



East Coast College

Higher Education Strategy 2025 - 2030

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Higher Education Strategy 2025-2030

1. Context and Background of Higher Education at East Coast College:

As a founding partner college of University of Suffolk, higher education is well established at both Lowestoft and Great Yarmouth campuses.

East Coast College serves a community where involvement in higher level studies is amongst the lowest in the UK: thus, raising participation for the benefit of all stakeholders through a rigorous and vocationally-based academic curriculum is central to its mission.

The college has strong connections with local and national employers and this involvement will continue to drive the development of higher education programmes.

From 2025, the East Coast College higher education team will continue to lead the expansion of this provision at the college, working closely with curriculum areas to ensure benefit to students' progression needs, employability and the needs of the community.

The addition of appropriate new Foundation degree, Honours degree, Higher National and Higher/Degree Apprenticeship options will be developed year-on-year. Modular provision and post graduate provision will also be developed in response to student and employer need. Higher Technical Qualifications will continue to be added to the curriculum offer as relevant, strengthening the focus on level 4 and level 5 technical delivery.

Existing programmes will be continually monitored and enhanced to maintain currency and relevance. Programmes will be aligned to relevant Professional, Statutory or Regulatory Bodies (PSRBs).

Professional, Statutory and Regulatory Bodies are a diverse group of organisations that include professional bodies, regulators and those with statutory authority over a profession or a group of professionals. PSRBs engage with the higher education sector through the approval, recognition and accreditation of Higher Education (HE) programmes.

2. Aims

- To develop and deliver programmes which anticipate and respond to the needs of employers, local skills improvement plans and support economic/ cultural/ social progress
- To grow higher education provision in both portfolio and participation (including joint ventures as appropriate)
- To provide high quality, flexible and sector-relevant pathways, developed and delivered in partnership with key stakeholders
- To provide incentive for internal progression, increase participation and improve levels of recruitment, support and retention
- To actively encourage and support creative thought and innovation in order to provide programmes which build the confidence and develop the graduate skills and employability skills of the student through supporting autonomy in learning, from application to graduation

- To develop an ethos that facilitates continual enhancement of the HE experience for all stakeholders
- To secure progression agreements from FE through to HE to support student progression and transition
- Raise the profile and promote participation in higher level study regionally with clarity and transparency, demonstrating a commitment to the University of Suffolk brand
- To develop and deliver programmes which, wherever possible, ensure PSRB engagement through approval, recognition and accreditation processes.

3. Strategic Objectives for Higher Education

- To continually improve the quality, range, relevance and accessibility of our provision and services
- Develop appropriate, stimulating and relevant curricula that underpins the University of Suffolk and East Coast College visions
- Employ appropriately qualified staff (including associate staff), provide and support relevant professional development
- To support students through the provision of appropriate resource management to enable sustained investment in the physical and virtual learning environments whilst ensuring financial viability
- To foster a culture of social responsibility and sustainability designed to support students, staff and community
- To develop and improve quality and enhancement processes in accordance with University of Suffolk policies and procedures and which meet the expectations of the QAA UK Quality Code and professional statutory regulatory bodies
- To measure success in line with the teaching excellence framework metrics and to align with the Framework for Higher Education Qualifications

4. Key Performance Indicators (KPIs)

- National Student Survey data should, as a minimum, match the University of Suffolk average for each question category
- An increase in enrolments annually by a minimum of 5%
- Retention rates continually meet TEF metrics
- Achievement rates and classifications that meet national levels as defined by the annual TEF metrics
- The achievement of positive outcomes in both external reviews and internal quality audits
- Increased participation in professional development and scholarship that demonstrates commitment and contribution to the overall HE ethos and improves teaching, learning and assessment

- Destination data demonstrates an increase in graduate employment, participation in further study of alumni over time

5. Monitoring and Quality

Monitoring and enhancement of quality at East Coast College will take place in line with the principles outlined in both the college self-assessment (SAR) process and the RiME (Risk-based Monitoring and Enhancement) procedures, as well as through response to annual External Examiner reports, University and external reviews and the re-approval and validation of programmes of study.

RiME includes:

- Tri-annual Centre Academic Committees, reporting to the University of Suffolk Partnership Quality Enhancement Group
- Annual RiME Event and report
- Regular Course Committee meetings for all programmes which include student representation
- Audit meetings in response to Risk Alerts, triggered by indication that an aspect of provision is not meeting University of Suffolk or student expectations

East Coast College will also provide:

- A Quality Audit Tracker (monthly almanac of management and quality responsibilities for course leaders, module leaders and programme managers)
- A central Quality Improvement Plan (QIP), monitored a minimum of three times per year by the Academic Committee
- Rolling action plans for each programme, generated and monitored by the Course Committees
- The HE Student Committee, providing an opportunity for student representatives to discuss issues affecting the student experience
- The HE Staff Group, providing an opportunity for staff to discuss teaching, learning and assessment
- Action plans reflecting the outcomes of student feedback including the National Student Survey (NSS) which feed into the QIP
- Provide annual Professional Learning staff updates relating to University of Suffolk and national policy and procedure changes
- HE Graduate scheme as appropriate

Meeting UK Higher Education Standards:

In addition to the quality monitoring processes the college will ensure a robust approach to meeting higher education standards through;

- Validation and re-approval of courses
- Collaboration with external examiners in the ratification of student grading

- Assessment board ratification to release student grading

6. Actions

- To continually improve the quality, range, relevance and accessibility of our provision and services including access to a range of validated HE modules as a relevant professional learning offer
- Develop appropriate, stimulating and relevant curricula that underpins both the University of Suffolk and East Coast College visions
- Employ appropriately qualified staff and provide and support relevant professional development
- To support students through the provision of appropriate resource management to enable sustained investment in the physical and virtual learning environments whilst ensuring financial viability
- To foster a culture of social responsibility and sustainability designed to support students, staff and community
- To develop and improve quality and enhancement processes in accordance with University of Suffolk policies and procedures and which meet the expectations of the QAA UK Quality Code, professional statutory regulatory bodies and align with the Framework for Higher Education Qualifications
- Develop and engage a marketing strategy that is appropriate to client groups and the stages of the application cycle each year
- Support HE staff to engage in relevant professional development and scholarly activity including recognition on practice through an agreement for financial and time allowance for a minimum of four staff each year to complete Advance HE fellowship

7. Curriculum Development

Developments within HE curriculum will be driven by:

- The requirements and strategic targets of the communities we serve including the demands of our priority sectors
- Provision of appropriate progression from areas of strength within local FE

The portfolio will be based around a vocational/professional/technical core, enabling progression from level 3 and Access programmes and attracting applications from both traditional academic and 'non-standard' client groups. HE development will be closely linked to the FE curriculum development strategy.

The college aligns its curriculum with the specific demands of its priority sectors, Construction and Civil Engineering, Clean Energy, Engineering and Advanced manufacturing, Healthcare, The Visitor Economy and Hospitality, SEND and specialist education. HE curriculum will be developed for students to SUCCEED through continuous curriculum review.

Consolidation of modules within the degree level programmes (through shared core modules) will increase efficiency and further improve the student experience. This will be achieved through review at each course revalidation and new course development to ensure modules are selected to support the individual programme need and to build on existing provision. Some overarching principles will apply:

- Reduce foundation degree courses per subject area feeding into specialist honours top-up programmes to support learners to undertake a chosen specialism but securing a level 4 and 5 course group size (for example an FdA Arts programme for all through to a BA (Hons) specialist programme in; Fashion, Photography, Visual Arts).
- Utilise compulsory cross degree modules, such as L4 personal development to standardise delivery across courses and facilitate joint degree delivery.
- Combine cognate programmes through shared module validation and delivery for core learning, for example a module in safeguarding utilised across all childcare and health programmes to standardise delivery and increase efficiency within delivery.

Higher and Degree Apprenticeships

In addition to the higher education delivered through our Higher Education partner, East Coast College will have a commitment to the higher skills required by employers locally. To support this, the college will continue to explore Higher Apprenticeships at Levels 4 to 5 and provide the development of degree apprenticeships when appropriate.

Higher Technical Qualifications

The college will invest to grow new areas of professional and technical qualifications at Levels 4 and 5 through approved Higher Technical Qualifications (HTQs) as relevant to the local need.

8. Market

Each course is designed to meet a market demand including a student demographic and a local/regional need. Our HE offer will continue to meet the needs of our local adult market in core areas such as social care and childcare. We will however continue to develop courses that meet the needs of our progressing 18yr olds in areas such as media, forensic science and digital provision. The target market is a core consideration at each course validation with the course aims and outcomes set to address the client need through an agreed delivery model. The HE offer will, in this way, remain flexible for entry to both the adult and college progressing student markets.

9. Risks

- Recruitment to Higher Education provision at East Coast College supports the contribution and income of curriculum departments and is therefore important within secure financial viability

- The development of Higher Education must maintain a sharp focus on robust management to maintain consistency of quality and standards
- Suitable support for professional development and scholarly activity to ensure high quality curriculum provision
- Curriculum resources receive continual review and investment to ensure currency and relevance to sector practices
- The current portfolio must be effectively managed to ensure all courses on offer align with the HE Strategy
- The development and provision of HE should significantly link, support and benefit the local community and contribute to the overall strategy and financial wellbeing of East Coast College.