



**‘Inspirational
learning, creating
outstanding
futures’**

Higher Education

Strategy 2020-2025

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Foreword

Welcome to our Higher Education Strategy 2020-2025, which builds upon and consolidates our achievements and successes in higher education (HE) for over sixty years. Working at the heart of the community, building aspiration and skills, Blackpool and The Fylde College (B&FC) and its graduates continue to make a significant contribution to economic, cultural and social growth. We have worked collaboratively with Lancaster University for more than thirty years, our primary university partner. HE is central to our ambition to be a catalyst for change through enabling economic regeneration and social inclusion. Over 3,000 students annually choose to study higher education with us. Our extensive work with key local, national and international employers enriches our students' experience and provides them with the essential graduate skills and attributes they need to help them succeed in life and work.

The HE context has undergone significant change in recent years. The Office for Students (OfS), established through the Higher Education and

Research Act of 2017, is the new regulator for HE, aiming to create the conditions in which the interests of students are consistently prioritised. This, alongside changing consumer behaviour, increased competition and rapidly changing technologies, is changing expectations from HE providers. Following the introduction of higher and degree apprenticeships, where employees have the opportunity to study and gain formal qualifications and or standards, their popularity has grown and provided many opportunities to enhance B&FC's existing technical, professional education offer and collaborate more closely with employers. The recently published Review of Post-18 Education and Funding contained 53 recommendations, which whilst acknowledging strengths and successes, firmly questions the value for money and challenges the HE sector to reform itself. However, it is unclear whether the government will enact these recommendations. In addition, the government has undertaken a comprehensive review of higher technical education (Review of level 4 and 5 Education) seeking to

ensure these qualifications provide the skills that employers want and the economy needs. These changes represent an opportunity for Blackpool and The Fylde College to continue to be highly successful through our unwavering commitment to high quality learning and teaching, digital skills, a culture of continuous development, enhancement and collaboration and the centrality of our students and our employer partners in all that we do. Reinforced by the Government's Industrial Strategy, there has never been a more important time in the UK to invest in high quality technical and professional education. We believe in the transformative potential of HE, for individuals and their families, for businesses, for communities and the economy as a whole. This strategy sets the direction of travel over the next five years and is designed to further unlock that potential. It reflects the values and ethos of the whole College community. I encourage you to engage with it, to use it and to work with it to help facilitate our shared ambitions.

Best wishes,
Bev Robinson, OBE
Principal and Chief Executive
Blackpool and The Fylde College





B&FC Strategy 2019-2022

Our Mission

'Inspirational learning, creating outstanding futures'

Our Vision

Our 2020 vision builds upon our considerable successes to date and reiterates our enduring focus on excellence and the provision of an outstanding career-focused educational experience co-created with industry for industry.

Situated in Lancashire at the heart of the Northern Powerhouse we will continue to act with pace and ambition to help drive successful outcomes for individuals and employers locally, regionally and nationally.

Our Values are:

1. Placing the student at the heart of all we do
2. Showing fairness, courtesy and mutual respect
3. Learning, teaching and assessment as the key to our success
4. Empowering others to achieve their full potential
5. Working collaboratively to achieve excellence and growth



Who we are

B&FC roots go back to 1892, with higher education (HE) a key element of the continuing success of the College since the 1960s. In collaboration with our primary university partner, Lancaster University, HE is central to our ambition to act as a catalyst for change through enabling economic regeneration and social inclusion. Our extensive work with key local, national and international employers enriches our students' experience and provides them with the essential skills and attributes they need to help them excel. As one of the area's largest employers with a turnover of approximately £55 million, annually over 3,000 students choose our HE provision, from a total student population of circa 16,000.

In Sept 2018, B&FC joined the Office for Students register as an HE Provider, meeting the 'conditions of registration' by which all HE providers in England are judged, and demonstrating externally the quality and standard of our provision. Awarded the highest possible, prestigious 'gold' rating for higher education provision in the Government's Teaching Excellence and Student Outcomes Framework (TEF) in 2017, similarly demonstrates B&FC's commitment to delivering consistently outstanding teaching, learning and outcomes for its students. Detailed scrutiny and commendation by the Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) for Higher Education, led to B&FC being granted Foundation Degree Awarding Powers in 2016. This further illustrates the trust and confidence which B&FC has within the HE sector and reflects B&FC's role as one of the largest

providers of college based higher education in the country. These awarding powers give B&FC greater flexibility over the programmes that we co-create with employer partners to develop the workforce, which they need to drive their business and productivity forward. This complements our continuing strong relationship with our principal awarding partner, Lancaster University. Lancaster University is ranked in the UK top 10 in all national league tables, number one in the Northwest and was named University of the year 2018 and International University of the Year 2019 by the Times and Sunday Times Good University Guide and is in the top 1% of universities globally. In addition, our long-standing work with Pearson and Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA) for our Higher National provision will continue to provide stability and growth.

B&FC welcomed the launch of degree apprenticeships in 2015, as this reflects much of the work we have been doing with employers for over fifteen years. We currently support a growing portfolio of higher and degree apprenticeships, working with over 1,800 regional and national employers; we will continue to grow and develop these opportunities over the life of the strategy, ensuring that principles of equality and diversity are embedded in all of our processes. We have recently been chosen through a rigorous process to join the register of end-point assessment organisations in order to conduct independent end-point assessment of apprentices on several standards.



B&FC's STEM Assured status is testament to both our students and employers of delivery of high quality education in STEM subjects - science, technology, engineering and mathematics. In recent years' the College has made significant investments in its education and training infrastructure, to invigorate and strengthen its STEM provision in line with current and future economic and employer needs, locally and regionally¹. The College is committed to providing high quality, flexible and easily accessible learning opportunities for individuals, organisations and the local community.

B&FC operates from five campuses, five specialist centres and over twenty community learning centres located along the Fylde coastline. Delivery also takes place from an increasingly significant number of other venues to meet the needs of our employer partners. HE is delivered through the following academic curriculum areas, predominantly from a dedicated central University Centre, the Fleetwood Nautical Campus and at the Bispham Campus:

- Blackpool School of Arts
- Computing and Digital Technologies
- Construction
- Engineering and Science
- Leadership, Management and Lifestyle
- Maritime Operations
- Society, Health and Childhood



¹In 2017-18 67% of level 3, 4 or 5 students undertook STEM related study (Internal data source).



Our Higher Education (HE) Strategy

At the heart of our continuing vision for HE at Blackpool and The Fylde College, is a desire to provide an outstanding education experience through a highly responsive curriculum; learning and teaching excellence is absolutely central. We secure outstanding outcomes for students, regardless of age or demographic, providing an education that equips them with the knowledge, skills, attributes and qualifications to navigate work, study and life in the 21st century. This is vital not only for students, but also for our locality, region and the country. We want to create conditions for success two or more decades ahead.

We understand the vital role of HE as a key driver for economic and social progression and that it is personally transformational. We continue to have ambitious plans to increase the availability and accessibility of higher technical, professional and vocational education that will meet the needs of the local and regional population, as well as business and the economy.

Situated in the heart of the Northern Powerhouse, a part of the government's UK industrial strategy, and committed to the development and delivery of Lancashire's Local Industrial Strategy², we will continue to act with pace and ambition to help drive successful outcomes for individuals and employers locally, regionally and nationally. In response to the Lancashire Skills and Employment Strategic Framework 2016-2021³, our strategy includes the expansion of priority curriculum areas including energy and environment, primarily delivered from our Lancashire Energy HQ (LEHQ) campus on the Blackpool Airport Enterprise Zone. Advanced engineering and manufacturing, construction and creative and digital media remain a priority and we will continue to work with employer partners to develop appropriate solutions, such as higher and degree apprenticeships. We will take the same approach to the health and social care sector, which continues to be of importance within the locality and is an area that has seen significant growth recently. Our specialist maritime provision at the Fleetwood Nautical Campus continues to provide outstanding education and training locally, nationally and internationally and there is scope for further growth to meet evident need. A clear priority for UK productivity continues to be the development of leadership and management skills and to raise digital skills to support a growing high value economy that

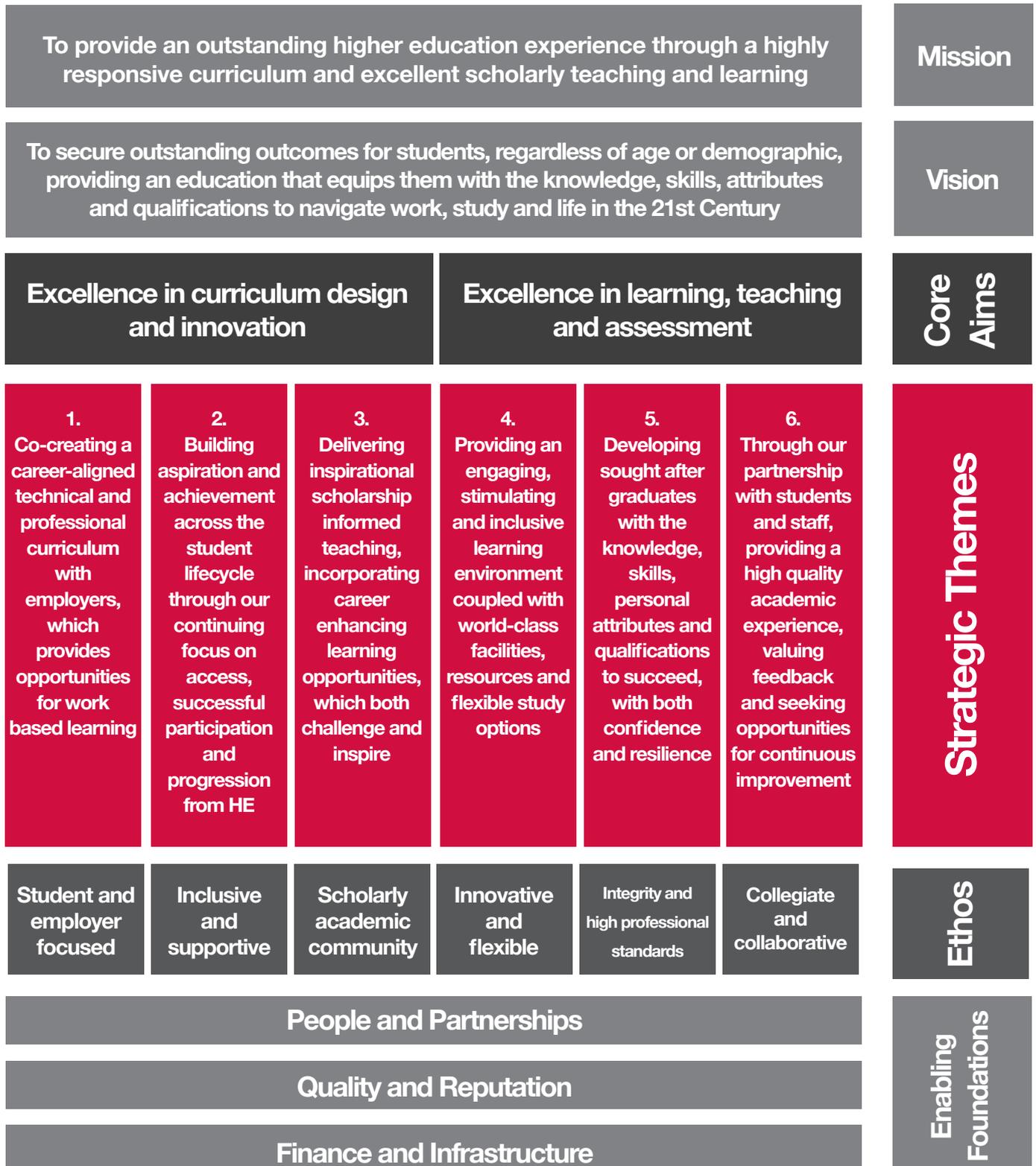
sees new jobs and opportunities emerging.

Lifelong learning is a central concept and clear routes into, through and progressing beyond HE will be further developed. We are committed to providing up-skilling and re-skilling opportunities for those who wish to progress further at work, particularly in small and medium sized enterprises. Both our Access to HE and intermediate HE at levels 4 and 5, supporting continuous professional and technical development, will remain central to our vision of a ladder of progression and we will work closely with our university partners to raise aspirations and access to postgraduate study. We will actively encourage students to develop a lifelong relationship with the College from pre-entry, to undergraduate and as alumni, following graduation.

Meeting the skills demands of the future will require more than just the acquisition of knowledge and skills; it will involve the mobilisation of knowledge, skills, attitudes and values to meet complex demands. Future-ready students will need both broad and specialised knowledge⁴. To this end, a multi-disciplinary approach will be an embedded feature of all curricula, enabling and facilitating connections and collaborations between and across traditional 'subjects', driving creativity and innovation. Looking ahead to 2030 and beyond, B&FC will embrace a multiversity approach⁵ in which the curriculum will address key trends including automation and mobility, artificial intelligence (AI), health, population ageing, sustainability and globalisation. This will be provided through a balanced blend of cognitive, technical and social skills with lifelong learning being central, given the longer span and greater volatility in future career paths. We will cater for multiple entry points along the age distribution and along the skills spectrum. Important too will be actively linking different areas of knowledge to understand complex issues and increasing our students' ability, personal resilience and flexibility to make the giant logical leaps needed to solve problems that are increasingly multidisciplinary, cross-dimensional and transnational.

This strategy embodies our vision of HE and sets out the specifics of the realisation of that vision over the next five years.

B&FC Higher Education Strategy: At a glance

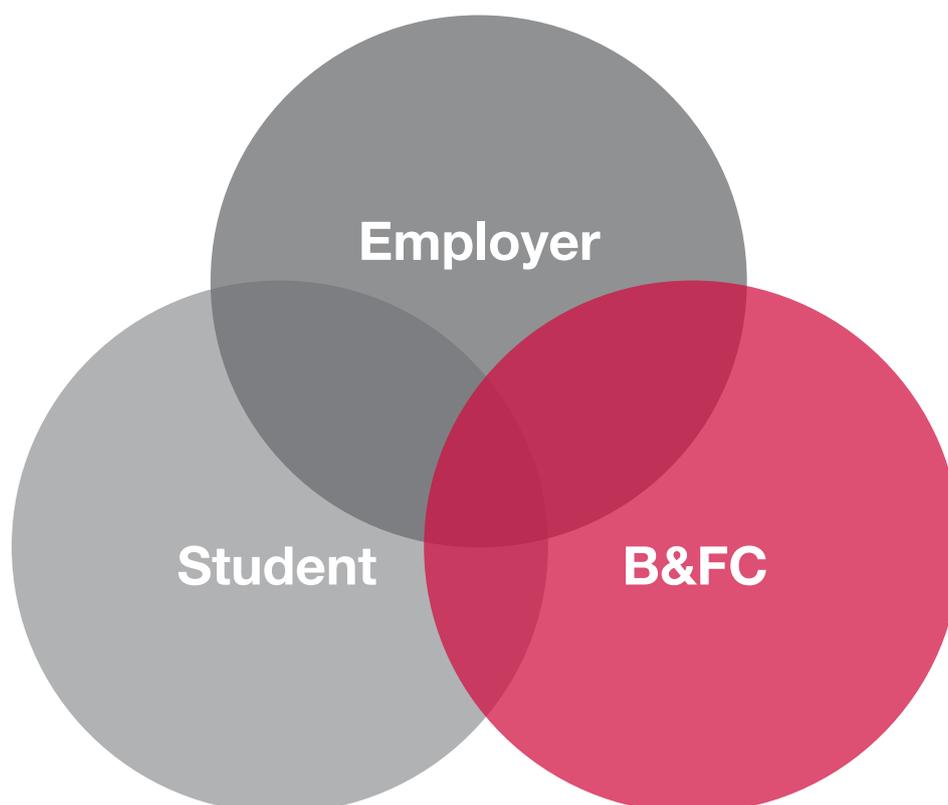


Core Aim: Excellence in curriculum design and innovation

Through our relentless focus on the quality of the student experience and rich employer engagement, we will secure continued growth and continue to be the provider of choice for technical and professional higher education across Lancashire and beyond. Through our commitment to continuous enhancement, we will consolidate our reputation as the leading provider of college based higher education.

We recognise that curriculum design and innovation is the cornerstone of a high quality learning experience, which develops the knowledge, skills and personal attributes to enable lifelong success. Our highly effective and mature relationships with employers, organisations and industry will continue to meet skills gaps and facilitate increased productivity and economic growth, in the locality regionally and nationally.

To this end, a career curriculum informed by scholarship and co-created with employers is at the heart of this strategy. We will continue to realise the opportunities presented through the expansion of technical and professional education, working with employers locally, regionally and nationally to understand their needs, focusing on key skills gaps and responding with an expanding portfolio of higher and degree apprenticeships. In doing so, we recognise the vital importance of working in close partnership and collaboration with employers and students in a dynamic and responsive tripartite relationship. Our HE programmes are led by the needs of our employers and designed to facilitate the development of our students; academically, professionally and personally.



Core Aim: Excellence in learning, teaching and assessment

We continue to deliver an outstanding student experience as a leading provider of innovative higher education teaching, learning and assessment. We will remain a vibrant and inclusive academic community working in close partnership to achieve shared goals.

Through our ongoing investment in professional development and scholarship, industrial updating and physical resources, we create inspirational learning opportunities within an innovative learning

environment, which provide students with the opportunity to apply knowledge and learn through experience. Our approach instils a desire for lifelong learning within our students by developing learning independence and professional autonomy. We will continue to build on our success in widening access and participation in higher education through the provision of a relevant and accessible environment for inclusive learning, teaching and assessment and by working in close partnership with employers and students.



Strategic theme 1: Co-creating a career-aligned technical and professional curriculum with employers, which provides opportunities for work-based learning



The expansion of apprenticeships and the reform of technical, professional education in the UK provides greater opportunities than ever before to engage with employers in the co-creation of higher education programmes which are aligned to business needs and career progression. With the support of our employer partners, our aim is to continue to develop desirable highly skilled Apprentices and graduates, with the skillset to succeed in their future job roles and careers. We create streamlined technical and professional routes, which develop higher, economically valuable skills

at levels three to six, in order to embrace emergent technologies that drive productivity. Furthermore, we will continue to work in partnership with employers to give students real-life, structured opportunities for learning in a workplace setting and we will incorporate relevant professional qualifications or accreditation to enhance student employability. During the lifetime of this strategy, we will explore the opportunity to apply for Bachelor Degree Awarding Powers, to provide yet further flexibility over the higher professional programmes we co-create with employers.

Strategic theme 2: Building aspiration and achievement across the student lifecycle through our continuing focus on access, successful participation and progression from higher education

As an anchor institution within the community, B&FC is committed to continuing to raise aspirations and ensure that every student who chooses to study with us successfully develops the knowledge, skills and behaviours to facilitate positive progression. Our ambition is that all students should have equal opportunities to access and succeed in higher education and achieve successful and rewarding careers. Our Access and Participation Plan sets out how we will continue to improve equality of opportunity for under-represented groups to access, succeed in and progress from higher education.

We will continue to align HE programmes to the needs of the economy, facilitating a pipeline of development and opportunity for progression from levels 3 to 4, through levels 4 to 6 and on to relevant level 7 postgraduate study,

with our university partner or alternative providers. This creates clear education and skills development pathways mapped to careers, fuelling aspiration and maximising accessibility.

We will continue to provide comprehensive advice, guidance and information to enable students to access, succeed in and progress from higher education. Our curriculum will continue to meet the needs of our students and add genuine value. Personalised learning tailored to individual needs, and enacted through our supportive tutorial culture, will include high quality, targeted support to help all students reach their full potential. This will be supported through the development of student analytic data and enhanced by in-year and end of year analysis.

The College's systematic approach to student support and engagement is epitomised through the B&FC Partners for Success framework, which outlines the holistic cross-College strategies that are employed to ensure a level of consistency for all students and to provide a framework for curriculum and service areas to work within. Integration, coherence and internal collaboration are key factors to the success of this framework and ultimately students' success.

We will continue to develop interventions to improve the mental wealth of our students, in order to realise their own abilities, have the resilience to cope with the normal stresses of life, work productively and to enable them to contribute to their community. We will also continue to support students to transition into and through HE, facilitating progress at different stages of their journey.



Strategic theme 3: Delivering inspirational scholarship informed teaching, incorporating career enhancing learning opportunities, which both challenge and inspire.

We will continue to ensure that our curriculum and pedagogies are informed by wider subject disciplines and networks, including employer engagement in scholarship, research and industrial updating, which directly benefits the design and delivery of our HE programmes.

We will continue to be a vibrant academic community, engaging our students, employees, stakeholders and providing mechanisms, opportunities and events to share the outputs of scholarly activity and to foster connections and collaborative opportunities to enhance scholarship and pedagogic

practices. Our teaching practices embrace inclusivity and inspire students to achieve their potential, providing opportunities to relate theory to practice.

We will continue to strategically invest in our employees to support professional development, scholarship, extended study, HEA fellowship and industrial or sectoral updating, in order to equip them with the ability to shape, influence and lead curriculum design and delivery. Our newly created Scholarship and Research Committee will closely monitor and evaluate the impact of this strategic investment.



Strategic theme 4: Providing an engaging, stimulating and inclusive learning environment coupled with world class facilities, resources and flexible study options.

We continue to invest in physical and digital learning resources and facilities to enhance the learning experience, inspiring students to achieve their potential.

Our ongoing exploration and development of flexible modes of programme delivery relevant to the sector, will meet the needs of our students and employers and provide inclusive access for all our students to facilitate an effective life-study balance. Our resources and facilities will foster a culture of collaboration amongst staff and students, sustaining a reflective, cohesive and vibrant academic community, advancing

cultures of innovation. We will ensure those associated with technological change continue to be fast paced and impactful⁶. We will continue to proactively engage with a wide range of employers and organisations, to address the skills needed by local and regional industries and provide clear information on progression pathways between skill levels to facilitate planned growth. The development of even more responsive, flexible and innovative approaches is an absolute prerequisite; through leading edge technologies, communications and environments we will become more responsive and customer focused. We will continue to

develop blended approaches that use multiple methods to deliver learning, combining face-to-face interactions with online activities. Our modes of delivery will continue to evolve. Our delivery will comprise traditional forms of HE learning and teaching provision, including more innovative approaches such as flipped classroom and problem based learning. Flexible study options, such as part-time or blended learning (from a distance) may be included, together with work-based opportunities from live briefs to higher and degree apprenticeships.

Strategic theme 5: Developing sought after graduates with the knowledge, skills, personal attributes and qualifications to succeed, with both confidence and resilience.

In a multi-disciplinary and fast changing world, a central consideration remains the development of graduate attributes and employability skills, including readiness for employment, digital skills and a global perspective. In addition, key transferable skills prepare our students for multiple career options after graduation; these include interpersonal skills, problem solving and decision making, planning and organising, resilience and adaptability. Alongside in-depth subject knowledge, we will equip our graduates for life and work beyond B&FC and enable them to thrive, helping to ensure their success

in the world as it is today and might be tomorrow. We want our graduates to leave with the knowledge, skills and attributes that will contribute to the local, regional and national economies and communities, and drive productivity.

To enhance successful progression to highly skilled employment and further study, a further focus on employability and careers education, information, advice and guidance (CEIAG) will be a priority closely aligned with B&FC's Degree Plus employability award. Our Degree Plus awards recognise the value of skills and attributes

developed outside of the core programme and seek to endorse extracurricular activity which develops graduate employability. Degree Plus awards are recognised within B&FC's student Higher Education Achievement Report (HEAR) provided to all students as a comprehensive electronic record of their success.

In addition to in-depth subject knowledge, we will ensure our students develop the essential graduate attributes and skills, which will equip them for the future and add real value in terms of profit or productivity to their employers.



Strategic theme 6: Through our partnership with students and staff, providing a high-quality academic experience, valuing feedback and seeking opportunities for continuous improvement.

B&FC is committed to ensuring all students have appropriate mechanisms for sharing their views about their HE experience. A key strength of our provision lies in our collaboration and partnership with students: partners in research and enquiry, active partners in College deliberative committees and quality processes and partners in shaping current and future curriculum. We will continue to strive to make our academic community a site for shared learning, development and enhancement, valuing and utilising the student contribution in meeting our strategic aims. Working with our Students Union Sabbatical Officer, we will ensure our students are appropriately trained, prepared and informed to make effective contributions and capture the student voice.



Ethos

HE at B&FC embraces ethos and values, which drive educational excellence in the delivery of an innovative, future-focused curriculum, co-created in partnership with employers:

- Student and employer focused
- Inclusive and supportive
- Scholarly and academic community
- Innovative and flexible
- High professional standards and integrity
- Collegiate and collaborative

Enabling Foundations: People and Partnerships

Our committed and dedicated employees, working in partnership both internally across the College and externally to meet the needs of our students and employer partners, enable the continuing success of our HE strategy.

Enabling Foundations: Quality and Reputation

We maintain firm guardianship of our academic standards and our strong reputation as a leading provider of technical and professional higher education. We will work closely with the Office for Students (OfS) to further enhance the quality of the student experience and will seek endorsement of our high quality provision through the maintenance of OfS registration, including the Teaching Excellence and Student Outcomes Framework (TEF) and the introduction of subject-level TEF in 2020.

Enabling Foundations: Finance and Infrastructure

Our financial stability is pivotal in maintaining our continued investment in the infrastructure to enable and support learning and teaching. We will maintain our already robust financial position, securing the long-term viability of our provision and delivering value in all of our activity. We will continue to develop our governance framework to ensure the integrity of both deliberative and executive function in order to enhance decision-making and accountability.

Measuring our Success

Appropriate growth

We will meet planned enrolment targets set through the business planning process.

Student satisfaction (NSS)

The National Student Survey (NSS) is an annual national survey, which gathers opinions from students about their time in higher education, asking them to provide candid feedback on what it has been like to study on their course.

We will aim to be significantly above the national benchmark in all categories of the NSS⁹:

- Teaching on my Course
- Learning Opportunities
- Assessment and Feedback
- Academic Support
- Organisation and Management
- Learning Resources
- Learning Community
- Student Voice

Access and Participation

Our Access and Participation Plan sets out how we will improve access to higher education and will continue to ensure different student groups are provided with the opportunities to perform the same as their peers. The plan provides a set of ambitious targets that we will monitor and evaluate.

We will deliver the targets identified within our 2020 to 2025 plan, which seek to improve equality of opportunity for under-represented groups to access, succeed in and progress from higher education. Our ambition is that all students should have equal opportunities to access and succeed in higher education and to achieve successful and rewarding careers.

Continuation

This refers to a student's continuation from one year of study to the next. We will continue to enhance our systems and resources to both track student progress and to further develop student progress support. We will continue to identify and support students at risk of not completing or attaining below their potential on programme.

⁹In 2019, we are significantly above the benchmark for Academic Support and Learning Community (NSS 2019)

Progression to higher-level employment and further study

Fundamentally, our co-created higher education programmes are designed to support our students in their career ambitions and to ensure our employer partners have access to an appropriately skilled workforce.

In order that our graduates are work-ready, we will ensure that all students have the opportunity to experience at least one of the following work-based learning opportunities:

- Live briefs and work-based projects
- A research project
- An industry placement

We will ensure all our students have the opportunity to be recognised by our employability award; Degree Plus.

Graduate Outcomes Survey

The Graduate Outcomes Survey is a national survey capturing information about the activities and perspectives of graduates 15 months after they finish their studies. We will continue to support a representative response rate to the Graduate Outcomes Survey through a range of activities and we will use the responses to enhance our offer.





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Relevance to You

This strategy sets the direction of our travel and is essentially a guide to focus our activities and enable our continuing success; it is very much a practical tool to enable us to meet our shared ambitions.

This strategy will be supported, driven and continually reviewed through our annual business planning process, and key performance indicators will allow us to monitor our progress. It is relevant for a range of key partners. The strategy outlines our mission and ethos and details how we will work collaboratively with you to support you in achieving your goals.

Students

This strategy provides information about what we believe is important and sets out our intention to engage with you as a partner.

Colleagues

This strategy identifies our strategic aims and will help to guide you in your work to deliver our shared ambitions.

Partners

This strategy outlines our mission and ethos and details how we will work collaboratively with you to support you in achieving your goals.



Our Reputation

TEF Gold

From 2017 to 2021, B&FC was awarded the TEF Gold award in recognition of our exceptional teaching and learning provision. B&FC educates its students for life and ensures an excellent educational experience.

In reaching its decision the TEF panel commented upon:

- The outstanding and extensive employer engagement
- Exemplary levels of contact time through personalised provision
- Exemplary use of technology and business intelligence that allows those learners at risk to be rapidly identified and supported to progress
- Outstanding physical and digital resources, which are actively used by students to enhance learning and progression
- A well-established system of teaching development, appraisal and reward that exemplifies an institutional culture in which excellent teaching is embedded.

Foundation Degree Awarding Powers (FDAP)

In 2016, B&FC was granted Foundation Degree Awarding Powers. The FDAP report (QAA May 2016) notes our emphasis on excellence in learning and teaching 'which demonstrably permeates all activities'¹⁰.

'The team noted that a culture of enhancement was embedded throughout the College; it was embodied in a strategic approach to continuous quality improvement and excellence in the provision of student learning opportunities; and permeated the College infrastructure.'

'The College ensures that staff are appropriately qualified to teach on degree programmes and that programme teams have a good balance of academic and professional and/or industry experience'.

STEM Assured

2017-18 saw the successful re-validation of the College STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths) Assured process, which identified that B&FC 'delivers a clear and long term strategic focus on STEM, aligned to its areas of expertise and local and regional employer requirements. It is fully informed by local employers and the sectors in the region and takes into account the national UK Digital Strategy. As part of its College-wide strategy, B&FC focusses on technical professional level training so aligning to the College's values, in particular to offer the local population the possibility of aspiring to higher levels by indicating clear routes for progression. Many of the programmes are recognised for being of national relevance, such as the Project Management degrees and the marine and energy programmes'.

¹⁰https://www.qaa.ac.uk/docs/qaa/reports/blackpool-and-the-fylde-college-fdap-16.pdf?sfvrsn=1289f581_4



Blackpool and The Fylde College

Bispham Campus · Ashfield Road · Bispham · Blackpool · FY2 0HB

University Centre · Park Road · Blackpool · FY1 4ES

Fleetwood Nautical Campus · Broadwater · Fleetwood · FY7 8JZ

T +44 (0)1253 352 352

WWW.BLACKPOOL.AC.UK



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