

ANNUAL ACCOUNTABILITY STATEMENT 2026 TO 2027

Including Local
Needs Duty

UCS
COLLEGE GROUP
TRANSFORMING LIVES



CEO's Foreword

Further education is undergoing profound change. Economic uncertainty, skills shortages, technological disruption and rising regulatory and accountability expectations all demand that colleges be clear about their purpose and disciplined in their delivery.

Yet the opportunities before us are significant. Ambitious, responsive and well-governed colleges have the potential to shape regional growth, improve social mobility and transform lives at scale. Whether students start at entry level, advance through technical and professional pathways, or move into higher and degree study, our responsibility remains the same: to ensure that their education creates real opportunities. This involves high teaching standards, strong employer links, clear pathways into work and further study, and an inclusive environment in which all students can succeed.

UCS College Group is one of the largest and most influential college groups in the country, with a strategic direction focused on investment, progression, and outcomes. We are committed to full accountability and have set out clear goals, measurable results, and a strong governance framework that promotes challenge, transparency, and ongoing improvement. Progress is monitored openly and regularly, allowing us to adapt while staying true to our long-term direction.

The path to success hinges crucially on our people - the driving force behind everything we achieve. Investing in leadership, capability, wellbeing and culture is essential, as is our ability to work in deep partnership with employers, civic bodies and stakeholders.

UCS College Group speaks with one voice and operates with a shared identity, but its ethos and culture are also place-based. Each college within the Group has a distinct role and identity, rooted in its community and local economy. Our task as an executive

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team is to ensure that those individual strengths are supported by the Group's scale, resilience, and shared standards.

I want to thank our Board, governors, staff, students, and partners for their contributions to developing our strategic direction and for their ongoing commitment to its delivery. The challenge for us now is to turn intent into action, and action into lasting impact for the people and places we serve – a challenge we are ready and excited to meet head-on.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'AB', with a large, sweeping underline.

Andy Berry CBE

**Principal and Chief Executive Officer
UCS College Group**

Our Group

On 1st August 2025, University Centre Somerset College Group (UCS College Group) brought together the exceptional capabilities of Bridgwater College, Cannington College, Strode College, and Taunton College under a single group entity, thereby creating a united force for education in Somerset, driven by the single, unswerving ambition to inspire students and transform the communities we serve.

The South West region is currently experiencing unprecedented inward investment, growth, and regeneration, bringing huge possibilities for employment, career progression, and transport, digital, and housing infrastructure. UCS College Group is committed to ensuring that every individual, business and community can benefit from these opportunities, recognising that education and training are vital tools for building careers, boosting job satisfaction, and supporting personal growth.

The safe delivery of inspirational teaching, learning and assessment is – and has always been – our core priority. As one of the largest college groups in the country, and with a long track record of academic achievement, we are well positioned to place Somerset firmly on the map as a beacon of excellence for further and higher education. Exceptional partnerships forged across many years with businesses, councils, community organisations and national government mean that no one is better placed to meet the evolving workforce needs of UK plc, with an education and training offer that leads directly to real jobs, whether in technical, professional or operational support roles.

We will continue to offer a dynamic, forward-thinking and inclusive learning environment that encourages every individual to discover their passions, aim high and acquire the skills they need to succeed in the ever-changing, fast-moving world that is UK plc.

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Our Vision

Pioneering, Collaborating, Inspiring, and Transforming.

Our purpose

Inspire every student to realise their potential; strengthen our communities and transform lives.

Our Values

Our values are behavioural and cultural standards of excellence that underpin how we operate across all colleges.

1. **INCLUSIVE.** We create a culture where everyone feels welcome, respected, and able to belong; where we value differences and ensure everyone can thrive.
2. **SUPPORTIVE.** We care for one another, work as a team, and provide the encouragement, guidance and challenge that enable everyone to grow and succeed.
3. **RESPONSIVE.** We listen, adapt and act with purpose, responding to the needs of our students, staff, employers and communities with agility and care.
4. **AMBITIOUS.** We aim high for our students, our people and our Group, embracing opportunities, driving innovation and striving to make a lasting difference.
5. **INTEGRITY.** We act with honesty, fairness and accountability, doing the right thing and building trust through our decisions, behaviours and relationships.

Our Strategic Aims

- **INSPIRING STUDENTS** through an exceptional, ambitious and future-focused curriculum
- **TRANSFORMING COMMUNITIES** by widening opportunity and driving economic and social prosperity.

1. Context and place

The South West is increasingly seen as a region of strategic importance to the UK economy, particularly in clean energy, advanced engineering and investment in major infrastructure projects.

The Great South West Independent Economic Review (2024) identifies the region as central to the UK's ambition for long-term economic growth and its transition to a clean energy superpower. With major assets in nuclear, marine, renewables, and Agri-tech, the South West has the potential to lead nationally in sectors that will shape the next decade of economic development.

A defining feature of the next 10 years will be the implementation of Local Skills Improvement Plans (LSIPs), which fundamentally reshape how skills provision is planned and delivered. LSIPs highlight the importance of collaboration across institutions, sectors, and geographies – including bringing together employers, education providers, and local authorities- to deliver accessible, sustainable skills solutions that are closely aligned with local economic needs. Through close collaboration, they identify priority sectors, skills gaps, and required interventions, thereby creating a coordinated, place-based approach to workforce development.

The current LSIP covers both Somerset and Devon. However, the region is preparing to move forward with two aligned LSIPs—one for Greater Devon and one for Somerset—reflecting both the Department for Education's revised geography and the strong collaborative relationships built through LSIP delivery. This transition is not simply administrative—it strengthens strategic clarity and delivery capability—and will continue to shape the region's skills, employment, and economic future.

In addition, investment programmes such as the Western Gateway partnership and Levelling Up Fund are further accelerating regional growth by supporting transport, energy, and industrial development corridors. These investments are expected to drive sustained demand for skills in:

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- Clean energy and environmental technologies
- Engineering and advanced manufacturing
- Digital and data-driven industries
- Construction and retrofit.

Key economic drivers:

Hinkley Point C

Hinkley Point C, Sizewell C, and the wider clean energy agenda represent long-term opportunities. The evolution of the National College for Nuclear, with a broader clean-energy focus, aligns directly with national priorities, and designation as a Clean Energy Technical Excellence College offers UCS College Group a significant opportunity to scale its proven leadership in workforce development into a nationally coordinated, high-impact system that shapes the future of clean energy skills.

Gravity Smart Campus (Agratas gigafactory)

The £4bn investment in the Gravity Enterprise Zone is a transformative opportunity, bringing high-value jobs in clean growth, electrification, battery technology, and advanced manufacturing. UCS College Group will play a critical role in developing the skills pipeline to support this.

NHS Somerset workforce transformation

Our strong partnerships with the NHS and health providers throughout Somerset underpin significant opportunities for growth. The development of integrated pathways from T Levels right through to degree-level provision positions UCS College Group as a key source of healthcare professionals.

Alongside these, Somerset's "bedrock" sectors - agri-food and land stewardship, the visitor economy, and cultural and creative industries - are central to the local economy and communities.

The challenges

Somerset has a strong rural character, with roughly half the population living in countryside areas and the remainder in small and medium-sized towns and villages. This creates both opportunities and constraints. Rurality contributes to Somerset's natural assets, visitor offer and quality of life, but it also creates challenges around transport, digital connectivity, social isolation and access to employment, training and services.

Although the South West maintains one of the highest employment rates in the UK (79.0%) and is often perceived as relatively prosperous, Somerset is also characterised by pockets of acute deprivation, an ageing population and the outward migration of its young people. Disproportionately few of its residents are educated to Level 4 or above, resulting in an overabundance of low-skilled occupations, regional productivity below the UK average, and ongoing recruitment needs in the healthcare, construction, engineering, digital, and agri-food sectors. There is growing demand across the board for professional, technical, and managerial roles. Employers continue to report difficulty filling these positions, indicating persistent mismatches in specific sectors and occupations, as well as a general lack of employability skills, such as communication, teamwork, problem-solving, and resilience.

In Somerset and the wider South West, LSIPs highlight:

- The persistent skills shortages reported by local businesses
- Difficulties in navigating the skills system
- A need for stronger alignment between education provision and employer demand.

The regional economy is therefore characterised by an underperforming and capacity-constrained labour market, where future growth will depend heavily on expanding the skills pipeline and improving workforce productivity.

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Our focus

UCS College Group is uniquely positioned to lead local workforce development, support business innovation and contribute to regional and national growth strategies. Operating as a single entity, it incorporates University Centre Somerset and colleges at Bridgwater, Cannington, Strode and Taunton, which share resources, initiatives and a bold, future-shaping ambition centred on pioneering, collaborating, inspiring and transforming. However, as place-based anchor institutions, each college is uniquely embedded in its community and can forge and maintain strong relationships with employers, local authorities, and strategic partners. This places them at the front and centre of aligning skills provision with local economic priorities, supporting small and medium-sized enterprises, and developing talent pipelines for emerging sectors.

BRIDGWATER will be a national flagship for post-school education, recognised for seamless pathways from entry to higher-level and professional study. It will be the first-choice post-16 provider for our community, developing future-ready talent through academic excellence and outstanding student support, with specialisms including electrification, advanced manufacturing, and construction training, underpinned by strong employer partnerships. It will also be a recognised centre of excellence for elite sporting performance and the performing arts, with progression routes to higher-level study and professional environments.

CANNINGTON - a nationally recognised hub for environmental innovation – will lead in skills for the green economy and major infrastructure projects, working with industry and partners to develop future-focused skills and solutions in clean energy, electrification and associated construction and civil engineering. Its long history of outstanding land-based education and training has given rise to a campus with a deeply embedded green culture and highly sustainable practices that shape our curriculum, operations and community.

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STRODE is one of the highest-performing colleges in the country for Sixth Form Education, combining strong academic and creative outcomes. As the first-choice post 16 provider in Mendip, it achieves exceptional L3 outcomes that facilitate clear progression to university, apprenticeships and employment. A leader in digital, arts and creative education, its ambitious programmes broaden horizons and reduce SEET outcomes at Levels 1–2, as well as offering a distinctive, high-quality higher education offer.

TAUNTON is a nationally recognised, award-winning leader in professional, technical and future focused education, with specialisms in health, professional and technical education and providing an exceptional talent pipeline for regional and national employers. Its sector-designed curricula are aligned to future skills demands and delivered in real and simulated industry learning environments which, together, drive sustainable growth through transformative, career-defining experiences and enable ambitious progression for all students.

2. Policy context

Over the next 10 years, four major policy and system shifts will shape the economic and skills landscape for UCS College Group. Collectively, they point to a system that is becoming more economically aligned, employer-led and outcomes-focused, yet at the same time more complex in terms of demand, delivery and accountability. They are:

The Post-16 Education and Skills White Paper

The post-16 White Paper positions further education as a central driver of economic growth and expects colleges to align provision with labour market demand through mechanisms such as Skills England and Local Skills Improvement Plans.

The Milburn Review

The Milburn Review highlights a growing structural challenge within the UK labour market. The number of young people who are Seeking Education, Employment or Training (SEET) now exceeds one million and, without intervention, is projected to increase significantly. The review frames this not as a short-term economic fluctuation, but as evidence of a deepening “generational fault line”, with long-term disengagement from work becoming more prevalent and persistent. Youth inactivity is increasingly understood as a strategic economic risk, contributing to lower productivity, higher welfare costs, and a loss of national talent at scale.

It underscores the need for a fundamental reset towards an integrated “working system” that better connects education, skills, and employment, strengthens pathways into work, and ensures that institutions are collectively accountable for supporting young people into sustained, meaningful participation in the economy.

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Qualification Reform

Qualification reform represents one of the most significant structural changes to the further education landscape in a generation. The Department for Education's review of Level 3 qualifications has sought to simplify what has historically been a complex and fragmented system, moving towards a clearer architecture built around A Levels, T Levels, and a new suite of shorter vocational qualifications (V Levels). This reform agenda is underpinned by a policy ambition to ensure that all publicly funded qualifications are high quality, clearly purposeful, and aligned with labour market needs, with hundreds of existing qualifications already removed or earmarked for defunding where they duplicate or fall below new standards. For college groups such as UCS, this represents not simply curriculum change, but a fundamental reconfiguration of the 16–19 offer and the way progression pathways are presented to students. The strategic importance of deep employer partnerships - particularly those aligned with priority sectors such as clean energy and advanced manufacturing - to ensure placement capacity and curriculum relevance cannot be overstated. More broadly, qualification reform will require recalibrating delivery models, investing in staff capability, and more clearly articulating progression routes to maintain competitiveness in an increasingly simplified yet more demanding system.

The reform of the SEND and High-Needs funding system

In parallel, the SEND and High-Needs reforms – driven by the sharp increase in young people with Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCPs), amid rising levels of autism and mental health needs - reflect increasingly complex student needs and a system under significant financial pressure. A shift towards earlier intervention, greater inclusion within mainstream provision, and new models of support and accountability is required. The proposed reforms aim to fundamentally reshape the system, moving from a reactive, assessment-led model to a more preventative and inclusive approach centred on a clearer national framework. A new tiered model of support is expected to emerge, with a universal offer complemented by targeted and

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specialist interventions, and an increased expectation that mainstream providers will meet a broader range of needs.

Taken together, these developments signal a clear direction for the sector: a more integrated, place-based, and demand-led system in which colleges are expected to deliver not only high-quality education but also measurable economic and social impact.

For UCS College Group, this presents both opportunity and challenge, requiring us to maintain strong recruitment and outcomes on legacy programmes while strategically repositioning the curriculum towards the reformed system. They underpin the UCS College Group 2026-2035 strategy, reinforcing our commitment to operating as a system leader within the regional economy, addressing skills shortages in priority sectors, expanding lifelong learning opportunities, and supporting students most at risk of disengagement.

3. Developing the Statement

This statement has been developed through extensive engagement with employers and stakeholders to ensure alignment with local, regional, and national workforce needs.

Key partners and engagement

We have worked with:

- Employer Representative Bodies (ERBs) and LSIP partners
- Local authorities and regional economic partnerships
- Major employers (including within the clean energy and infrastructure sectors)
- Schools, universities, and independent training providers.

1. Our partnerships with employers and stakeholders in curriculum co-design include:

- Somerset Council
- Somerset Chambers (County and local)
- Devon & Somerset LSIP
- NHS Somerset ICB and Foundation Trust
- EDF/MEH Alliance
- Universities - Bristol (Gravity), UWE, University of Plymouth, The Open University, Oxford Brookes
- Environment Agency
- National Trust
- British Gymnastics
- SMEs
- DWP/Jobcentre Plus
- Dorset & Somerset Training Provider Network (Skill Up).

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2. Our use of data and evidence includes:

- Labour Market Intelligence (regional and national)
- Provider performance dashboards
- Destinations
- Apprenticeship demand
- Clinical and industrial workforce plans
- LSIF/SDF project evaluations.

3. The annual curriculum review and quality/planning cycles are:

- Group-wide annual curriculum review cycle
- Employer advisory boards
- Occupational maps
- Sequencing and pedagogy improvement programmes
- Industrial updating for dual-professional staff.

4. We collaborate closely with other training providers to reduce duplication, strengthen progression pathways and address participation barriers. These include:

- South West Institute of Technology partners (Yeovil and Strode, transitioning to a group)
- Exeter College and City College Bristol for regional coherence
- School MATs and secondary heads' networks for pre-16 pathways
- Higher Technical pathways with HEIs.

As a result, our provision aligns directly with LSIP priorities and local growth plans.

4. Our contribution to national, regional and local priorities

UCS College Group is an anchor organisation within the local community and makes a significant contribution to meeting local, regional and national skills priorities.

The curriculum responds to the local context, with strong employer partnerships helping UCS College Group develop flexible programs that equip students with the skills, knowledge, and behaviours needed for success in current and future business environments. Our work with local secondary schools is key to aligning provision, facilitating transition, and enabling a relevant and rich offer for young people and adults. It includes a strong focus on those with education, health, and care plans, as well as those with special educational needs.

A dynamic curriculum approach is vital to stay competitive and meet future skills needs. UCS College Group reviews its curriculum annually to ensure that plans for the next year and 3-5 years align with economic needs and the National Skills Priorities.

- Clean Energy Industries
- Advanced Manufacturing
- Creative Industries
- Defence
- Digital and Technologies
- Financial Services
- Life Sciences
- Professional and Business Services
- Construction
- Health.

UCS College Group Curriculum Review Process

1) Identify demand:

- i) A full review of national, regional and local LMI priorities and feedback from businesses through our occupational maps and curriculum pathways project
- ii) Alignment with the Local Skills Improvement Plan (LSIP)
- iii) Review of the broader knowledge, skills and behaviours required for each occupational career pathway
- iv) Research and review the specific skills required by the appropriate industry bodies/sector.

2) Establish solutions:

- i) Amend and adapt existing curriculum, and develop new programmes to meet immediate and future demand
- ii) Identify appropriate subject combinations that could be offered
- iii) Explore blended learning opportunities and flexible learning models, including embedded digital skills
- iv) Create inclusive provisions that meet the needs of adults upskilling and reskilling, apprentices, higher education students, school leavers, and those who are SEET.

3) Co-create:

- i) Co-create curriculum, product design, and sequencing
- ii) Co-create the learning experience with businesses and other stakeholders
- iii) Seek business and stakeholder endorsement of programmes of learning.

4) Implement/deliver:

- i) Continue to recruit dual professional tutors to deliver high-quality, industry-relevant programmes.

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- ii) Develop and apply the most effective pedagogical approaches
 - iii) Invest in cutting-edge technology, resources and pedagogy
 - iv) Continue to forge and nurture deep employer partnerships that enhance the student experience
 - v) Raise awareness around the impact and value of technical and professional career paths, including the promotion and marketing of provision by career/occupations.
- 5) Review, test, evaluate via:
- i) Student and apprentice progression and intended destinations
 - ii) Feedback from businesses and stakeholders
 - iii) Student and apprentice satisfaction with their experience
 - iv) Added value for students, apprentices, the local community, businesses and the economy, demonstrating a clear return on investment
 - v) Contribution to a positive impact on social mobility.

Inclusive Mainstream Fund (IMF)

In 2026–27, we will use the IMF to support the transition to the reformed SEND system, focusing on:

- Earlier identification and reasonable adjustments in mainstream learning, scaling the proven iPad/assistive tech model to improve access, independence and assessment.
- Invest in opportunities for all students to access enrichment and extra-curricular activities.
- Enhance support in English, maths and digital for all disadvantaged students with structured progression to higher levels of study, traineeships, supported internships and apprenticeships.
- Support the development of provision and create capacity to reduce NEET
- Investment in Teaching Learning Coaches to enhance inclusive pedagogy and neurodiversity, and support the development of an inclusive Toolkit
- Outcome measures: improved attendance and retention; Increased engagement in enrichment; increased progression into employment or higher-level education; reduced withdrawals due to unmet needs.

Local Needs Duty Statement

Overview of provision and volume

In 2026–2027, UCS College Group will deliver a comprehensive technical and academic curriculum aligned to regional economic priorities and workforce demand. Anticipated volumes are:

- 16–18 Study Programmes: ~5200 students

Adult Skills Provision (19+): ~7000 students, including Adult Skills Fund, Tailored Learning and Free Courses for Jobs

- Apprenticeships: ~2,500 apprentices (Levels 2–6)
- Higher Technical and Higher Education: ~xxx students

Provision is deliberately focused on key growth sectors:

- Clean energy and nuclear
- Advanced manufacturing and engineering
- Health and social care
- Digital and creative industries
- Construction and the built environment
- Professional and business services

Key Conclusions from Local Needs Analysis

Our curriculum is shaped through systematic engagement with LSIPs, employer partners (including Hinkley Point C, Agratas, and NHS Somerset Foundation Trust and ICB), and Labour Market Intelligence.

The analysis highlights:

- Strong and sustained demand for higher-level technical skills, particularly in clean energy, engineering, and digital
- Acute workforce shortages in health, social care, and construction
- A chronic shortage of ‘work-ready’ and life skills among young people
- Growing need for adult reskilling and upskilling, driven by major regional infrastructure, the transition to net zero and current productivity/efficiency levels that fall below the national average

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- Clear employer preference for flexible, modular and work-based pathways, including apprenticeships and higher technical qualifications

Outcomes and Impact

UCS College Group continues to demonstrate strong performance against local need:

- High achievement rates across study programmes, adults and apprenticeships, exceeding national benchmarks in priority sectors
- Positive progression outcomes, with a high proportion of students moving into employment, apprenticeships, or higher-level study within the region
- High employer satisfaction, evidenced through repeat engagement, co-investment, and sustained partnership growth
- Targeted inclusion impact, supporting priority groups into education, work and advancing social mobility across Somerset

Impact on Meeting Local Needs

Together with its employer partners and local stakeholders, UCS College Group is committed to building an aspirational workforce that responds to the current and future needs of our local economy, enabling all residents to access opportunities for education, training and employment that support them in achieving their full potential and thriving. The Group meets local needs effectively and at scale through:

- Direct alignment of curriculum to regional growth sectors, particularly clean energy and advanced manufacturing
- Deep employer partnerships, co-designed curriculum and joint investment in specialist facilities
- Responsive provision, including rapid deployment of new programmes such as Skills Bootcamps and higher technical pathways
- Strategic contribution to regional workforce priorities, supporting LSIP delivery and major infrastructure pipelines.
- Strong relationships with feeder schools that attract and engage students pre-16, and pathways right through to higher-level skills that ensure a solid pipeline of local talent
- Outstanding provision for SEND and High Needs students that is truly inclusive and delivers exceptional permanent employment opportunities.

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Overall Assessment

UCS College Group is highly responsive to local skills needs, delivering significant impact for workforce development, economic growth, and social mobility across Somerset and the wider South West.

Review Cycle and Scope

The Governing Body will undertake a full strategic review of the effectiveness of education and training in meeting local needs during 2026–2027 as part of Group formation.

- A summative statement is included within this Accountability Statement
- A full report will be published where material updates arise
- Reviews will be conducted on a three-year cycle, or sooner where significant change occurs.

Key Conclusions and Actions

Strengths

- Strong alignment to local priorities in health, construction, engineering, digital, clean energy and Agritech
- Established national specialisms, including nuclear and environmental training
- Deep and effective employer engagement enabling rapid curriculum adaptation

Priority Gaps and Actions

- Level 4+ participation below national averages
 - Scale Higher Technical Qualifications and degree apprenticeships
 - Strengthen progression pathways from Level 3 and expand outreach in priority areas

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- Essential skills and adult employability
 - Expand modular and short-course provision, including Skills Bootcamps
 - Embed English, maths, and digital skills within all adult pathways
- Inclusion and SEND transition
 - Deploy Inclusion Maturity Framework (IMF) to embed inclusive practice
 - Expand supported internships with targeted employer brokerage
- Green skills integration
 - Systematically embed retrofit, hydrogen, battery manufacturing, and carbon literacy across relevant curriculum areas
- SME engagement in skills delivery
 - Simplify access routes and strengthen employer support
 - Increase SME participation in apprenticeships and training provision.

System Collaboration and Capacity

UCS College Group will continue to work in partnership with regional providers through:

- The **Technical Excellence College (TEC) Hub and Spoke model**
- NCfNCE
- SWIoT
- Regional provider forums and LSIP networks

This collaboration will:

- Reduce unhelpful duplication
- Strengthen progression pathways across the region
- Maximise access to specialist facilities, including NCfNCE, CSIC, AEC, and Clinical Simulation

Highlights 2025-2026 Plan

- Achieve Adult Skills Fund budget

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- FCFJ has grown by 10% and will continue to be a priority
- Bootcamp numbers have increased, and the provision has included new areas such as battery technology
- ESOL numbers have increased
- 16-18 numbers have increased by 5%
- Growth in the number of Supported Internships achieved, and Somerset has been recognised nationally for this work.
- UCS College Group remains the largest provider of LEVY apprenticeships nationally
- First Foundation Apprenticeship introduced
- Achieved growth in apprenticeship income
- Applications to HE increased by 9%
- Continued development against achieving degree-awarding powers

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UCS College Group will deliver a focused set of **priority outcomes for 2026–2027**, aligned to:

- National Skills Priorities
- Local Skills Improvement Plans (LSIPs)
- Regional growth ambitions
- Our strategic plan (UCS 2026-2035)

Priority Outcome	Objective	Key Actions	Impact
Clean Energy and Net Zero Skills	Expand provision aligned to nuclear, renewables, and green construction	• Grow technical pathways in clean energy and engineering • Increase higher technical (Level 4–6) provision • Establish UCS College Group as a Clean Energy Technical College • Operate as a ‘spoke’ for other TECs	Supports national priority for clean energy industries and construction.
Apprenticeships and Employer-Led Training	Deliver high-quality, high-growth apprenticeships aligned to employer demand	• Increase apprenticeship volumes in priority sectors	Drives productivity and employer responsiveness, reflecting strong

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		• Improve achievement and progression outcomes • Expand SME engagement and workforce development	practice seen in employer-led curriculum models
Higher-Level Skills and Progression	Increase participation in higher technical education	• Increase applications to UCS HE by 10% • Expand Higher Technical Qualifications (HTQs) • Strengthen progression from Level 3 to Level 4+ • Support the national ambition for increased higher-level participation • Expand flexible, modular provision	Contributes to the national ambition to increase higher-level attainment by age 25 Increases productivity locally and regionally Increases accessibility/participation among the employed/under-employed

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Adult Skills and Workforce Reskilling	Grow adult participation in priority sectors	• Deliver targeted reskilling programmes • Expand flexible, modular provision • Extend programmes and numbers in conjunction with DWP • Increase % of ASF delivered locally	Supports economic recovery, productivity, and workforce mobility Enhances social mobility, productivity and participation
Inclusion, SEET Reduction and Basic Skills	Improve access and outcomes for disadvantaged students	• Reduce SEET levels through targeted pathways • Increase attainment in English, maths, and digital skills • Strengthen transition pathways for vulnerable students	Addresses participation decline in essential skills and supports inclusive growth Addresses employment gaps in hard-to-recruit, part-time and repetitive roles
Curriculum Quality and T Levels	Deliver high-quality technical education	• Increase 16-18 numbers by 5% • Expand T Levels and industry placements	Supports national priority programmes, including T Levels and technical education

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		• Increase number of construction students to address national skills priorities • Improve achievement and progression rates	
System Leadership and Collaboration	Lead the regional skills system	• Strengthen collaboration across providers • Align provision across the system • Support shared workforce strategies	Enhances system efficiency and responsiveness to skills needs UCS acts as an engine of growth and transformation across the regional provider network

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Governance engagement

Any action with potential structural implications (e.g., a significant reconfiguration of provision) will be discussed early with the DfE Regional Improvement Teams and the FE Commissioner, as required.

Corporation / Governing Body statement

On behalf of the UCS College Group Corporation, we confirm:

- This Accountability Statement for 2026 to 2027 has been discussed and approved by the Corporation on 25th June 2026.
- This document fulfils the requirement to publish outcomes and actions arising from the Local Needs Duty review. A full review report will be maintained by the Corporation and updated within the three-year cycle, or earlier if circumstances change substantially.

Signed:



Chair of Governors, Denys Rayner



Principal & CEO, Andy Berry CBE

Date: 25th June 2026

How the annual statement will be used

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We will use this statement with employers, local authorities, NHS Somerset, LSIP/ERB partners, DfE Regional Improvement Teams, and Ofsted to evidence alignment, progress and impact. It will guide annual curriculum planning and inform our strategic conversation with the Department for Education.

Deadline and submission

- Submission via Document Exchange under document type “accountability agreement” by 31 July 2026.
- File size under 5 MB; DfE Sign-in access arranged via our organisation approvers. Queries via DfE helpdesk or Customer Help Portal.

Publication

- Front page hyperlink: <https://www.btc.ac.uk/the-college/about-us/corporate-governance/> (UCS College Group landing page to be updated post-merger to group domain:
- We will publish this statement, including Local Needs Duty outcomes, on our website by the 31st of July 2026.

Supporting documentation (links

- Devon & Somerset LSIP (Progress Report, June 2024)
- Great South West economic review; Gravity Skills Charter summary
- UCS College Group Strategic Plan 2026–2030 (on publication)
- Ofsted report (BTC Outstanding, 2024/25)
- NCfN Southern Hub overview
- FE Provider Dashboard (for outcomes context)