



Fife College

Employer Engagement Strategy 2020 – 2025



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“Fife College is committed to forging strong and meaningful relationships with businesses across the region. Our aim is to deliver courses that are relevant, impactful and meet the skills needed by employers.”

- Dr Hugh Hall - Principal



1. Introduction

The Fife College strategic plan sets out its vision to transform the lives of our students through inspirational learning and teaching along with offering a dynamic and high quality curriculum portfolio with direct input from employers.

We will design our portfolio with businesses in mind, promoting innovation and investment which will contribute to business growth and increased productivity. We will enhance and maximise strong collaboration with business, local and regional stakeholders and national agencies to ensure that our students develop the skills and qualifications required to achieve and sustain positive outcomes in the fast moving economy and technologically advancing industry.

Critical to our success in achieving our vision is our relationship with industry and employers. In support of this we will work collaboratively across the College to develop strong employer relationships and industry links, thus ensuring that our portfolio offering is aligned with the priorities of the local, regional and national economy.

Our strategy aligns with that of the Fife Economic Strategy and the wider Scottish Economic Strategy by supporting inclusive growth, encouraging investment in business infrastructure, fostering a culture of innovation and enterprise and improving business growth through increased internationalisation.

“Developing awards and training that meets employer workforce need”

- NHS Lothian



2. Purpose

The purpose of this strategy is to describe how we engage with businesses and stakeholders and other external agencies to support employability of students and upskilling or re-skilling of the existing workforce in a rapidly evolving environment as well as fostering inclusive growth and sustainable employment.

In this strategy we:

- Outline our priorities and activities to support workforce development.
- Describe how the College will understand and strive to meet the current and future skills needs of employers.
- Develop and enhance our well-established ways of engaging with and gaining feedback from industry as well as posing new ideas to employers through encouraging and supporting knowledge transfer initiatives.
- Demonstrate that we are an innovative and dynamic college, committed to workforce development.

“I recently attended Fife College for my 18th edition regulations training. I was very happy with every aspect of the course. The tutor was knowledgeable and related the coursework very well.”

- Hatrick Bruce



3. Our Regional Context

Our strategy and portfolio offering is defined by the needs of employers, local and regional stakeholders, national agencies and aligns with national policy drivers and economic priorities.

The Regional Skills Assessment (RSA) Plan for Fife shows that the largest sectors are professional, scientific and technical. These sectors account for 18% of all businesses. Fife's business base profile mirrors that for Scotland, with the exception of fewer agricultural, forestry and fishing businesses.

Fife College are also ensuring that they are aligned to the Skills Development Scotland (SDS) Strategic Plan 2019-2022 to drive productivity and inclusive growth through skills, and SDS 'five-step skills' alignment model, matching learning provision with demand to develop the right skills and understanding skills demand through direct employer engagement.

The profile of businesses by size is identical to Scotland, where 98% of the 9,785 registered businesses in Fife are small or micro firms employing fewer than 50 people. The Fife business base has continued to grow with an additional 55 businesses in 2019.

There are various challenges within the Fife region which our strategy directly aligns with and supports. These include:

- The scale and pace of technological change for example, advances in robotics and digital technologies.
- The need for investment in Fife's business infrastructure and increased productivity.
- The need for growth to be fair and inclusive, including addressing the entrenched geographical disparities in employment and opportunity within Fife with a particular focus on the continuing lower performance of the economy in mid-Fife.
- Higher than average rates of youth unemployment, per the 2019 Regional Skills Assessment, for young people in Fife aged 16-24 in employment was 57.7% compared to 58.3% for Scotland.
- Changing demands for workforce skills and a need to match supply with demand.

As outlined within the Fife Economic Strategy 2017-2027 a major challenge for Fife over the next decade is to tackle these issues against a background of continued reductions in public spending, low oil and gas prices, constitutional uncertainty and the implications for businesses arising from the outcome of the 2016 EU referendum.

There are however, many areas of opportunity and growth for businesses within Fife across the key sectors which are:

- Energy & Renewables
- Manufacturing
- Finance & Business Services
- Tourism
- Food & Drink
- Health & Social Care
- ICT
- Construction

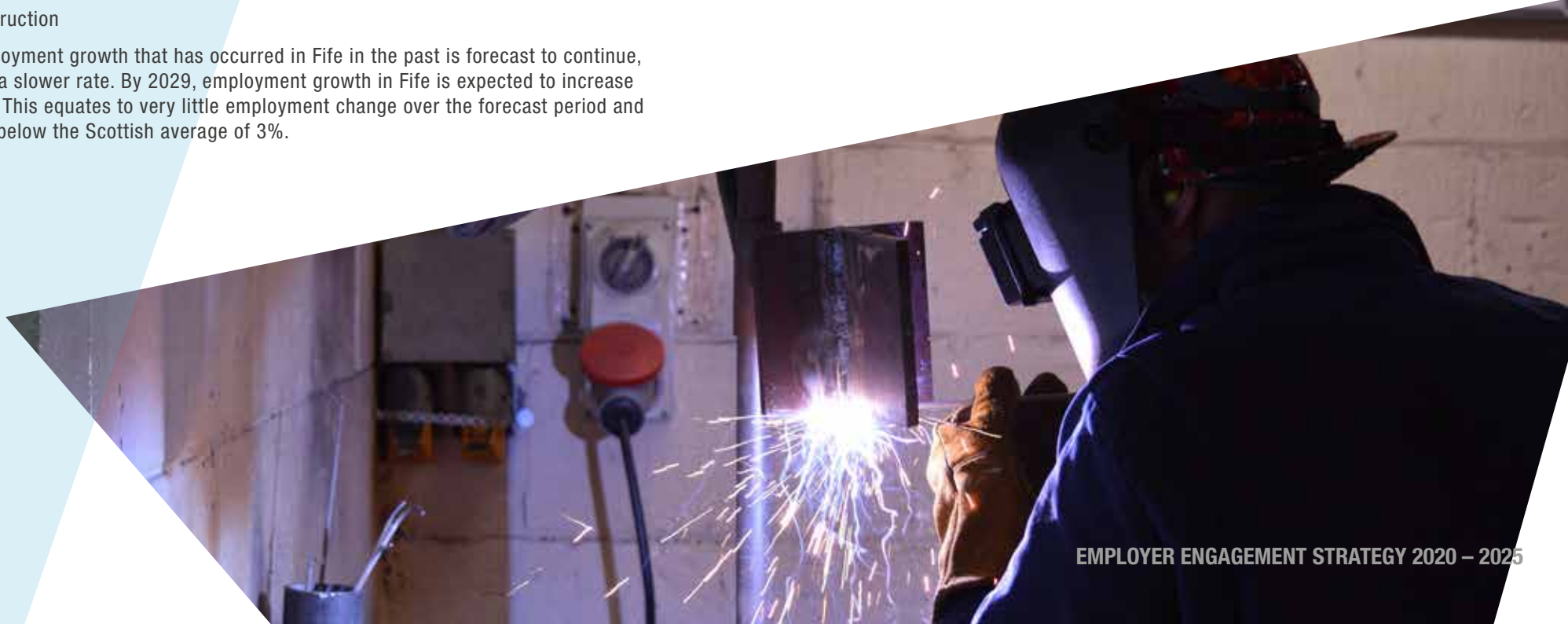
The employment growth that has occurred in Fife in the past is forecast to continue, albeit at a slower rate. By 2029, employment growth in Fife is expected to increase by 0.7%. This equates to very little employment change over the forecast period and remains below the Scottish average of 3%.

Currently, the highest employing sectors are wholesale and retail trade, accounting for 15% of total regional employment, Human Health and Social Work, accounting for 14% and Manufacturing, accounting for 10%.

Administrative and support services is forecast to be the fastest growing sector in Fife over the next 10 years. A similar rate of growth is projected for professional, scientific and technical services, construction and human health and social work.

Other key changes include substantial job losses in manufacturing and public administration and defence. These sectors are expected to lose 2,300 and 1,200 jobs respectively over the forecast period. This reflects both the Government's fiscal priorities and sectorial transition within manufacturing to less labour-intensive methods and continued pressure on public finances.

The RSA also identifies the need to upskill employees which as of 2017 stated that in the next 12 months upskilling was anticipated by 68% of employers in Fife. Within the region, digital and operational skills were the most commonly mentioned development area and can easily be addressed through tailored courses.



4. Our Ambition and Aims

Our ambition is to have a responsive and future focussed portfolio offering aligned to business needs which promotes innovation, investment, internationalisation and contributes to increasing business productivity, thus ensuring we are the training partner of choice for Fife employers and beyond.

To achieve this ambition we aim to expand our partnership work with employers, industry/sectoral bodies, other educational providers, local/regional community partners and key government stakeholders to:

- Enhance the College's role as a key contributor to the economic development of the region and beyond.
- Provide accessible, learning opportunities aligned to industry needs and informed by employers to support inclusive growth and employability.
- Ensure the future workforce has the relevant knowledge and skills, qualifications and experience to support business growth, competitiveness and sustainability.
- Establish strong relationships and collaborative partnership working models at local, regional and national level to maximise future opportunities for economic growth, inward investment and new innovative training and working practices.

“We have used Fife College for a number of Electrical City & Guilds. The courses are great value, they are well run and full of content. This has undoubtedly added value to the business and broadened the capabilities of our maintenance team.”

- Semefab





5. Our Objectives

To deliver our ambition and aims we will:

- 5.1** Ensure our portfolio offering is relevant and aligned to business needs to deliver the current and future workforce skills:
- Work with industry sectors and use high quality skills assessment tools to gather market intelligence for portfolio planning and development.
 - Raise awareness of the College offering through employer engagement with a calendar of sector forums, networking events and knowledge transfer activities.
 - Work with local, regional, national and sectoral partners to be a key contributor to partnership networks.
 - Work with industry to ensure our own staff resources and skills are relevant and up-to-date for current and future practices.
 - Support employers and partners to challenge and reduce gender stereotypes in career choices and occupational development.
 - Involve business in the design, delivery and review of our faculty curriculum to enhance curriculum planning and align skills developed to meet employer need.

“Quality and content of training provided is excellent and receiving positive feedback at all levels.”

- Onfife

5.2 Enhance current business relationships and increase the number of businesses we work with:

- Raise the profile of the College within the wider business community through the creation of a calendar of stakeholder events and knowledge sharing forums.
- Work closely with community and business organisations, for example Fife Council, Fife Chamber of Commerce, Fife Economic Partnership, Opportunities Fife Partnership, NHS Fife and Lothian, Scottish Prison Service, IOD, CEED, and Business Gateway, to raise the awareness of the College offering.
- Regularly obtain employer feedback on programme content and delivery models to ensure they are high quality and are accessible for businesses.
- Promote our positive impacts on businesses through cases studies presented at employer forums and Scottish Stakeholder Events as well as marketing collateral, social media and website presence.
- Ensure our portfolio offering is flexible and accessible for businesses by developing our online resources and distance learning offering.

“College staff are knowledgeable and handouts are first class”

- FVS Engineering



5.3 Develop and increase the training portfolio for employers across our key sectors:

- As part of our annual planning process, the College reviews the current product offering and develops as required to align with employer requirements.
- Anticipate changes in product requirements for future years through market intelligence sources and develop products and investment plans for resource requirements.
- Engage with our existing client base through the Flexible Workforce Development Fund training to build upon market intelligence on specific training requirements.
- Manage client acquisition and on-going account management using our client relationship management system.

5.4 Build upon our apprenticeship offering, volume and achievement across Foundation, Modern and Graduate apprentices:

- Continue to strengthen our links with the Schools, Fife Council Education and Economic Development functions to build our Foundation Apprenticeship offering and student numbers.
- Work with employers and partners to expand the Modern Apprenticeship portfolio to meet Industry needs.
- Work with partners to develop new demand-led Modern Apprenticeships frameworks.
- Build upon our existing Modern Apprentice contract numbers in key sector areas contracting directly with industry.
- Explore opportunities with university partners for shared Graduate apprenticeship delivery models.

“Fife College listened to what we needed as far as our apprentice was concerned and directed us to the correct framework that was best for him and us as the employer.”

- Muir Group



“I would like to take this opportunity to thank Fife College for all their help in the arrangements and organisation for the 18th Edition Electrical Installations course. The course lecturer was very helpful and explained the course well to the delegates. As a whole, the dealings we have had with Fife College training department has always been professional and deliver what we require, so much so that I would highly recommend them.”

- Bell Group

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