

BRIDGWATER & TAUNTON COLLEGE

ACCOUNTABILITY STATEMENT

2023-24

Transforming lives and communities
through innovative learning
and partnerships



BRIDGWATER
& TAUNTON
COLLEGE

Statement of Purpose

Bridgwater & Taunton College launched a new five-year strategic plan in September 2022.

Our Vision and Mission statements have evolved to more clearly articulate our strategic direction and purpose.

Our four overarching strategic aims have been developed in response to the current context and our overall Vision. In addition, the framework identifies three cross cutting themes that will influence our response to the climate emergency, digital transformation, and our continued work to strengthen equality, diversity, and inclusion for all.

The safe delivery of inspirational teaching, learning and assessment will remain our core priority. We will continue to inspire all our students to achieve their full potential, through delivering a high- quality inspirational experience. As an anchor organisation embedded into our community, we commit to working in partnership with all our stakeholders to deliver our Vision.



MISSION STATEMENT

As a leading college of further and higher education, we will:

- Deliver inspirational teaching, learning and skills development
- Maintain a culture that promotes a supportive, inclusive, and safe environment
- Build highly effective partnerships that positively impact our students
- Positively influence the educational landscape.

OUR VALUES

Together, we are:

- Passionate and excited about learning
- Inclusive and supportive
- Responsive to student, employer, and community needs
- Always aspiring to the highest standards
- Professional and enterprising
- Innovative and creative
- Friendly and welcoming.

Context and Place

Bridgwater & Taunton College (BTC) is a large tertiary college providing education, skills, and training to 23,881 students across all disciplines in 2021/22. The College occupies three main sites: Bridgwater, Taunton, and Cannington, including the National College for Nuclear (NCfN) (Southern Hub).

In 2021/22, the College recruited 13 698 students on class-based funded programmes and had over 3202 individuals engaged in apprenticeship programmes. The College offers courses in all 15 subject sector areas, which range from Pre-Entry to Post-graduate level.

The campus offerings reflect the specialist provision; with Land Based Studies based in Cannington, A Levels based in Bridgwater, IB (International Baccalaureate) and T levels at Taunton, the majority of study programmes for all other disciplines, except Land Based, are offered across the Bridgwater and Taunton Campuses. The Cannington campus also has student accommodation, which has recently undergone an Ofsted inspection for which we were graded outstanding. In addition to the Land Based provision, the Cannington Campus maintains a dedicated civil engineering department (CSIC) and NCfN.

Throughout the College, the volume of students engaged in adult learning activity totalled 11 176, including a large and highly successful flexible learning programme, and active community learning.

Bridgwater & Taunton College strategic overview has consistently positioned the college to work effectively with employers and stakeholders on local, regional, and national levels to design curricula that meet identified skills needs and offer progression opportunities into, or within employment.

Somerset is a region long characterised by its dispersed rural geography and lack of major cities or traditional university campuses. Perceived as relatively affluent, it is nevertheless home to pockets of deprivation that are among the worst in the country with 47,000 of its residents living within the 20% most deprived areas of England, including the worst performing area for social mobility in the entire country. This, combined with an ageing population and a high percentage of young people who leave the county to pursue education and career aspirations elsewhere, means that skills at Level 4 and above are in short supply and overall productivity low.

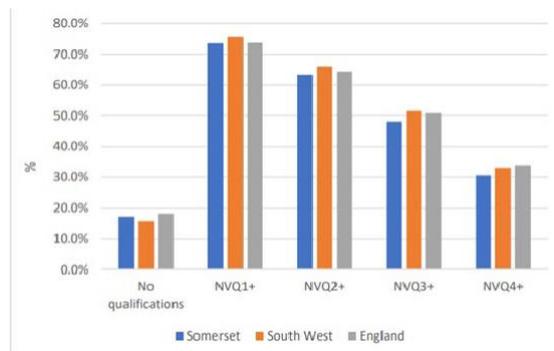


Figure 1 Highest level of qualification by area (%): (Source: Census 2021)

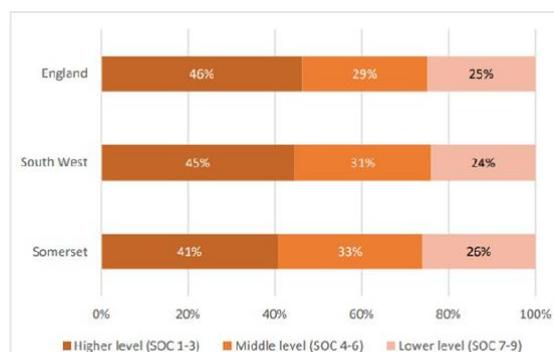


Figure 2 Resident occupations by Skills Level (Source: Census 2021)



Figure 3 Percentage of businesses with staff not fully proficient (Source: UK Employers Skills Survey 2019)

The above graphs show that:

- Somerset has lower levels of minimum attainment in all NVQ categories compared to the South-West region and England;
- A higher proportion of Somerset’s resident workforce are employed in lower skilled occupations than both the South-West and England;
- A lower proportion of Somerset’s resident workforce are employed in higher skilled occupations than the South-West and England;
- Somerset has a higher proportion of employees that are not appropriately skilled for their job compared to the South-West, HotSW LEP area and England.

Bridgwater & Taunton College serves a wide geographic area spanning the four current district authorities in Somerset, as shown in Figure 1 below, which will combine in April 2023 into one unitary Somerset Council.



Figure 4 The four district authorities of Somerset

With three campuses located throughout Somerset in Bridgwater, Cannington and Taunton and national coverage for many of our courses, our work benefits not only our students but also the wider community.

The College has invested in University Centre Somerset (UCS) in line with our strategic objectives enabling BTC to offer degrees and degree apprenticeships in many curriculum areas at Somerset's only university, widening participation in HE (Higher Education) to local residents.

The inward investment and employment opportunities arising from the new nuclear power station at Hinkley Point C (HPC) in Bridgwater has greatly boosted the local economy. As the primary training provider, we have introduced and delivered programmes supported by all funding streams.

The increasing use of technology has meant that BTC serves people and businesses across the UK and wider region, and this is particularly true of our curriculum focused on adult students. However, most students and businesses remain within a commuting distance of less than an hour from the College.

Historically the Heart of the South- West Local Enterprise Partnership (HoSW LEP) has coordinated the region's skills response. HoSW LEP have managed and distributed the FE (Further Education) capital funds and more recently established the Skills Advisory Panel (SAP). As part of the response The Heart of the South-West produced a Local Industrial Strategy ('LIS') which formed a key foundation document for the Local Skills Report. This document sets out a shared ambition to transform the local economy through clean and inclusive growth.

In addition, in response to the FE Skills White Paper sets out a new approach to regional skills co-ordination with new Local Skills Improvement Plans (LSIP) being developed by employer representative groups (ERG) The Devon and Somerset chambers of Commerce have come together to lead this activity for the region. The College is playing an active role in this development.

In response to the Skills white paper the College is leading the SDF (Skills Development Fund) on behalf of Devon and Somerset Colleges.

Meeting local, regional, and national skills - Curriculum Offer

Our curriculum offer is designed in collaboration with industry and employers and provides a clear path for our students to progress from FE at Bridgwater & Taunton College to HE at University Centre Somerset and further into employment in industry. Our unique BTC Advantage sets us apart from other FE providers and gives our learners the best chance of success.

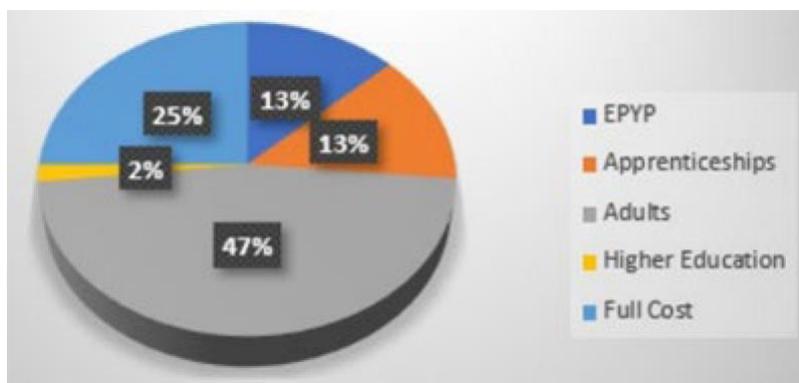


Figure 5 Student numbers by provision type for Bridgwater & Taunton College 2021/22

The above clearly shows the diverse nature of the Bridgwater & Taunton College provision. There is a high volume of learners overall, including a very high proportion of adult students. Due to the nature and scope of the industry led provision, full cost training and development make up the second largest provision type, which demonstrates the context within which the college operates meeting the needs of the industry both locally and regionally through working with the Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) and nationally.

BTC is clear of the significant changes going forward in local and regional changes to facilitate regional skills developments. The class-based provision for 16–18-year-olds (navy in the table above) is highly important representing 13% of all college provision type and in a tertiary system provides the 16 plus offer for local students. Apprenticeships represent 13% of all provision, illustrating the rapid growth over the last few academic years and importance of this provision. Adult provision remains the largest provision at 47% with excellent outcomes.

The College works closely with schools in Somerset to strategically support and strengthen educational opportunities. This includes Bridgwater & Taunton College Trust, a charitable organisation which exists with the single legal and moral purpose to advance education for public benefit. A key strategic objective is to improve and maintain high educational standards within and beyond our schools. Our work with school stakeholders underpins the core purpose and success of the tertiary system in our local area.

BTC as a 2020 T Level provider continues to grow and strengthen the position of this new government flagship qualification. As numbers and pathways increase our young people are benefitting from a high-quality experience, strong industry links and positive progression into careers and higher education.

The College has a strong track record of early engagement and bespoke training delivery for major infrastructure projects, and local employers, for example Morrisons, Hinckley Point C, Mulberry, and the NHS. Forthcoming opportunities include the potential Gravity Project. BTC plays a leading role in developing implementing a coordinated, multi-provider, regional and national responses focused on the development of new curricula and training methodologies to support employers.

BTC works effectively with a wide range of employers of all sizes covering most key industry sectors, engaging with them to understand the skills needs and working with them to design and implement a relevant and effective curriculum offer. The offer supports employers and stakeholders on local, regional, and national levels to meet identified skills gaps and offer progression opportunities into – or within – employment.

Since the apprenticeship reforms in 2015 the college has worked in close partnership with employers to implement apprenticeship standards that link to a wide range of job roles. Supporting employers with the transition to standards has resulted in many employers developing apprenticeship schemes that seek applications from college students on an annual basis. The impact of this activity is seen in the volume and growth in the college's Apprenticeship and Industry Placement available to support students' employment aspirations.

In 2021/22 Bridgwater & Taunton College was the largest provider of levy funded apprenticeship nationally.

To support our strategic direction and address local, regional, and national skills needs the College has identified several priority areas. These align to the LIS three areas of significant growth opportunities for the Region over the next two decades, Engineering Futures; Digital Futures; and Energy Futures.

In addition, the Local Skills Report also identifies core sectors that will be areas of specific heightened regional need / demand into the medium term. These are crucial to our region's economy and require a discrete focus:

- Health and social work are currently predicted to create more 'new' jobs than any other sector.
- Accommodation and food, arts, and entertainment, along with other services and wholesale and retail trade
- Agri-Tech and Food and Drink Production
- Construction both at professional and associate professional and managerial level and construction trades
- Professional and support services and information technology
- Production, manufacturing and Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths (STEM) will have a significant replacement demand.

Overview of key curriculum provision linked to skills priorities

As a strategic priority we have aligned provision to meet four of the five priority areas as identified in Implementing a new Further Education Funding and Accountability System-paragraph 136.

Engineering

From an initial £8m investment in an Energy Skills Centre the College has invested in ever-more sophisticated training facilities and equipment that align to new and emerging technologies in aerospace, nuclear, welding and composites. A £6m Advanced Engineering Centre (AEC), equipped with Rolls-Royce Gem engines, specialist training rigs and workshops for composites, materials testing, welding, and CNC accommodates growth in the College's higher level engineering provision.

Nuclear

The Government flagship National College for Nuclear (NCfN) has been established at the College's campus. NCfN represents a joint venture between the College, EDF Energy and Bristol University to the south and Lakes College, Sellafield Ltd and the University of Cumbria to the north

BTC also proactively plays a central role in the national agenda around Green Skills by sharing knowledge, curriculum, and staff resource with the NCfN and the National Energy Skills Consortium via our participation in the National Electrification Skills Framework and Forum. Additionally, the College's partnership with the HPC MEH Alliance has strengthened, bringing together employers such as Balfour Beatty, NG Bailey, Cavendish Nuclear, Altrad and Doosan.

A Welding Centre of Excellence was designed and built-in direct response to industry demand, providing Virtual Reality simulation technology in advanced welding techniques for the training nuclear apprentices at Hinkley Point C (HPC).

Construction

The College's investment in 'live' workplace training environments is not confined to nuclear and engineering. Its £2m Construction Skills and Innovation Centre (CSIC) is hugely important to the regional economy. This 8-acre outdoor area, with industry-standard plant, machinery, and materials, replicates a live construction site and offers pre-employment programmes, Apprenticeships and specialist skills training in Water Utilities, Construction Plant, Construction Operations, Scaffolding, Concrete Pouring, Form Work and Steel Fixing Operations, with a clear line of sight to employment with companies such as ByLor, Laing O'Rourke, Kier Bam, Wessex Water and Costain. The knowledge and experience gained through developing the apprenticeship programmes has enabled the College to also develop fast-track accreditation for experienced workers, and 1500 workers are expected to undertake this process for HPC alone.

Automotive

BTC has invested significantly in its Automotive Engineering curriculum over the last two years. A project alongside the Heart of the South West's Strategic Development Fund (SDF), for which BTC is the lead provider within a consortium of nine training providers in the South West, is allowing the college to invest further into new sustainability technology, supported by qualified staff. This is also supporting the upcoming delivery of T-Levels for Light and Electric Vehicles commencing 2023/24.

The college has placed itself ahead of the curve in this arena for future training needs. Funding has allowed us to invest in equipment that includes an Advanced Driver Assistance System (ADAS), calibration and diagnostic equipment available at both our Bridgwater and Taunton campuses for the benefit of our students, apprentices, and local employers. The college works closely with the Institute of the Motor Industry (IMI) to inform our curriculum as it gives us insight into the significant skills gap within the trade. With the investments made, BTC is ready to plug this skills gap and deliver world-class education to its stakeholders with the intention of nurturing highly productive, knowledgeable students who will add value to their employer post-qualification completion.

Land-Based

The College's Land-Based studies department offers outstanding experience to a diverse range of students and provision is intent on developing the next generation of professionals, leaders, and managers through the development of knowledge, skills and professional behaviours supporting growth and prosperity in the sector. The suite of programmes offered reflects the Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) in relation to land-based employment opportunities and is enhanced by the LEP funded Environmental Living Lab project which provides students with the opportunity to engage in research to tackle environmental challenges within Somerset; a new research hub is planned for development ready for exploitation in 2023/24.

The Land-Based studies department offers a diverse range of apprenticeship standards meeting the requirements of the national, regional, and local sector. The breadth of provision also encompasses the Food and Drink industry as well as the more traditional land-based subjects and Veterinary Nursing.

The College works with a wide range of employers including levy-paying employers and SMEs. Working relationships with large national and international organisations continue to be successful and include the National Trust, Environment Agency, Canal, and River Trust, Nestle, Thatchers, Mars, and Lucozade.

Digital

The College provides bespoke facilities designed to replicate those of industry and a real working environment, including specialist Virtual Reality (VR) equipment- an omnidirectional treadmill, a suite of high-spec computers, and cyber security simulation facilities.

BTC hosts Somerset's first Apple Authorised Training Centre for Education (AATCE), one of the first in the UK approved to deliver training in Swift coding, the powerful and intuitive programming language of iOS, iPadOS and macOS.

The College has invested £350k enabling us to provide all study programme students with portable digital devices that significantly enhance their overall learning experience whilst reinforcing our unswerving commitment to break down barriers to achievement and ensure equality of opportunity for all.

Health and Social Care

The Colleges unique achievements mean that individuals of all ages and abilities – some already employed in the sector – can now access a raft of career pathways into healthcare that can take them from an Internship, Level 2 transition programme or Access to HE qualification, via Level 3 programmes that include a T-Level in Health, right through to qualifications at Levels 4, 5 and now a locally owned and managed BSc, that are wholly delivered on their doorstep.

The college's partnership with NHS Somerset represents a system-wide 'home grown' approach that links learner numbers to workforce plans and ensures that local talent is retained within Somerset, whilst also reducing reliance on expensive external and international recruitment.

Nursing

Health and Social Care is the second largest sector in the South-West economy, and although health outcomes are good and life expectancy high, too many people develop avoidable long-term multiple conditions which affect both the quality of their lives and their ability to work. Within Somerset there is an acute need for trained nurses, arising from a combination of an ageing workforce, the demise of nursing bursaries, a dearth of university provision, the migration of young people and an organisational structure within the NHS that limits progression from junior roles.

Our successful and long-standing partnership with the NHS in Somerset has developed further in recent years and together we have designed programmes that meet a range of future skills needs, most notably direct delivered Nursing degree apprenticeships that address the acute regional and national shortage of trained nurses. The College is also working with the NHS to understand their digital strategy for the coming years and design roles which will address their future needs.

The college has invested £3.2m in new facilities, including a fully equipped Clinical Skills & Simulation Suite

Hospitality

The College's work across the Food and Drink Sector continues to strengthen which includes the Food and Drink Skills Network UK hosted by the College and designed to engage local and national employers across the sector in discussions on critical topics and challenges in their industry.

The surge of business coming into Somerset brings with it a raft of opportunities for training in support functions, and the College's work with facilities management consortiums and other umbrella organisations is supporting the growth of provision in this area.

A £1m refurbishment of this full-scale restaurant and commercial kitchen has resulted in an outstanding training facility for Hospitality and Catering students who, by opening to the public on a regular basis, acquire the teamwork, communication, and people skills that employers and customers expect.

Sport & Uniformed Public Services

BTC is the first college to work in partnership with a national governing body for sport. Since 2016 we have held the national contract with British Gymnastics to deliver Apprenticeships that enable aspiring gymnasts and those nearing the end of their career to be redeployed as coaches and instructors in gymnastics clubs throughout the UK in addition, we work closely with a wealth of SMEs under the British Gymnastics banner to offer coaching apprenticeships at Levels 2, 3 and 4.

The College works in collaboration with The Fire Service regionally to deliver high quality apprenticeships.

Creative Arts

Through our work in the creative arts sector, Bridgwater & Taunton College is having a highly positive impact on local employment and local enterprise. A long association with luxury leather goods manufacturer Mulberry is a key example of meeting employer needs. Other achievements in Creative Arts include the McMillan Theatre, our state-of-the-art, multi-million-pound theatre and teaching facility that has pride of place in the community in Bridgwater and is open to the public.

Approach to developing the Plan

At the heart of this agreement is a strong approach to strategic planning underpinned by robust mechanisms for monitoring and high expectations.

The Governing Body has continued to strengthen with the addition of the addition of new members of the board from key strategic positions from our stakeholders, securing the diverse skills base, experience and links to local business and community. The composition of board members has continued to evolve and incorporate the skills and experience required across a broad range of disciplines to further enhance a highly effective board with an excellent mix of skills and experience. The governors take a lead in setting a clear strategic vision, which is articulated through a robust annual strategic planning process, involving consultation with teams across the College. The governing body play an active role in The Association of Colleges, which provides a link into the local FE sector.

As the lead for the Devon and Somerset Skills Development Fund the College has responded to and enabled a collaborative approach to developing new provision designed to meet the needs of the local and regional economy. The Skills Development Fund provides a centralised framework for a co-ordinated response to skills in the South West. Highly effective governance provides robust oversight, which is monitored by the respective college boards.

The College is working in close collaboration with a number of employer responsive boards to inform the future Learning Skills and Improvement Plans. These are built on a firm foundation of a collaborative and strategic partnership through local and regional skills improvement plans.

The College works in collaboration with local schools and teachers to understand and plan the curriculum to enable all young people to succeed. This collaboration extends to strategic planning, transition work, provision for KS3 and careers support.

We work closely with The Local Authority and County Council to align strategic priorities to support the county and its skills needs. The College sits on the board of the new Somerset Education Strategy- Great Futures.

As a member of the South West Institute of Technology we have responded and grown provision at Level four and above which directly responds to employer needs. The joint strategic board of the IoT (Institute of Technologies) enables a link between the accountability agreements of those South West colleges and the region. This relationship strengthens and extends the opportunities available to the region and its students.

Close collaboration with universities both regionally and nationally ensures the plan and curriculum provision is enabled to respond to higher level skills needs, for example in nursing and digital higher technical qualifications. As a county without a university the College has identified the growth of university provision as a strategic priority.

Extensive links to employers through a variety of activities has resulted in highly bespoke curriculum which enables businesses to respond and grow. These relationships underpin the strategic and curriculum plan. For example, the College has maintained successful relationships with many employers including EDF Energy, Bylor, MoD, Environment Agency, Wessex Water, UK Power Networks, Somerset NHS Foundation Trust, Somerset County Council, British Gymnastics and National Trust. In addition, the College works successfully with a high volume of SMEs to ensure their workforce needs are successfully met.

The College is working closely with the Somerset Chamber of Commerce to support development of the Local Skills Improvement Plan (LSIP).

Aims	Link to Strategic Ambition/Vision	Link to Strategic Priorities	Actions	By when
<p>Develop and grow our AEB (Adult Education Budget) offer to meet skills needs and the needs of the community to enable adults to move into employment and improve in-work opportunities</p>	<p>Deliver high quality, proactive and flexible learning programmes to support adults</p>	<p>Innovate and grow our curriculum for adults in response to local, regional, and national demand</p> <p>Develop and deliver high quality re-skilling and up-skilling programmes which enable businesses and adults to thrive</p> <p>Develop and deliver courses to engage adults in learning and support well-being and community cohesion</p> <p>Continue to partner with key stakeholders in our community to ensure opportunity for all</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Continue to grow the flexible learning offer to ensure national skills needs are met ▪ Increase provision in ESOL (English Speakers of Other Languages) to support those students who are new to our community ▪ Increase opportunities to deliver and grow bootcamps and Sector- Based Work Academies to enable adult to enter/re-enter the labour market ▪ Extend the curriculum offer and increase the number of adults engaging in community learning ▪ Grow the FCFJ (Free Courses for Jobs) offer to increase skills of adults in key areas such as health, leadership and management and construction ▪ Work collaboratively with local FE providers to enable progression to higher education 	<p>July 2024</p>
<p>Increase numbers of students at Level 3</p>	<p>An inspirational experience for school leavers</p>	<p>Invest in and grow our high-quality academic programmes including A Levels and T Levels</p> <p>Engage with our school partners to ensure students and our community can realise the full benefit of the Tertiary education system</p> <p>Ensure all students have access to a digital device to support and energise learning</p> <p>Deliver high quality support and personal development to develop life skills and resilience</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Introduce new T Levels up to 2025 ▪ Increase % of students achieving high grades ▪ Increase the number of 16-18 choosing to study at The College ▪ Further develop the Level 2 offer to enable students to progress to higher levels of study ▪ Improve further GCSE outcomes ▪ Increase the number of students progressing through levels ▪ Grow our higher education offer to enable positive progression within Somerset, supporting raising low HE participation rates 	<p>July 2024</p>
<p>Continue to grow high quality apprenticeship and work-based provision to meet employer needs</p>	<p>Transformational change for employers and apprentices</p>	<p>Equip apprentices with the high-quality industry knowledge, skills, and behaviours to achieve and thrive in their chosen career</p> <p>Work in partnership with employers to provide a safe, inclusive, and supportive experience for all</p> <p>Match businesses and future talent to unlock their potential</p> <p>Continue to grow our apprenticeship programme in response to regional and national needs</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Increase apprentice provision by 5% annually ▪ Maintain position of provider of choice and largest FE provider of Levy funded apprenticeships ▪ Work in collaboration with employers locally, regionally, and nationally to provide bespoke responses to their challenges in areas such as health, construction, engineering and digital ▪ Further improve apprenticeship retention and first time EPA outcomes ▪ Increase employer satisfaction score to excellent ▪ Increase provision in degree and higher apprenticeships linked to employer needs ▪ Increase commercial portfolio to enable wider employer needs to be met 	
<p>Grow higher education numbers and offer</p>	<p>Transforming Somerset through University Level Education</p>	<p>Establish UCS as the leading provider of university-level education in Somerset</p> <p>Deliver and enhanced student experience</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Achieve degree awarding powers ▪ Increase portfolio to respond to employer needs, and enable more students to access local higher education in Somerset in construction, engineering, health & well-being and digital ▪ Work in collaboration with key stakeholders to co-design and deliver Higher education provision linked to skills priorities ▪ Increase number of HE students in health and associated well-being subjects 	

Corporation Statement- confirmation of governor sign-off

We can confirm this Accountability Agreement was approved by the Board on

23 March 2023

Associated Links

Link to latest Ofsted Report

[Bridgwater & Taunton College Ofsted Report](#)

