

HIGHER EDUCATION AND SKILLS

STRATEGY



UNIVERSITY
CENTRE
STOCKPORT COLLEGE



HOSPITALITY
COMPUTING EARLY YEARS
ART ENGINEERING
CONSTRUCTION
CREATIVE AND DIGITAL MEDIA
SCIENCE BUSINESS

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INTRODUCTION TO THE STRATEGY

We are pleased to present the Trafford and Stockport College Group Higher Education and Skills Strategy for 2025-2030. This strategy builds on the achievements of the previous strategic plan while addressing the evolving needs of our students, employers, and the community.

The TSCG Higher Education and Skills Strategy responds to national, regional, and local contexts, ensuring our offerings align with policy developments and market demands. Our strategy aims to unlock the potential of our community by adapting to changing educational landscapes and workforce requirements.

This strategy will support TSCG's goal of advancing from bronze to silver rating in respect of the Teaching Excellence Framework, with a focus on ensuring student experience and student outcomes are consistently of a very high quality. A robust tertiary education system is essential for fostering the skills, knowledge, and qualifications necessary for students to succeed in the workforce and contribute to society. By improving teaching quality and enhancing the overall student experience, this strategy will not only help TSCG achieve its goal but also strengthen the role of tertiary education in promoting personal development, social mobility, and economic growth.

This Strategy aligns itself with the overarching TSCG Strategic Plan (2025-2030) sharing the same purpose, vision, mission and values.



A photograph of an elderly man with glasses and a young woman in a care home setting. The man is sitting in a green armchair, smiling and looking towards the woman. The woman is standing next to him, also smiling, and has her hands clasped. She is wearing a blue uniform with white piping. The background shows a window with a view of greenery. The entire image has a blue and green color overlay.

PURPOSE

UNLOCKING POTENTIAL FOR SUCCESSFUL FUTURES

A close-up portrait of a man with dark hair, a beard, and glasses, looking intently at a screen. The background is a blurred digital interface with various data points, charts, and code snippets. The overall color palette is dominated by deep purples and blues, with a bright green highlight on the left side.

VISION

**TO LEAD THE WAY
FOR A CITY REGION
WHERE EVERYONE HAS
THE EDUCATION AND
SKILLS TO SUCCEED IN
LIFE AND WORK**



MISSION

**TOGETHER
WE ELEVATE
SKILLS, SHAPE
FUTURES, AND
TRANSFORM
LIVES**

A photograph of two women, one with blonde hair and one wearing a hijab, leaning over a table and working together. The blonde woman is pointing at a document, and the woman in the hijab is holding a red pen. The background is softly blurred, showing other people in a meeting or classroom setting. The image has a blue and yellow color gradient overlay.

VALUES

AMBITIOUS

COLLABORATIVE


INCLUSIVE

RESPECTFUL

RESILIENT

BACKGROUND

Trafford & Stockport College Group's (TSCG) Higher Education and Skills Strategy 2025-2030 sets out the ambitions and aims for provision at Level 4 and above across the College group. This Strategy is set within the context of a changing political landscape for higher level provision and a commitment by the newly formed Government to focus on “skills, fair growth and local prosperity” as key drivers in supporting the nation's productivity challenges. Several national policy initiatives were articulated by the previous government in the Skills White Paper (2021) with the development of higher-level skills provision one of the main objectives within this. The current government is committed to improving diversity within higher education and supporting underrepresented groups.



HIGHER EDUCATION CONTEXT

HIGHER EDUCATION CONTEXT IN THE GREATER MANCHESTER CITY REGION AND NATIONALLY



NATIONAL CONTEXT

- 1 Policy Changes:** The previous UK government has implemented several reforms aimed at enhancing the quality and accessibility of higher education over the past four years. Initiatives such as the Augar Review and the Lifelong Learning Bill focus on expanding access to education and fostering skills development. The newly formed government looks to continue this focus, although its execution may differ over the coming months/years.
- 2 Skills Shortages:** The UK faces significant skills shortages in various sectors, including digital technology, healthcare, and engineering. Higher education institutions are increasingly tasked with aligning curricula to address these gaps and meet the needs of employers.
- 3 Shift to Higher Technical Qualifications (HTQs):** The introduction of HTQs aims to bridge the gap between academic qualifications and vocational training. These qualifications are designed to enhance employability by equipping students with practical skills.
- 4 Increased Competition:** The higher education sector has seen a rise in competition among institutions, both domestically and internationally. This has led to a focus on student experience, employability outcomes, and the integration of technology in education.

HIGHER EDUCATION CONTEXT IN THE GREATER MANCHESTER CITY REGION AND NATIONALLY

GREATER MANCHESTER CONTEXT

- 5 Economic Landscape:** Greater Manchester has a diverse economy with strong sectors such as digital, health, advanced manufacturing, and creative industries. Higher education institutions play a critical role in supporting this economic landscape by providing skilled graduates.
- 6 Local Skills Improvement Plan (LSIP):** The Greater Manchester LSIP identifies key skills needs across the region and emphasises collaboration among educational institutions, employers, and local authorities to address these needs.
- 7 Partnerships and Collaboration:** There is a growing emphasis on collaboration between higher education providers and local businesses to ensure that educational offerings align with market demands. Initiatives such as the Greater Manchester Colleges Group (GMCG) foster partnerships aimed at improving skills delivery.
- 8 Focus on Inclusivity:** Greater Manchester is committed to enhancing social mobility and providing equitable access to education. This includes targeted outreach to underrepresented groups and the development of flexible learning pathways.



HIGHER EDUCATION CONTEXT IN THE GREATER MANCHESTER CITY REGION AND NATIONALLY



GREATER MANCHESTER CONTEXT

- 9 Higher Technical Qualifications (HTQs):** The region is actively engaging in the rollout of HTQs, which are designed to provide students with industry-relevant skills. This initiative supports the goal of ensuring that local graduates are job-ready and equipped to meet the needs of employers
- 10 Regional Challenges:** While there are many opportunities, Greater Manchester also faces challenges such as economic inequality and varying educational attainment levels across different communities. Higher education institutions are tasked with addressing these disparities through targeted programmes and support services. Approximately 40-45% of young people in Greater Manchester progress to higher education at age 18. This is slightly below the national average, which hovers around 48%. Those from disadvantaged areas of Greater Manchester often have lower participation rates.
- 11 Regional Initiatives:** Various programmes and partnerships, such as the Greater Manchester Combined Authority (GMCA) and local colleges, aim to boost university participation among underrepresented groups, including outreach efforts to schools and community organisations. An example of this is the Greater Manchester Higher Programme aimed at widening participation into university. TSCG has an outreach officer employed through this GMCA initiative.

TRAFFORD AND STOCKPORT COLLEGE GROUP CONTEXT

At a local level, TSCG has experienced a steady decline in HE student intakes over the last three years. To help address this challenge and continue to provide a responsive, local and accessible offer, we are committed to further reviewing our marketplace and strategic direction of travel. We will invest in further efforts for stakeholder engagement and targeted growth in priority areas.

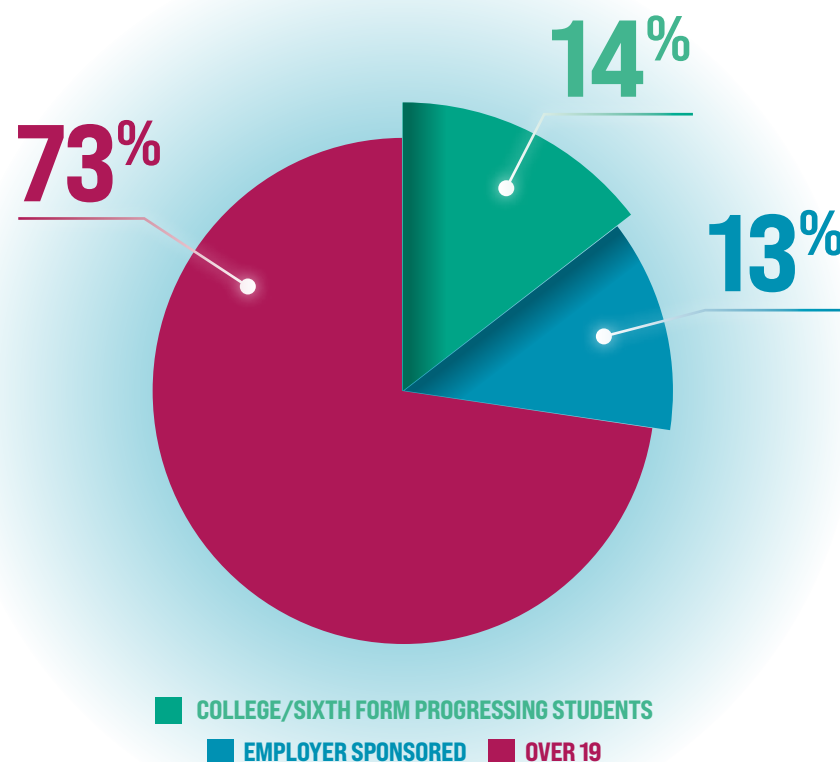
The TSCG “Higher Education and Skills” offer consists of diverse types of provision. There is extensive delivery of an existing traditional Level 4 / 5 offer consisting of BTEC Higher Nationals and HTQ’s across STEM related disciplines including Applied Science, Building Services Engineering, Construction, Computing and Electrical & Mechanical Engineering. TSCG delivers a range of foundation and full degree programmes in the sectors of Arts & Media, Education, Early Years, and Childhood Studies, including programmes validated by Sheffield Hallam University and teacher education provision validated by the University of Huddersfield. TSCG also delivers several professional programmes at Level 4/5 including Accountancy, Counselling, Human Resources (CIPD) and Procurement and Supply Chain (CIPS). Over recent years, the TSCG apprenticeship offer has also developed into Level 4/5 provision, with large volumes of apprentices

on Leadership and Management programmes, and higher technical STEM related disciplines becoming popular as apprenticeships.

The TSCG higher education and skills market consists of three primary areas: adults, employers, and young people. Adult learners seeking to up-skill and develop new career opportunities form the largest market. These are typically individuals looking for a more local, flexible, and affordable offer with clear career pathways.

The employer market primarily consists of higher-level apprenticeships at Level 4/5, but also includes employer sponsorship of individuals undertaking part-time higher education alongside their roles. However, this sponsorship has reduced in recent years as employers have taken more advantage of the apprenticeship route. The progression of young people (18/19-year-olds) within TSCG from advanced level study into higher-level courses remains small. Similarly, access to our higher-level provision by young people from other institutions is limited, and opportunities exist to attract and encourage more young people to participate.

HE STUDENT COMPOSITION



STATEMENT OF INTENT FOR HIGHER EDUCATION AND SKILLS AT TRAFFORD AND STOCKPORT COLLEGE GROUP

TSCG's Higher Education strategic objectives are rooted in inclusivity and widening access to, and success in, higher education. Our vision is to develop the higher education and skills offer within Trafford & Stockport College Group to:

- Provide an excellent quality, accessible, value for money and employment-focused offer
- Allow our students to achieve their full potential, progress in their chosen career and increase their potential for higher earnings in response to the growing demand for higher level skills
- Ensure that our employers benefit from a skilled workforce that will enable growth, generate innovation and increase their productivity

STATEMENT OF INTENT FOR HIGHER EDUCATION AND SKILLS AT TRAFFORD AND STOCKPORT COLLEGE GROUP

We will work with our key partners, with a focus on employers, to ensure that our curriculum provides opportunities for our students and leads to improved career outcomes and life chances. We will engage employers on all aspects of curriculum development, delivery and review. We want to offer economically relevant, high quality, flexible learning opportunities and a curriculum that will meet the needs of local adults, employers, and community.

We will support social and economic regeneration and contribute to measurable business success and community cohesion through the provision of flexible, innovative, and responsive high quality training opportunities, working in partnerships with employers, local communities, and key agencies and training providers. We will ensure that we meet the need of our student body through regular review and enhancement of our mechanisms for student engagement.

We will continue to transform our estate to further support a high-quality learning environment. This transformation will capture outstanding practice, including a culture of continuous improvement, by providing inspirational teaching and learning responsive to the needs, interests, and experiences of our students, leading to their success. The quality of learning, teaching, and assessment will be enhanced through the sharing of good practice, both internally and across other regional and national providers.



STATEMENT OF INTENT FOR WORKING WITH PARTNERS AND EMPLOYERS AND OUR ESTATE



We are committed to widening participation and increasing access to lifelong learning opportunities in education and training through an inclusive and enabling approach, and to ensuring that high quality higher education is accessible to a wide range of groups. This will include:

- The provision of progression opportunities to existing college students
- The targeting and engagement of students from cold spots (areas with low higher education participation rates or non-traditional higher education students)
- The provision of a local higher education offer for regional sixth form and further education leavers
- Up-skilling and re-skilling opportunities to individuals within the community and further afield
- Opportunities for employees to gain accreditation for higher level learning through part-time and bespoke routes including higher apprenticeships, short courses and flexible HNC/HND delivery modes.

Our Access and Participation plan (due for submission in Summer 2025) will underpin the above with targeted strategies to support increased participation and achievement from specific, under-represented groups. The plan will set out several actions and KPIs which will help drive forward this strategy.

Working in partnership with students, the College will ensure that sound information, advice and guidance supports individuals into higher education study and, following high quality learning experiences, students progress further into employment or continued study.

TSCG has a strong track record of working in partnerships, and will continue working with industries, awarding bodies and HEIs to increase participation and develop the higher-level skills needed to support economic regeneration regionally and nationally. We will promote innovation as new flexible models of delivery are sought to meet the changing needs of both industry and individuals in a rapidly changing world.

THE STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES



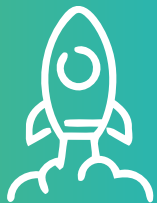
Shape our local community through an employer-aligned and inclusive curriculum



Position TSCG's University Centre as the employer of choice for the Higher Education workforce



Transform student experience and outcomes



Maximise recruitment opportunities



Innovate curriculum delivery models, supported by outstanding digital and physical learning environments



Support collaborative arrangements

1.

SHAPE OUR LOCAL COMMUNITY THROUGH AN EMPLOYER-ALIGNED AND INCLUSIVE CURRICULUM



AIM:

Develop a curriculum in collaboration with local employers and industry, ensuring that the courses reflect the current and future needs of the local economy, and are inclusive of all learners.

APPROACH:

- **Employer-led curriculum design:** Work closely with local businesses and industries to design courses that meet their specific needs.
- **Regional development focus:** Ensure that the curriculum addresses both local employment opportunities and the unique needs of the community. Students should be prepared not just for jobs but to meet local, regional, or national economic demands.
- **Inclusive approach:** Offer flexible learning pathways that support learners from diverse backgrounds, including those who may face barriers to education. This includes part-time learning options, evening classes, and distance learning.
- **Access to higher education:** Provide clear progression routes from FE qualifications to higher education (e.g., foundation degrees, top-up degrees) so that learners can continue to expand their qualifications and skills within a familiar institution.

POSITION TSCG'S UNIVERSITY CENTRE AS THE EMPLOYER OF CHOICE FOR THE HIGHER EDUCATION WORKFORCE



AIM:

Position TSCG University Centre as an employer of choice by fostering professional growth, inclusivity, and career progression, while strategically planning for future workforce needs to support our 2030 vision. This will be achieved by empowering staff, promoting collaboration, and celebrating contributions that enhance the student experience.

APPROACH:

- **Maximise professional growth** for all higher education staff, encouraging talent development, cross-departmental collaboration, and clear pathways for career progression within the TSCG University Centre.
- Foster a **supportive and nurturing environment** where staff are empowered to take ownership of their roles, delivering high-quality outcomes in teaching, research, and student support.
- Promote an **“Everyone on Board” workplace** through transparent communication across the TSCG University Centre and wider Group, building a culture of inclusivity where all colleagues feel secure in expressing ideas, fostering open communication, collaboration, and innovation.
- Embed the **One College Group culture** at the TSCG University Centre by recognising and rewarding contributions from a broad range of staff, celebrating achievements that enhance student experience and institutional success.
- **Strategically review workforce planning** for the TSCG University Centre to identify new roles and skills required to meet our 2030 vision. This will include robust annual resource planning, targeted development, and best-practice strategies for attracting and retaining talent in higher education.

3.

TRANSFORM STUDENT EXPERIENCE AND OUTCOMES



AIM:

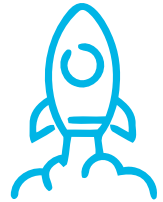
To ensure that students have not only academic success but also develop skills that make them adaptable, employable, and capable of contributing meaningfully to society.

APPROACH:

- **Progression pathways:** Ensure clear progression routes from Level 3+ to full degree-level qualifications or career advancement short courses and higher-level apprenticeships, showing students that their education can lead to further academic and professional opportunities.
- **Support services:** Offer tailored support services such as career advice, personal development workshops, academic coaching and additional learning support. This is particularly important for students from non-traditional or underrepresented backgrounds who may require extra assistance in transitioning to higher education.
- **Development of Soft Skills:** In addition to academic learning, students should be encouraged to develop resilience and soft skills such as communication, leadership, emotional intelligence, teamwork, and resilience by taking part in workshops, societies, and extra-curricular activities.
- **Campus Culture:** Students should feel that they are part of a welcoming and inclusive community where they can thrive both academically and socially.

4.

MAXIMISE RECRUITMENT OPPORTUNITIES



AIM:

Increase recruitment by promoting the TSCG University Centre offer as an accessible and practical alternative to university, especially for local learners and those in employment.

APPROACH:

- **Local marketing:** Market Level 4+ qualifications as an accessible, cost-effective alternative to university, particularly for local students who may not want to relocate or take on significant debt. Highlight that HNCs, HNDs, HTQ's and Foundation Degrees offer practical, industry-focused employability skills and the opportunity to progress onto top-up degrees and promote career advancement.
- **Development of TSCG University Centre brand:** Development of a creative brand that promotes the benefits of HE in FE, highlights TSCG University Centre strengths, resonates with our diverse audiences, and promotes quality and industry-focus.
- **Partnerships with employers:** Develop stronger ties with local employers to advertise higher level apprenticeships and part-time HE offers that lead to higher-level qualifications. Engage employers in promotional efforts, demonstrating how the college's higher-level courses can address skills gaps.
- **Clear progression pathways:** Showcase the clear and transparent progression routes from Level 3 qualifications to, HNC's, HND's, HTQ's, top-up degrees, higher apprenticeships, or further study, ensuring prospective students understand how their qualifications can lead to further academic success or career growth.
- **Adult learners:** Develop targeted marketing campaigns aimed at adult learners seeking career progression or looking to upskill. Highlight flexible learning options and broader benefits of local HE that allow adults to work while studying or return to education after a break.

5.

INNOVATE CURRICULUM DELIVERY MODELS, SUPPORTED BY OUTSTANDING DIGITAL AND PHYSICAL LEARNING ENVIRONMENTS



AIM:

Create a flexible, accessible, and engaging learning environment that utilises both traditional and modern technologies to enhance the learning experience.

APPROACH:

- Incorporate blended learning models that combine online learning with in-person classes, offering a convenient and flexible approach to learning.
- Leverage cutting-edge technologies like virtual reality, AI-driven learning tools, and interactive digital platforms to make learning more engaging and dynamic.
- Ensure that physical spaces, such as classrooms and labs, are equipped with modern technologies that foster collaboration and hands-on learning.
- Further adaptation to align with the proposed Lifelong Learning Entitlement modular delivery and explore additional learning opportunities such as evening and block study formats.

6.

SUPPORT COLLABORATIVE ARRANGEMENTS



AIM:

To foster strong partnerships between institutions, government bodies, local universities, employers, and industry stakeholders to enhance the effectiveness and accessibility of the tertiary education system, ensuring that curricula align with labour market needs. This collaboration will ensure the currency and relevance of higher-level programmes, provide seamless pathways for students, and offer meaningful progression and employment opportunities.

APPROACH:

- **University partnerships:** Build or strengthen partnerships with local universities to offer Foundation Degrees, top-up degrees, or jointly accredited courses. This collaboration enables students to achieve higher education qualifications without having to leave the FE college setting they are familiar with.
- **Regional skills partnerships:** Work with local councils and regional skills partnerships to identify skills gaps and offer targeted education and training programmes in areas such as digital innovation, construction, or green energy that meet regional employment needs.
- **Employer-led programmes:** Work with employers to design tailored Level 4+ courses that meet their specific needs. This can include workplace-based learning, higher level apprenticeships, or industry placements that ensure students gain real-world experience in their field while studying.

SUMMARY OF STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES



Local community alignment is key. The curriculum should be tailored to meet the needs of local employers and provide progression pathways to ensure that students are gaining the skills that will help them thrive in both regional and national job markets.



Position TSCG University Centre as the top choice for HE professionals by fostering growth, collaboration, and inclusivity, recognising staff achievements, and implementing strategic workforce planning to attract and retain talent aligned with TSCG University Centre's 2030 vision.



The transformation of the student experience at Level 4+ should emphasise the blend of vocational workplace-ready skills with higher level academic outcomes. Students should be prepared for both employment and potential further study.



Recruitment efforts must highlight the value of FE-based Level 4+ qualifications as employer-driven, accessible, and cost-effective, with clear routes to higher education and career advancement.



Innovative delivery models (blended learning, use of technology, work-based learning) should ensure flexibility for part-time students, adult learners, and those balancing work and study.



Collaborative arrangements with employers, universities, and community organisations will ensure the relevance of the curriculum and provide students with meaningful opportunities for both study and employment.

IMPLEMENTATION AND MONITORING

RESPONSIBILITY:

Establish a strategic oversight committee to monitor progress and ensure alignment with the overall College Group strategy.

EVALUATION METRICS:

Develop KPIs for each objective, conducting regular reviews to assess impact and adjust as necessary.

EVALUATION AND REVIEW

The Higher Education and Skills Strategy will be supported by an Annual Plan, detailing the actions to support achievement of each objective within the strategic aims. The progress of the Strategy Action plan will be reviewed termly by the Higher Education Curriculum and Quality Committee.

CONCLUSION

The Trafford and Stockport College Group Higher Education and Skills Strategy for 2025-2030 aims to position TSCG as a leader in higher education, meeting the needs of our students and community. By focusing on our strategic objectives and aims, we will create an inclusive and dynamic educational environment that empowers individuals and drives local economic growth.

QUALIFICATIONS

THAT WORK FOR YOU!



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