

ABERDEEN COLLEGE

**ESSENTIAL SKILLS FOR LEARNING, LIFE AND WORK:
CORE AND SOFT SKILLS STRATEGY**

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CORE AND SOFT SKILLS STRATEGY

1.0 Introduction

Aberdeen College recognises the importance of not only developing vocationally-specific knowledge and skills, but also in enabling students to develop essential skills for learning, skills for life and skills for work that form the basis of Curriculum for Excellence. These skills have been defined as Core Skills and Soft Skills.

The key importance of the Core Skills of Communication, Numeracy, ICT, Working with Others and Problem Solving, and Soft Skills of Citizenship, Employability, Environmental and Economic Sustainability, Enterprise and Study Skills is reflected in the College's overall range of services. The College is committed to embedding the principles of Curriculum for Excellence across the curriculum in ways that develop in learners the essential skills for life and work beyond college.

The College recognises that the development of a wide range of essential life skills helps learners to secure positive destinations post College.

The College is committed to including Core Skills units and Soft Skills development on full-time programmes, and on part-time programmes where appropriate.

The College recognises the need for the integration of these skills into meaningful vocational contexts. The most appropriate method of integration is determined on the basis of the client group and their prior experience. In deciding on the appropriate method of delivery, issues of skill development and skill assessment will be planned.

2.0 Core Skills

2.1 In order to develop the Core Skills of Numeracy, Communication, ICT, Working with Others and Problem Solving in mainstream College provision, the College strategy is to:-

Where appropriate incorporate contextualised discrete Numeracy, Communication and ICT units within course programmes and promote ICT pervasiveness in the curriculum.

- Through programme design and lesson planning, promote the inclusion and development of Working with Others and Problem Solving (and other similar essential skills for life and work) through appropriate learning activities and experiences, and ensure that progress is recorded in individual learning plans.
- Put in place arrangements to allow learners who have already achieved the Core Skills level for the programme to progress to the next level, and to support those whose Core Skill entry level is such that they cannot readily achieve the Core Skills level for the programme.
- Carry out communication and numeracy Core Skills profiling for non-advanced full-time learners (with the exception of ESOL and Learning Opportunities students) to establish and record individual skill levels and promote the full development of Core Skills. Profiling also provides an opportunity for:
 - recognition by students of acknowledgement of prior attainment
 - course overviews and lesson plans to include planning for Core Skills development at individual and class level
 - early intervention and support for learners with particular difficulties
 - further development of learners who are already at the required level and who have the capacity to make further progress
 - teaching staff to differentiate the learning and teaching experiences of learners to accommodate differing levels of core skills in any class group.
- Allow learners to see the relevance of Core Skills to their overall employability and citizenship skills profile.

- Encourage curriculum teams to be innovative in their approaches to reflecting on core skills development with learners.
- Allow HE learners to self profile by giving access to profiling software through StudentNet.

3.0 Soft Skills

The College has identified four broad clusters of Soft Skills, and for each has identified the key elements in how it will help students to develop them. Each cluster consists of a different mix of skills, essential understandings and underpinning attitudes. However, the College recognises that there is a high degree of overlap between all of these essential skills.

The College has mapped the soft skills to the 4 capacities of Curriculum for Excellence to help learners identify the full range of essential skills that they are developing and being credited for.

3.1 *Citizenship Skills: developing Responsible Citizens*

The cluster of skills, understanding and attitudes that enables an individual to be integrated as an active and informed member of local, Scottish, British, European and world society.

- Citizenship will be taken to incorporate both the values of respect for fellow citizens, whilst at the same time constructively participating in and contributing to the life of the local community and wider society
- Citizenship as a concept incorporates an awareness regarding wider social issues of justice, environmental sustainability and participation in democracy and decision-making
- The concept of Citizenship furthermore links the individual to competencies of integrity, diligence and punctuality, which are essential values for employability.

3.2 *Employability Skills: developing Effective Contributors and Confident Individuals*

The cluster of skills, understanding and attitudes that (in conjunction with relevant specific vocational skills) enables an individual to enter and sustain paid employment, to create self-employment, to take advantage of opportunities for career progression and to remain versatile by adapting to changes in the economy.

The College will develop employability skills in students by:

- Setting an example through the professional manner in which it delivers its service and the behaviours of all its employees
- Reinforcing in students the essential skills and attitudes that underpin employability, and challenging negative behaviours
- Providing systematic workplace experience, where relevant
- Involving employers in programmes where appropriate
- Supporting learners to progress to positive destinations.

3.3 *Environmental and Economic Sustainability Skills: developing Responsible Citizens*

The cluster of skills, understanding and attitudes that enables an individual to make informed decisions relating to the impact of their actions on the environment and to act in ways that promote a sustainable world environment.

The College is committed to ensuring that all learners develop skills and habits that allow them to become responsible citizens who can and do contribute to the wellbeing of society and the environment.

The College is aware of its educational, organisational and social responsibilities, therefore in promoting and developing environmental sustainability the College will:

- Promote sustainability across the curriculum and whether it is delivered as a discrete unit in areas such as Science, Construction, Hospitality, Engineering and Travel and Tourism or in projects integrated into the curriculum, such as in Fashion, Photography, Marketing and Hairdressing, it permeates the life of the College
- Recognise sustainability as an essential skill for life and work
- Use both the curriculum and CPD to promote knowledge, attitudes and skills that enable learners and staff to make informed decisions relating to the impact of their actions on the environment
- Act in ways that promote a sustainable world environment through reducing, reusing and recycling wherever possible and implementing safe and ethical disposal procedures
- Develop and share good practice in order to influence society in a positive way, seek to engage creativity and diversity and promote opportunity for all.

3.4 *Study Skills: developing Successful Learners*

The cluster of skills, understanding and attitudes that enables an individual to manage their learning effectively and to take maximum advantage from learning opportunities whether in formal or informal contexts.

The College will develop study skills by:

- Providing (subject to the availability of funding) specific courses relating to the use of IT and to information skills for study
- Ensuring that staff teaching course programmes embed within programmes appropriate methodologies to allow students to learn effective study techniques.

3.5 Soft Skills development will be secured through combinations of learning experiences set in the daily life of the College, discrete areas of the curriculum, cross-curricular experiences and activities involving links with local, national and international partners. Soft Skills development will be encouraged through:

- Student involvement in College life and management
- Students managing their own learning
- Student involvement in local communities and with charities
- Student engagement in economic activity
- Promotion of diversity
- Awareness of global, national and local issues
- Recognition of student achievement.

Essentially the College's approach to Soft Skills involves:

- Leading by example – ourselves providing examples of the essential skills needed for employment, citizenship, sustainability and study
- Reinforcing the required skills, behaviours and understanding in our students and challenging inappropriate behaviours
- Promoting best practice in relation to their delivery and development through the formal good practice in the curriculum dissemination events.

4.0 Implementation and Monitoring

4.1 The College recognises its crucial role in the development of students' Core and Soft Skills underpinning the principles of Curriculum for Excellence and understands that this strategy requires College wide commitment. By developing students' essential skills for life and work, the College is supporting its students to become successful learners, confident individuals, responsible citizens and effective contributors.

4.2 The College will monitor delivery of Core and Soft Skills in the curriculum and students' development of these skills by various means, including:

- Lesson observations

- Audits of course materials
- Self-audit checklist for teaching teams
- Documenting students' understanding and development of Core and Soft Skills in Individual Learning Plans
- Core Skills profiling at the start of each academic year for relevant full-time students
- Learner attainment
- First destination statistics, including progression to work or further study
- Employer feedback
- Learner participation in competitions and prizes
- Learner involvement in the life and work of the College and in the wider community, including volunteering and charity work
- The monitoring role of the Curriculum for Excellence Implementation Steering group
- Performance Indicator data relating to the impact of embedding Curriculum for Excellence in the curriculum of the College
- A range of self reflection approaches adopted by curriculum teams.

The College will ensure that students are aware of the essential skills they have gained and accept ownership of their progression, and the recording of the progress made.

- 4.3 The College's Core and Soft Skills Strategy will be implemented by specialist teaching staff in College Sectors and other departments, and by staff development relating to Core and Soft Skills.

5.0 Responsibilities

- 5.1 The **Director of Curriculum and Learning** has overall responsibility for the implementation of the Core and Soft Skills Strategy as part of the College's approach to the implementation of Curriculum for Excellence.
- 5.2 The **Associate Principal (Student Support Services)** will ensure that the College's guidance process supports the delivery of the Core and Soft Skills Strategy.
- 5.3 The **Sector Manager (SISS)** is responsible for the management of Core Skills profiling results and resulting actions.
- 5.4 **Teaching staff** will plan lessons to take account of learners' Core and Soft Skill levels in the development of skills for life and work.
- 5.5 **Guidance Tutors** will discuss learners' progress in relation to Core and Soft Skills with them as required, and will liaise with teaching and LDC staff if intervention strategies are required.