

**University of the Highlands and Islands, Orkney College**

Outcome Agreement Self-Evaluation Report - 2018-19

**October 2019**

***Recruitment***

In response to the EREP Enhancement Plan, the College has reviewed the recruitment processes, has strengthened engagement in a number of areas locally, and is working closely with partner colleges to monitor and respond regional strategies to achieve regional recruitment targets. The Orkney College performance in recruiting students on our Further Education courses saw us achieve, and surpass, both Core and additional ESIF-funded student credit targets, following a small miss of our target in the previous year. The College delivered 4,065 Core Credits, against a target of 3,603, and an additional 176 ESF Credits, reaching an overall 4,241 Credits. This success was achieved largely due to the development of a stronger relationship with schools and the Orkney Islands Education Department, in pursuing the Orkney Offer. As we have noted before *“The ‘Orkney Offer’ is the Education Service’s commitment to help ensure that all young learners in the County are able to access an educational pathway that improves their life chances and helps them in to sustainable employment / further study.] These dual roles reflect the emphasis from the Skills Investment Plan for Orkney (2017), to ensure all of our young people have in place effective pathways for learning, progression and employment. The local labour market intelligence provides us with direction in ensuring our key curriculum areas of Agriculture, Art & Design, Business, Construction, Computer Science, Early Education, Engineering, Hairdressing, Health, Hospitality, Inclusive Practice, Maritime and Social Care, continue to meet sector needs in Orkney.”*

The College hosts Developing the Young Workforce in Orkney, plays a full role in the local DYW Board, and has continued to work closely with local employers, schools, and the Education Authority. This committed partnership working has continued to increase the number of credits delivered to senior phase learners studying vocational qualifications, maintain a trend over recent years. Strong engagement in the Orkney Offer, and the relationships with schools and the Education Authority, in addition to engagement with SDS, is an important element of this, with meetings with school liaison staff taking place on a weekly basis and the College hosting regular activity with SDS. The volume of Credits delivered to learners at S3, and above, as part of 'school-college' provision has continued to grow, in line with the trend over recent years.

The college has continued to achieve well in delivering Modern Apprenticeship contracts and has this year substantially increased its Foundation Apprenticeship; The College delivers four frameworks and has increased the number of students engaged from 7 last year to to 23 in this year’s school destinations.

The College continues to monitor demographic changes locally, and the data available from SDS locally, as well as the Orkney Islands Council plays a key role in planning and development of curriculum. Orkney continues to have a low unemployment rate, and significantly is out of kilter with the national trend in relation to 16 year olds staying in education or training, with some 42% of our young people entering employment. This does mean that we are more likely to recruit these young people as part-time students at a later stage in their journey.

Our curriculum planning for the senior phase offering continues to be jointly reviewed and planned in conjunction with curriculum teams and senior managers in all secondary schools. Employability skills are incorporated in to programme design, including for example Pathways to Progression students engaging annually in the ‘Young Enterprise’ programme. An increasing number of students on full-time programmes undertake work experience and the College, working with DYW is leading on the management of work experience opportunities. Embedding career management skills and work placement standards continues.

Curriculum development continues to focus on the key employment sectors within Orkney, for example we have worked with our HMI to bring peer expertise and mentoring to the College to review our Hospitality provision; as a result we have revised our delivery plans to fit more closely with the needs of the trade in altering our start and finish dates.

The College has similarly worked to develop a small, but relevant STM provision with industry partners. The Maritime Studies Department has appointed an engineer on a part-time basis, and introduced an NC in Mechanical Engineering that has attracted its first 5 students, with 20 Nat 5 students also having started their study this year we believe that there is a logical progression route available to build numbers. The Department are now developing further Merchant Navy short engineering courses in response to demand from Orkney Ferries and other stakeholders. Finally, we are working in two partnership areas with North Highland College providing short courses for the Wind Farm sector.

**Retention and Attainment**

The College continues to perform above the national Sector KPI data in term of successful retention, achievement and attainment for almost all part time and full time provision. A report by Audit Scotland entitled “Scotland’s Colleges 2018” indicated that students on full-time further education courses at Orkney College had the Highest Attainment; Highest Retention; Highest Satisfaction; and

Highest positive destination. This does not mean that the College is complacent in this regard since dealing with small numbers can mean notable differences in attainment levels from year to year. The KPI benchmarking tool has been introduced to curriculum leaders and will provide further focus for them to review performance within their area.

Early intervention strategies for those pupils deemed to be at risk of leaving their course has been further enhanced by a key worker from SDS being present in college this year once a fortnight. A holistic approach to meet students’ needs extends beyond both academic and financial needs to include well-being and mental health support.

This remains a key focus for the College and to date 25 staff (both academic and support) have been trained in Scottish Mental Health First Aid training to increase capacity, confidence and support to our students. In addition, the College’s Corporate Parenting, and Gender Action Plans, are regularly reviewed in terms of their implementation with students being supported and monitored within their curriculum areas and a single point of contact to liaise with external agencies.