HIGHER EDUCATION STRATEGY
2025-2028

SWC
SOUTH WEST COLLEGE

Tyrone
Omagh
Cookstown
Dungannon

Fermanagh
Enniskillen
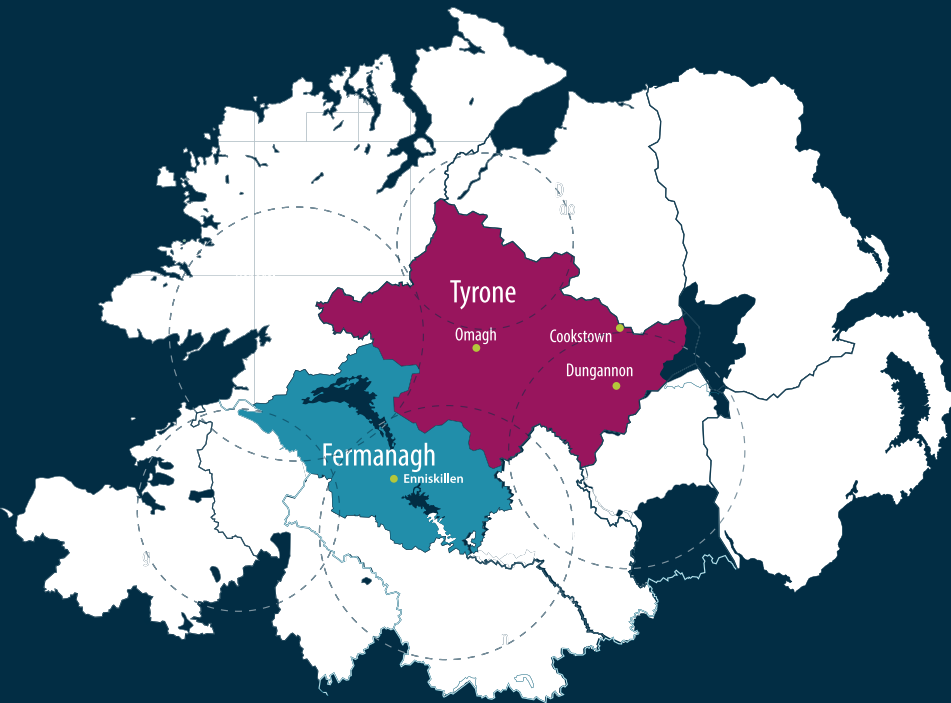
HNCs
3

Foundation Degrees
16

Bachelor Degrees
9

Professional Qualifications
15+

Director of Curriculum Foreword

I am proud to present South West College's Higher Education Strategy 2025–2028, a roadmap that builds on our proven strengths and sets a bold course for the future. Higher Education at SWC has long been a catalyst for opportunity, empowering individuals, supporting employers, and strengthening the social and economic fabric of our region.

Through a high-quality, industry-focused curriculum delivered across our campuses in Enniskillen, Dungannon, Omagh, and Cookstown, we are supporting more than 1,600 HE learners each year, studying full-time, part-time, or via Higher Level Apprenticeships, many of whom are returning to education later in life. With over 25 Higher Education programmes validated by local Universities and over 15 delivered in partnership with other Awarding Bodies, we respond to a growing emphasis on flexible, inclusive, and digitally enabled learning, ensuring that our offer is aligned to the real-world needs of both learners and the economy.

Our priorities over the next three years reflect our ambition to be both progressive and grounded — embedding sustainability, expanding student voice, deepening employer engagement, and enhancing the support and development of our staff. We are investing in innovation, embracing green and digital skills, and creating pathways that equip our graduates for a changing world. This strategy is not just about maintaining quality — it is about raising aspirations, responding to local need, and delivering lasting impact for learners, industry, and communities. I look forward to working with our dedicated staff, partners, and students

Padraig McNamee
Director of Curriculum

Our Vision, Mission and Values

The ambitious goals outlined in this plan are united by our College Vision, Mission and Values, providing a basis and reference point for everything that we do.

Our Vision
Inspiring Learning - Empowering People

Our Mission
South West College works, in partnership to provide inclusive lifelong learning opportunities, to enrich lives, support business and to promote community, economic and social wellbeing.

Our Values
Respectful | Accountable | Engaging | Committed

Strategic Context

South West College is at the forefront of delivering high-quality, transformative Higher Education across Fermanagh, Omagh, and Mid Ulster. With a growing portfolio of approximately 45 programmes from Level 4 to Level 6 — including Higher National Certificates, Foundation Degrees, Bachelor Top-Ups, and Full Honours Degrees — SWC supports over 1,600 learners annually through full-time, part-time, and Higher-Level Apprenticeship routes.
Our provision is rooted in widening access, skills alignment, and strong regional partnerships. We work closely with **The Open University, Ulster University, and Queen's University Belfast** to deliver accredited Foundation Degrees with clear progression pathways. We are also an approved centre for a wide range of awarding bodies, including **Pearson, ACCA, ATI, ILM, CIPD, OCN NI, NCFE CACHE, Active IQ, Passivhaus**, and **VTCT,** offering qualifications in priority sectors such as STEM, health, and business.

SWC understands that learners come to education at different times, with varying levels of qualification, experience, and motivation. We are committed to ensuring that every learner — whether employed or not — has the opportunity to progress from where they are, to where they aspire to be. In each vocational area, we aim to provide a flexible route from no formal qualifications to degree level. Learners can join or exit at any point on this pathway and can transition between employment statuses as their circumstances evolve.

SWC's strategic direction is shaped by:

• Department for the Economy priorities – including **Graduating to Success**, **Access to Success**, and **Securing Our Success**;

• Regional economic imperatives – such as productivity, balanced growth, and green innovation;

• **The UK Quality Code for Higher Education** – setting the national framework for academic standards;

• The **OECD Skills Strategy Northern Ireland (2020)** – promoting inclusive, responsive, lifelong learning.

The College endeavours to be a "leader in the development of sustainable curriculum". We will do this by further embedding sustainability into HE programmes through an increased focus on green skills, renewable technologies, and sustainable construction methods as highlighted in the Strategic Plan.

Higher Education at SWC is about more than academic attainment — it is about enabling personal transformation, empowering local economies, and building a sustainable, inclusive future for all.

UK Quality Principles

#	Principle	Priority 1 Enhance Student Engagement and Experience	Priority 2 Respond to Economic Opportunities and Challenges	Priority 3 Staff Recruitment, Development and Support	Priority 4 Deliver Innovative Curriculum and Pedagogy
1.	Taking a strategic approach to managing quality and standards	✓	✓	✓	✓
2.	Engaging students as partners	✓	✓		✓
3.	Resourcing delivery of high-quality learning experience	✓	✓	✓	✓
4.	Using data to inform and evaluate quality	✓	✓	✓	✓
5.	Monitoring, evaluating and enhancing provision	✓	✓	✓	✓
6.	Engaging in external review and accreditation		✓	✓	✓
7.	Designing, developing, approving and modifying programmes		✓		✓
8.	Operating partnerships with other organisations		✓		✓
9.	Recruiting, selecting and admitting students	✓	✓		
10.	Supporting students to achieve their potential	✓	✓	✓	✓
11.	Teaching, learning and assessment	✓	✓	✓	✓
12.	Operating concerns, complaints and appeals processes	✓			

Priority One

Enhance Student Engagement and Experience

This priority aligns strongly with the Strategic Plan's focus on the Learner Experience, which emphasises delivering a high-quality, supportive and inclusive curriculum that supports progression pathways and meets regional needs.

The HE Strategy outlines a series of objectives under this priority, aimed at strengthening the student voice and representation, enhancing well-being and inclusion, improving feedback mechanisms and developing wider skills. These objectives support the Strategic Plan's commitment to creating a safe and inclusive learning environment, delivering high-quality teaching supporting learners with additional needs, enhancing wider skills development and placing greater emphasis on the 'learner voice'. The HE Strategy sets out targeted actions that are specifically tailored to the Higher Education context to ensure effective implementation across these areas.

Key Objectives

Student Voice and Representation
• Strengthen student representation and engagement forums with actionable outcomes
• Develop a sense of HE learner identity and celebrate alumni success.

Well-being and Inclusion
• Continue reviewing Student Support Services to ensure accessible mental health and well-being provision.
• Develop and implement Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) initiatives aligned to progression pathways and regional needs.

Feedback and Quality Enhancement
• Launch a digital dashboard to communicate how feedback has been acted upon.
• Allocate quality business partners to each department to monitor and address issues promptly.

Wider Skills and Personal Development
• Deliver leadership development, active learning, and wider skills workshops.
• Host six annual community outreach events and promote alumni success through "My SWC Journey".

We Will:

✓ Empower students through strong representation, voice, and feedback mechanisms

✓ Promote a distinct HE learner identity, enriched by alumni success and community outreach.

✓ Provide inclusive, proactive support services focused on mental health, wellbeing, and EDI

✓ Enable the development of wider graduate skills through leadership and active learning initiatives.

✓ Strengthen our digital engagement and streamline registration and enrolment processes

Priority Two
Respond to Economic Opportunities and Challenges

The HE Strategy actively supports industry partnerships through collaboration with academic institutions, employers and the wider community and voluntary sectors. Notable initiatives include the Powering Research & Innovation for Advanced Manufacturing (PRISM) project, which promotes sustainable product development and manufacturing practices. Another key example is the Green Accelerator Skills Programme (GRASP)—a €9.8 million cross-border initiative aimed at addressing the significant green skills gap within the cross-border construction sector. Operating from the Centre for Renewable Energy & Sustainable Technology (CREST) in Enniskillen, GRASP brings together a diverse network of partners across nine counties.

Led by South West College (SWC), the programme involves collaboration with Southern Regional College (SRC), North West Regional College (NWRC), Irish Central Border Area Network (ICBAN), Cavan and Monaghan Education and Training Board (CMETB), Donegal Education and Training Board (DETB), Mayo, Sligo, Leitrim Education and Training Board (MSLETB), Atlantic Technological University (ATU), and Future Cast. Together, these partners are working to deliver innovative solutions and skills development aligned with regional and sectoral needs

Key Objectives

Curriculum Innovation and Design
• Monitor and review programmes through validation and industry co-design processes.
• Introduce one new industry-aligned course in each department by 2026.

Stakeholder Engagement
• Establish Industry Advisory Boards across all curriculum areas.
• Maximise engagement with Curriculum Hubs and Sectoral Partnerships.

Pathways and Progression
• Expand HLAs and Top-Up Degrees as progression pathways.
• Promote Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) with new staff and student guidance.

Access and Inclusion
• Enhance opportunities for individuals from disadvantaged backgrounds locally, to acquire higher-level skills.
• Co-design outreach and taster programmes with schools, employers, and community partners.

Collaboration through Funded Projects
• Collaborate with external stakeholders in delivering high-quality, accredited training and certifications, leading to greater regulatory compliance, economic growth, and environmental sustainability.

We Will:

✓ Deliver a forward-thinking curriculum shaped by digital transformation, sustainability, and employer input.

✓ Expand our HE portfolio in respect to HLAs and industry-aligned programmes and support the development of micro-credentials.

✓ Work collaboratively with employers and advisory panels to ensure our programmes meet future workforce needs.

✓ Integrate climate change themes and entrepreneurship into programme design.

✓ Provide clear academic and career progression pathways through structured curriculum development and review.

Priority Three

Staff Recruitment, Development and Support

Improve recruitment, retention and development of high quality HE staff, supporting staff through the implementation of CPD through our People Plan, quality assurance and compliance processes.

Key Objectives

Workforce Planning
• Use appraisals, surveys and training needs analysis to identify future workforce needs.

Recruitment and Retention
• Host targeted recruitment events for hard-to-fill roles.
• Create transition pathways for industry professionals into teaching.

Induction and CPD
• Implement a three-year HE induction programme for full-time and part-time staff.
• Expand bespoke CPD for technical and pedagogical skills across curriculum areas.

Professional Recognition and Research
• Promote Advance HE Fellowship and support professional body membership.
• Support staff to become research practitioners and HE teaching scholars.

We Will:

✓ Use workforce planning and engagement to identify training needs and skills gaps.

✓ Improve recruitment strategies and offer targeted CPD opportunities aligned to technical and pedagogical needs.

✓ Support staff in achieving professional recognition and academic qualifications.

✓ Build stronger partnerships with industry to attract skilled professionals into HE teaching.

✓ Continue investing in HE learning spaces, technology and infrastructure.

Priority Four

Deliver an Innovative Curriculum and Pedagogy

Promote continuous improvement, inclusive teaching, and digital innovation and embed sustainability throughout the HE curriculum.

Key Objectives

Digital and AI Innovation & Sustainability
• Integrate AI, digital skills, and sustainability into curriculum design and delivery.
• Review assessment strategies in line with Generative AI developments.
• Embed Sustainability throughout the HE curriculum

Inclusive Design and Access
• Develop flexible, modular delivery to suit part-time, distance and returning learners.
• Provide targeted academic and pastoral support for underrepresented groups and those who have barriers to learning.

Quality and Compliance
• Ensure policies and teaching align with the UK Quality Code (2024).
• Continue engagement with external validation and Awarding Body compliance.

Experiential and Interdisciplinary Learning
• Embed interdisciplinary, experiential learning and real-world application.
• Launch real-time data dashboards to support student retention and achievement.

We Will:

✓ Use real-time analytics and dashboards to monitor learner outcomes and inform teaching practice.

✓ Update all HE teaching, learning, and assessment policies in line with the new UK Quality Code.

✓ Introduce robust support systems for priority learner groups to improve progression and attainment.

✓ Promote academic integrity and innovative assessment, including ethical use of AI.

✓ Strengthen quality assurance processes through internal and external validation and compliance.

Monitoring, Reporting & Review

The delivery of this Higher Education Strategy will be guided by a robust and achievable monitoring framework, led by the Director of Curriculum and the Higher Education Management Team, through the Higher Education Academic Board. Progress will be tracked through annual HE Operating Plans aligned to the College Development Plan and Quality Improvement Plan (QIP).

Each strategic priority will be supported by clear actions, timelines, responsible owners and measurable performance indicators. Key metrics will include student satisfaction, retention and progression rates, curriculum development, employer engagement, and staff CPD participation.

Monitoring will include quarterly reviews by the HE Management Team, with biannual reporting to the Governing Body. An annual HE Self-Evaluation Review will ensure alignment with the UK Quality Code and Awarding Body expectations. Stakeholder and student voice will be captured through surveys, focus groups, and employer forums.

This strategy will undergo an annual rolling review to ensure it remains relevant, evidence-informed and responsive to the evolving needs of learners, industry and the wider region.

Your Future is Our Focus

SWC
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028 8225 0109

www.swc.ac.uk

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