning support. The number of High Needs students is 137 which represents 4% of the college total with the split being 44 (32%) within the discreet programmes and 93 (68%) on mainstream programmes. The college has a small Higher Education offer with a combination of in house and sub-contracted provision amounting to a 5% Market Share within the LSIP area.

The majority of students progress from 48 schools within 5 local authority areas with a small number from other local authorities in Essex and Greater London. The respective catchment areas have a higher number of people with no academic, vocational, or professional qualifications and a lower percentage of adults with Level 2, Level 3 and Level 4 qualifications compared with the regional and national average, impacting student aspirations. The average GCSE point score upon entry to the college for this academic year is 4.6. There are also approximately 20% less higher and intermediate managerial, administrative, or professional households compared with the national average. The area is characterised by moderate and varied levels of social deprivation with over 50% college learners at the Palmer's campus in Grays categorised as Bands 1-4 on the Indices of Deprivation ranking but only 26.5% learners attending the Seevic campus in Benfleet.

The LSIP area comprises approximately 77,000 enterprises with 99.7% of those being small or medium in size, and 592,000 jobs. Businesses span a range of sectors whilst there are a number of large infrastructure projects located within the area such as Lower Thames Crossing, Thames Freeport, Freeport East, and Bradwell B. Vacancies in Essex continue to reflect the key sectors and general labour market shortages. Of over 195,000 vacancies posted across Greater Essex from May 2021 to May 2022, most frequently posted vacancies included care workers, nurses, sales-related occupations, and customer service roles. Top skills sought included communications, management, customer service, sales, planning, leadership, teaching, operations, and problem solving. There are twelve local authorities and two unitary authorities in the area. Furthermore, there are eight Further Education colleges and three fully fledged Universities within the LSIP area.

The college's curriculum is designed to meet the needs of the wide range of learners, communities and employers that access our college. Every aspect of our curriculum is focused on learners reaching their aspirations and career goals, preparing our learners for the jobs of the future, and supporting them on the next steps of their journey. Learners and employers are at the heart of our curriculum, and it is their views which shape curriculum development based on their future ambitions and aspirations.

Our research-based approach has led to the development five specific sector areas: Creative Industries; Digital Innovation & Emerging Technologies; Financial & Professional Services; Medical Technologies & Life Sciences, and Sport & Healthcare Professionals. These are sector areas that are in line with areas of priority and growth within the LSIP, and nationally, as well as being areas the college specialises in, and where our learners progress into employment. The college's diverse curriculum from Levels 1 to 6 is organised within these five sector areas. The provision does not however seek to duplicate provision in the nearby GFE College which specialises in construction and service industries.

Our career focused curriculum is designed to ensure all learners gain the skills needed to get the competitive edge for their next steps, whether this be preparing them for employment, Higher Education, or an apprenticeship. The curriculum is based upon meeting the local, regional, and national skills priorities, developing technical, industry specific skills as well as essential digital and "soft" employability skills required to successfully enter the workplace.

The vast majority of learners study at Level 3 completing either a technical or vocational qualification or alternatively a cluster of 3 A Levels all with a focus on supporting a specific career pathway. The college has a wide range A Level or Applied subjects to choose from. The vast majority of students (86%) progress to a positive destination. Of those progressing into employment (42%), 82% are now working within the five college sector areas. Only 30% of the college's learners progress into Higher Education with 9% moving onto a relevant apprenticeship or traineeship. Of those applying to university, 81% accepted their first-choice course in 2021-22.

USP College's Strategic Plan can be viewed here: <https://indd.adobe.com/view/f13b1d88-9aa2-46a0-ab50-6836bb3f8a82>

Meeting National, Regional and Local Needs:

USP College prides itself on its Career Focused Learning Strategy. Employer engagement and involvement is at the heart of this strategy. It is crucial that this is a mutually beneficial relationship whereby the college futureproofs employers' needs whilst employers futureproof the college's curriculum offer, and therefore student experience. The curriculum, and wider curriculum has and will continue to be designed in collaboration with employers developing the skills and knowledge required to be successful in industry both now and in the future. The curriculum will be designed to support all students in progressing to their desired next steps, whether this be via a vocational, academic or apprenticeship pathway. The college's intent is therefore for all students to leave with not just their qualifications but a range of essential employability and transferable skills and relevant work experience which ensures they are prepared for the world of work. The college will support employers by working collaboratively on developing qualifications at Level 4-6 which provide opportunities for employee upskilling or reskilling to reflect the changing skills required in industry. USP College students will have the edge to succeed, be able to transition smoothly and

successfully into the workforce fulfilling the needs of our local employer partners. The college's strategy ensures a high-quality careers education following the Gatsby Benchmarks. Aside from this, all delivery staff engage in annual industry upskilling ensuring they remain current in their understanding of relevant industry skills, job opportunities and priorities. Many of these placements are with employer partners within the college's key sector areas and where employer-led provision such as T Levels exist. Staff are also exposed to employers and industry expertise via the Student CPD Days where between 30-40 employers facilitate knowledge and skill-based sessions with students focusing on a specific sector area or career pathway.

The curriculum is designed around five specific sectors: Creative Industries; Digital Innovation & Emerging Technologies; Financial & Professional Services; Medical Technologies & Life Sciences, and Sport & Healthcare Professionals. Each of these sector areas is overseen by a sector board (employer advisory board). Employer partners collaborate in shaping the curriculum and wider curriculum offer helping the college to identify and impart the necessary skills and knowledge that support the local economy. The college reviews its curriculum annually considering this employer feedback selecting specific qualifications and topics/modules/units within qualifications which better develop relevant skills and knowledge for the sector. The skills gaps identified are targeted for development within the delivery of the curriculum via live project briefs provided by employer partners, via the college's Student Continuous Professional Days (CPD Days) and through enrichment and tutorial. This process will directly shape and continuously review the focus and aims of our Accountability agreement, ensuring it remains aligned to local demand.

Many of these employers directly support the college's strategy via direct involvement in the curriculum providing placements, masterclasses, trips/visits, and live project briefs for learners. The curriculum is organised underneath these sector areas and includes as best as possible academic (A Level & Applied), Vocational/Technical and Apprenticeship progression routes from Level 1 through to Level 6. The college has a strong entry level offer and investment in student support and pastoral care. There is a strong focus on positive wellbeing in the workplace ensuring students also prioritise their own self-care, an essential skill itself. The college will continue to invest in specialist staff, industry standard facilities and digital technologies to respond to employers' needs and ensure an equitable and high-quality learner experience at each campus.

Approach to developing the Annual Accountability Statement:

The college has engaged with a diverse and varied range of stakeholders to identify these key priorities and target outcomes. Specifically, the college have been working directly with the Essex Chambers of Commerce (ECoC) in development of the LSIP. The college has provided feedback on behalf of the 58 employer partners across our five sector boards including hosting a Digitech event in January 2023 in collaboration with the ECoC. These employer partners have already been actively involved in shaping the college's curriculum and wider curriculum identifying skills gaps/needs, jobs of the future and work ready behaviours required in young graduates. All feedback has been shared to inform and support the development of the LSIP.

Engagement with Other Providers in the Area:

The area incorporated within the LSIP is both vast and diverse. The college therefore recognises that to address the various skills needs within the LSIP, collaboration with other providers is both essential and ongoing. The college will continue to work collaboratively within the Federation of Essex Colleges Network (FEDEC) alongside Chelmsford College, Colchester Institute, Colchester Sixth Form College, Harlow College, New City College (Epping), South Essex College and Writtle University College.

Our contribution to national, regional, local priorities:

College Strategic Aims and Objectives	Impact and/or Contribution towards National, Regional and Local Priorities for Learning and Skills
<p><u>Aim 1 – Sector Boards</u> Use the feedback from sector board employers to implement strategies which evidence that key transferrable 'soft' skills and work ready behaviours are being developed in all learners.</p> <p>Objective: Embed the following 'soft' skills and work ready behaviours in both the curriculum (lessons) and the wider curriculum (Student CPD Days, Live project briefs, enrichment, and industrial and work experience placements)</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Communication – listening 2. Communication – speaking & presenting 3. Problem solving 4. Creativity 5. Staying positive 6. Aiming high 7. Teamwork 8. Leadership 	<p>Essex Skill Priority 1 – Soft skills and behaviours New entrants, existing and returning employees often lack appropriate soft-skills and behaviours for work and often do not understand what is expected of them. Employers have identified that individuals either lack or have poorly developed skills and behaviours in a range of areas including listening, speaking, and presenting problem solving, creativity, staying positive, aiming high, and teamwork. Leadership is also mentioned here, but it is treated as a theme in its own right in Theme 5, due to the complexity of it.</p> <p>Relevant national/regional/local priority Skills & Post-16 Education Act (2022)</p> <p>Impact All students will leave college not only with their qualifications but the full range of 'soft' skills and work ready behaviours to immediately and successfully enter and thrive in the workforce.</p>
<p><u>Aim 2 – Maths & English</u> To develop high-quality pre-recorded Maths & English content, relevant to everyday life, which is accessed by all learners including adults who wish to develop their employability.</p> <p>Objective: To use the college's digital infrastructure to create relevant high quality pre-recorded virtual reality content which develops Maths & English skills and is made relevant to day-to-day life.</p>	<p>Essex Skills Priority 2 – Basic, Maths, English & ESOL Businesses have identified that new entrants, existing and returning employees often lack basic English and Maths skills that they need in the workplace. Often, this is linked directly to how these skills are applied day to day in work and the issue can be exacerbated where English is not an individual's first language.</p> <p>Relevant national/regional/local priority Skills & Post-16 Education Act (2022)</p> <p>Impact Students place more value on and engage with Maths & English developing the necessary skills to enter and thrive within the workforce.</p>
<p><u>Aim 3 – Digital Literacy</u> To improve the digital literacy of the college's graduates to support the local and regional economy.</p> <p>Objective:</p>	<p>Essex Skills Priority 3 – Digital Skills & “Digitech” Baseline digital skills have become a near-universal requirement for employment and are insufficiently developed across the workforce. Generic digital skills such as Microsoft Office and other productivity software tools are commonly required in jobs across all skills levels and are often fundamental to</p>

<p>Identify commonly used digital software tools used and introduce an online digital competency package for all learners which develops core essential digital skills for employment.</p>	<p>entering the labour market. The curriculum does not often cover these skills in detail, instead focussing on equally valuable, but more specialist digital skills like coding and cyber security. There needs to be a provision for generic digital skills also. Furthermore, with the advancement of Artificial Intelligence (AI) workplace digital skills are likely to become much more advanced. There is a difference between the everyday digital skills needed to order food etc, compared to more advanced workplace skills like the use of apps, technical support etc.</p> <p>Relevant national/regional/local priority Skills & Post-16 Education Act (2022) National & local priority of Digital & Technology</p> <p>Impact Students develop a range of essential digital competencies via engagement with digital platforms and a digital curriculum.</p>
<p><u>Aim 4 – Curriculum Development</u> To develop new curricula which provides opportunities for learners, including adult learners to upskill/re-skill</p> <p>Objective: Work in collaboration with employers and Higher Education Institutions to introduce micro-credentials at Levels 4-6 and for adult reskilling/upskilling which develop specific skills and provide specific knowledge.</p>	<p>Essex Skills System Priority 1 – Lack of flexibility in the system Employers and providers have fed-back that there is a lack of flexibility in an over-bureaucratic education system, which blocks it from meeting industry's changing needs. Within many new and emerging skills areas, there is a desire to use qualifications and funding in a more adaptable way. Breaking qualifications into smaller chunks was popular, such as completing individual units of qualifications at a time (unitisation), bite-size qualifications, online and hybrid delivery models. This issue permeates through all layers of the current system including new entrants and reskilling of the existing workforce, with most feedback targeted towards the adult education system and Apprenticeship Levy.</p> <p>Relevant national/regional/local priority Skills & Post-16 Education Act (2022) Levelling Up White Paper (2022)</p> <p>Impact Adult learners, including those progressing from Level 3, as well as those in local community wishing to upskill or reskill, have the opportunity to select and study essential micro-credentials developing specific skills and knowledge which support their employment.</p>
<p><u>Aim 5 – Skills Maps</u></p>	<p>Essex Skills System Priority 2 – Information, Careers Advice & Guidance</p>

<p>To improve the careers information, advice, and guidance provided to all prospective and existing students via the creation of industry endorsed skills maps.</p> <p>Objective: To produce skills maps following sector board meetings as informative and promotional material to be used in CEIAG meetings with existing and prospective students identifying career pathways, academic/vocational routes, current and future jobs within the sector and skills required to be successful in the sector. – link to CEC https://greateressexcareershubs.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/11/career-hub-lmi-booklet-final.pdf</p>	<p>To ensure that appropriately skilled labour is available to industry, it is vital that careers advice and guidance is of high quality and consistent across all levels of the education system. Employers have fed-back their concerns over the current system. They are primarily, pre-16, but post-16 would also benefit from improvements to the system. The system still doesn't appear to value vocational pathways (including apprenticeships) as a credible alternative to university. With new emerging sectors and skills there is a general lack of awareness of specific roles and career paths. Employers frequently describe the challenges of trying to influence young people to enter specific occupational sectors at a local level, with limited or no support from overarching national sector bodies. Additionally, many employers do talk proactively about engagement with local schools and colleges for visits, industry talks, careers fairs, work experience and work placement opportunities. Furthermore, there is a need to fully engage prime influencers, teachers, parents, and caregivers, in new and emerging vocational sectors so they can support young people make fully informed career decisions.</p> <p>Relevant national/regional/local priority Skills & Post-16 Education Act (2022) The Baker Clause (2023) – amendment to the Technical & Further Education Act (2017)</p> <p>Impact All prospective and current students are fully aware of all relevant sector-based career pathways including the multiple entry and progression routes as well as the necessary skills required and job opportunities upon leaving college.</p>
<p><u>Aim 6 – Creative delivery models to address teacher shortages</u> To employ creative methods of programme delivery which address the current tutor shortage and provide an equitable and high-quality student experience regardless of geographical location.</p> <p>Objective 1 To implement several creative delivery models across the curriculum to offset the lack of available teaching candidates including the following:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Immersive teaching – small groups 2. Immersive teaching – large groups 3. The use of whole cohort lectures once per week for specific subjects 	<p>Essex Skills System Priority 3 - Tutor shortages and capacity of providers to respond Colleges and Training Providers all feedback that they struggle to employ and retain high quality staff. This issue is more pronounced in skills shortage areas / emerging sectors where there are extreme Tutor and Assessor shortages. Additionally, with the fast pace of change in industry, it is becoming increasingly difficult for providers to ensure that tutors and assessors are up to date with existing practices and emerging technologies. When dealing with new and emerging skills priorities, many providers cite a lack of capacity to respond as a fundamental barrier. Such issues are varied, but most providers describe a lack of staff capacity to develop and teach new provision, general space constraints, a lack of capital investment in new technology and the ability to support very small group sizes in new subject</p>

<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 4. The use of Project Based Learning in vocational/technical subjects using expert facilitators to oversee student project creation 5. Pre-recorded high-quality online content capture including the use of Virtual Reality 6. Blended/online delivery for adult provision. <p>Objective 2 Expansion of current staff industry upskilling project so that all staff teaching on vocational and/or technical courses spend the equivalent of at least one day upskilling in industry with selected staff delivering on T Levels completing the equivalent of 5 days.</p>	<p>areas. There are also issues with take-up, as Learners are less likely to take up evening and weekend training due to childcare and other commitments, which limits the courses providers can put on.</p> <p>Impact The college is able to provide a consistent high-quality student experience regardless of tutor shortages or geographical location. Delivery staff are able to effectively impart all relevant and current industry focused skills and knowledge to students.</p>
<p>Aim 7 – Student CPD Days & College Companies Evidence that key sector specific technical skills are being developed in all students within each specific sector area via the college's Student CPD Days and via Project Based Learning and the College Company model.</p> <p>Objective: Embed sector specific technical skills through the following vehicles:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Include in the college's skills maps as informative promotional material to existing and prospective students identifying career pathways, academic/vocational routes, jobs of the future and skills required to be successful in the sector to aid initial advice and guidance, internal progression routes and positive destinations. 2. Further develop Student CPD Day activities/workshops to include at least once per year the development of sector specific and technical skills, using the employers as facilitators. 3. Ensure live project briefs completed by students target the development of these sector specific skills. 4. When planning the curriculum, select specific qualifications, and units/modules within qualifications which better develop these skills. 5. Embed these sector specific and technical skills more effectively into the planning (schemes of work) and delivery of lessons (IDAC). 	<p>Essex Sectors & Technical Skills – Priority 1</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Advanced Manufacturing, Engineering & Aviation ➤ Agri-tech ➤ Community & Voluntary ➤ Creative & Cultural ➤ Digitech ➤ Education ➤ Health, Social Care & MedTech ➤ Professional Services ➤ Transport & Logistics <p>Relevant national/regional/local priority Skills & Post-16 Education Act (2022) All the above are identified areas of local priority and/or growth.</p> <p>Impact All students will leave college with not only their qualifications but the key sector specific technical skills to immediately and successfully enter and thrive in the workforce.</p>

The shared ambition of the group is to respond effectively to the LSIP priorities ensuring a greater alignment of provision across the region and the design of courses which develop appropriate skills and knowledge to better support progression into the areas of priority and growth.

The college is also part of a Cenbase, a peer support group including Luton Sixth Form College, Colchester Sixth Form College, Long Road Sixth Form College, Solihull Sixth Form College, and Wyggeston & Queen Elizabeth College working collaboratively sharing good practice so that all students experience a high-quality and diverse curriculum which prepares them for their next steps.

Moreover, the college pro-actively leads a 50-college national consortium developing 'Virtual Campus', a state-of-the-art Virtual Reality project designed to provide high-quality lessons to all learners regardless of geographical location via pre-recorded content. The college has also pioneered a national immersive learning initiative through an immersive room network addressing both the current teacher shortage problem and the impact of inequitable student experience.

The key stakeholders the college has engaged with include:

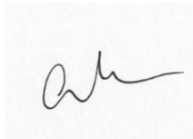
- Students of all ages, via the college's learner voice activities
- Employees of the college
- College Governors
- Local and National employers of all sizes within the college's focused sector areas
- Other local providers
- Local authorities and other government bodies
- Jobcentre Plus
- Employer representative partners such as the Essex Chambers of Commerce
- Higher Education Institutions

Corporation Statement:

On behalf of the Unified Seevic Palmers College (USP 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 Tuesday 11 July 2023.

The plan will be published on the college's website within three months of the start of the new academic year and can be accessed from the following link:
(link to be added once statement agreed)

Chair of Governors: Andy Williams:



Dated: 26 May 2023

Principal & Chief Executive Officer: Dan Pearson:



Dated: 26 May 2023

Relevant Supporting documentation:

1. [Local Skills Improvement Plans](#)
2. [Essex Skills Plan](#)
3. [College Strategic Plan](#)
4. [Ofsted Inspection Report](#)
5. [Annual Financial Statement](#)