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Lincoln / Newark / Gainsborough

OUR JOURNEY TO ‘BE EXTRAORDINARY’



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INTRODUCTION

Message from the Chair and Principal/CEO

The Lincoln College Group (LCG) Strategy document is intended to be an easy-to-read document for all LCG staff to ensure that we all have a good understanding of who we are, where we are, where we are heading and how we intend to get there. Please take time to read it and to think about it. Once you have done so, if you are not clear about where we are going as an organisation and what is expected of you, please discuss it with your immediate line manager who, in turn, will provide feedback to the appropriate senior manager.

This strategy, entitled ‘Our Journey to Be Extraordinary’ builds upon the excellent work and achievements of everyone at LCG during the past three years. Both James and myself are incredibly proud of what everyone in the LCG, staff and students, have achieved over the past 3 years. Where we are already extraordinary we are transforming lives through enjoyable and meaningful student experiences. We are seeing students grow, who are happy and feel safe to allow them to express themselves and flourish. Through these experiences they are becoming resilient, independent, inclusive and more mature individuals who are ready for the world of work. Our aim is for all our students to experience such development from their time at College.

Please take the time to think about the strategy and how it relates to you, your team and any people you lead. Please think and be clear about what you will do differently next year because of this strategy. We aim to concentrate on our strategic objectives, with the strategic moves driving our longer-term strategy and actions.

How do we get to “Be Extraordinary”? If we, the staff, governors, and alumni, strive to be extraordinary, our mindset will inspire our students to be the very best version of themselves and give them the absolute best opportunities in their careers.

This entire strategy is predicated on us all having a mindset of being extraordinary all the time and in everything that we do. Extraordinary is not a regulatory grade. Being extraordinary is not to suggest that everything is perfect. Extraordinary is a way of thinking and behaving in the context we are operating within. We strive to achieve things that are exceptional and remarkable, innovative and impressive. Critically we do not accept mediocrity. It is about being authentic, inclusive and inspirational leaders and dedicated and loyal followers; it is about being an effective team; it is about being responsible and accountable.

From the start of the 2022/23 academic year, we will all take every opportunity to inspire our students to “Be Extraordinary”.

James Pinchbeck
Chair of the Board of Corporation

Mark Locking
Principal/CEO

PURPOSE

To be an extraordinary employer-led organisation; producing a highly skilled and productive local workforce

Our Purpose comprises three distinct but nevertheless related components:

- Clear recognition of the importance of the employer requirement driving our work
- The importance of learning, assessment and teaching to produce highly skilled people
- The value of wider development of learners to make them ready for work and thus being productive as quickly as possible in their jobs

OUR FUTURE BY 2025

We see a future by 2025 where:

- Our staff are passionate and innovative in their focus on the quality of our education and training to unlock an extraordinary learning experience resulting in highly skilled and motivated students with sector leading outcomes
- Our education and training is nationally recognised as employer-led and informed by the local skills agenda, resulting in our students being even more productive and employable
- Leaders enable and liberate our people by being exceptional communicators, inspiring others and having an extraordinary approach to people management and development
- The College Group continues to invest innovatively in education and training due to growth and diversification of our income in the UK and overseas
- Our focus on finances, infrastructure and estates will provide resources that reduce our impact on the planet and accelerate the student experience to extraordinary

OUR PRIORITIES 2022-2023

- Deliver Extraordinary Education and Training – continue on our journey towards an extraordinary student experience where they make confident progress through excellent Learning, Assessment and Teaching (LAT), with improved outcomes and destinations. Grow the opportunities for Work Experience, paid work and Industry Placements across the Group
- Increase the Relevance of Education and Training – continue to be recognised for our innovation and focus on priority skills sectors delivering extraordinary programmes such as the Air and Space Institute, HEART and the Policing College, with concerted growth in Higher Technical Qualifications at levels 4 and 5
- Invest in our People and Facilities – to further develop a progressive, inclusive and supportive learning and working environment. Produce a 3 year “People Plan” to support the productivity, wellbeing and reward and recognition of staff and students that develops skills and aspirations
- Create Financially Resilient Colleges – by recruiting more 16-18 year olds, adults, apprentices, HE and international students, to deliver against the 2022/23 group budget. Explore strategic options for growth whilst delivering an efficient, and increasingly sustainable, property strategy
- Develop the Leadership and Governance of the Lincoln College Group – to provide aspirational goals and robust scrutiny to “Be an Extraordinary Organisation” and externally drive and deliver on the local skills agenda in the context of the 2022 Skills Act

CONTEXT AND HOW WE GET TO EXTRAORDINARY

The context in which we will operate for the next 3 years will continue to be highly challenging. We have made a great deal of progress during the past 3 years improving the quality and relevance of our provision and our financial health. We have made strides to improve the health and wellbeing of our people but more needs to be done. We need to invest further in our staff and equipment or we will be in danger of starting to fall behind. To improve this situation, we will have to make some difficult choices.

We get to “Be Extraordinary” through our everyday actions, operational innovation and strategic insight. Our collective knowledge, skills and behaviours, with exceptional leadership, will continue to accelerate us on the journey to “Be Extraordinary” and so give our students amazing outcomes through a fun and enjoyable learner experience. By listening to employers and responding to student needs, our relevance will accelerate and the College will be at the heart of our communities. Our dedication and innovation will transform the lives of both students and staff. In a growing number of areas this is already the case and we are Extraordinary. We know this as we are being told that this is the case by the DfE, local employers, staff, parents and most importantly students. These programmes are those such as the Policing College, the Air and Space Institute, the Care College and the Air and Defence College where students’ mindsets, knowledge and skills and behaviours are being transformed by highly innovative and inclusive employer designed programmes.

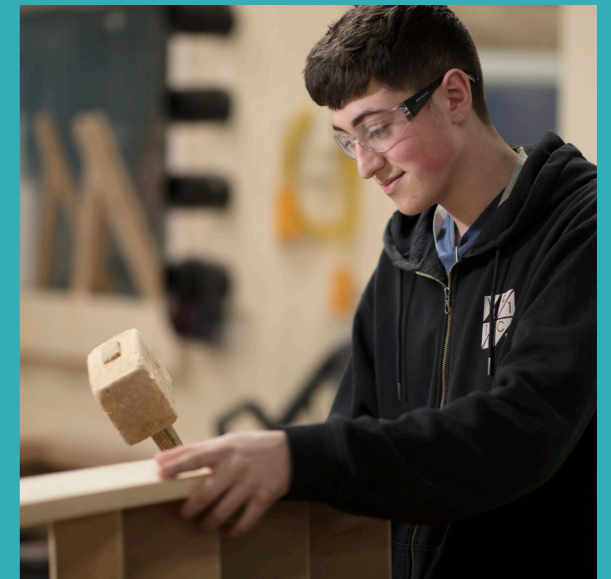
There can be little doubt that a decade of underfunding of the FE Sector is having a profound effect on many Colleges. The outlook for the first year of this strategy is very challenging with the costs of Covid washing through the system, lower FE recruitment nationally as young people stay on at school more following the pandemic and adult funding continuing to fall in real terms. There is little chance of any additional funding from central government for Further Education. Costs are rising beyond all reasonable forecasts due to the cost-of-living crisis and spiralling inflation, especially in relation to utilities, the NI employer rise and pension contributions. Against that backdrop we have been undergoing apprenticeships reform which has changed dramatically the way in which we market, sell and deliver apprenticeships. Standards and the issues with Covid and End Point Assessment centres have seen withdrawal rates spiral nationally with reduced recruitment, particularly at the lower levels and 16-18 year olds, and levy spending often concentrating on higher value standards.

The Schools and Post 16 Education Act 2022 sets out the future of the Further Education (FE) sector. We also learned that the Chancellor has been hearing the urgent pleas from MPs and others for College funding to be a priority, even if it is clearly going to be one amongst many. Within this context we are starting to manage the shifting education and funding landscape of Devolution, Local Skills Improvement Plans and most recently the ONS study into the incorporated status of FE Colleges.

In the context of these factors I believe we have performed strongly over the last 3 years, due to the unique way in which we fund the Group with a much greater reliance on commercial and international income than most other College Groups. We have been highly successful recently winning several capital funding bids supporting a number of exciting growth lines in industries such as construction and aviation sectors in Newark with the ASI and plumbing centre, and HEART (Hospitality, Events and Entertainment, Arts, Retail and Tourism) in Lincoln with the Towns Fund monies for The Drill and HEAT. The challenge now is to generate the revenue to run these at a commercial profit whilst providing an extraordinary enhancement to the learner experience.

Despite the myriad of challenges presented as we emerged from the Covid-19 pandemic, 2021/22 was successful academically and financially due to the immense efforts of our staff in the UK and overseas in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and China. The impact of Covid-19 financially on the College, on our students and staff and the UK economy, will obviously continue into the 2022/23 academic year. Ensuring the safety of our students and staff is always our highest priority. Central to our strategy will be a 3 year “People Plan” that will attempt over time to address the broader financial challenges impacting the whole sector in terms of pay, conditions, and reward and recognition more broadly.

Colleges have been under pressure to increase pay to ensure they can recruit and retain teaching staff, to cover higher pension contributions and to keep up with the rising minimum wage (up 6% this year alone). This pressure has pushed the average spending on staff costs to 69% - above the 65% benchmark set by DfE.



WHAT SITS BEHIND OUR 4 CORNERSTONES OF SUCCESS?

As a large and complex organisation there are inevitably a wide range of things that we have to do to survive and thrive in a very challenging operating context for the Further Education Sector and to achieve our strategic vision and mission. However, following analysis, we have determined that fundamentally there are four cornerstones of success:

THE CAPACITY,
RECOGNITION AND
WELLBEING OF
OUR PEOPLE

THE QUALITY &
RELEVANCE OF OUR
EDUCATION PROVISION

THE CONTRIBUTION
FROM OUR
UK COMMERCIAL &
INTERNATIONAL
ACTIVITIES

ENSURING THAT OUR
USE OF INFORMATION,
FINANCES & ESTATE
ENABLES GREAT
LEARNING

These cornerstones are underpinned by outstanding governance and highly effective leadership and management across the organisation.

By harnessing all the thoughts, actions and behaviours of the organisation and focusing on achieving excellence in education and training we will “Be Extraordinary”. This requires us to innovate; and to convert our innovations from concept to reality. The outcome of achieving excellence in education and training is the production of highly skilled and productive students for our regional employers; this is paramount and is explicit in our mission.

MINDSET

Our Mindset is how we expect people to behave to achieve our Purpose and ‘Be Extraordinary’.

CLEAR AND
COMPELLING
PURPOSE

HIGH PERFORMING
LEADERSHIP
& TEAMS

EXCEPTIONAL
COMMUNICATION

ENABLED &
LIBERATED
WORKFORCE

LEAN, EFFICIENT
& SUSTAINABLE
SYSTEMS

SHARP FOCUS ON
NUMBERS

CLEAR AND COMPELLING PURPOSE

We need to know where we are heading so that we concentrate our focus, our resources and capabilities on getting there. That vision also needs to be compelling, to motivate us to achieve it. To be compelling it needs to be achievable and realistic. Equally, it needs to take us beyond sustaining the status quo. A clear and compelling vision is something we all need to have.

HIGH PERFORMING LEADERSHIP AND TEAMS

There are lots of examples of organisations that have truly exceptional talent and yet fail to perform to their full potential. Leadership is a way of thinking, behaving and acting; it is a responsibility that falls on us all. We are all capable of leading, it is a choice. High performing leadership and high performing teams are founded upon trust and confidence. It intuitively understands that when one element of the team is unsuccessful, we are all unsuccessful, a sense of shared responsibility.

SHARP FOCUS ON THE NUMBERS

We often do not focus on numbers but use anecdotes to underpin any statements and arguments we make. Top performing organisations really understand their numbers. Those numbers are different for each of us depending upon the area in which we work and the level at which we operate. Take some time to think about your role. Do you know the numbers that pertain to you? If not, do something about it.

ENABLED AND LIBERATED WORKFORCE

Large and complex organisations cannot be run like a small business with decisions being made only by the owner or Managing Director. That sort of approach prevents innovation and creates a paternalistic culture. Equally, organisations that do not have proper boundaries and constraints can lack discipline leading to inappropriate decisions being made, duplication of effort and inefficient use of resources and capabilities. The question is one of balance and clarity.

LEAN, EFFICIENT AND SUSTAINABLE SYSTEMS

Lean and efficient systems ensure that we use our limited resources efficiently. Where we don't have lean and efficient systems we often tolerate wasted effort. Are the systems and processes that you follow efficient? Are the systems that you plug into efficient? We should all be thinking all the time about how we do our work and whether there is a better way.

EXCEPTIONAL COMMUNICATION

We all have a responsibility to translate our vision, mission and values driving behaviour into the language of our people, relating it to their daily work. We need to take this responsibility seriously and consider what forms of communication work best for us and our teams and make time for this activity.

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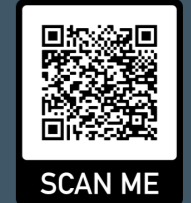
OUR FUTURE BY 2025

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OUR PRIORITIES 2022-2023

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CLEAR & COMPELLING PURPOSE 

HIGH PERFORMING LEADERSHIP & TEAMS 

SHARP FOCUS ON NUMBERS 

ENABLED & LIBERATED WORKFORCE 

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ANNEXES

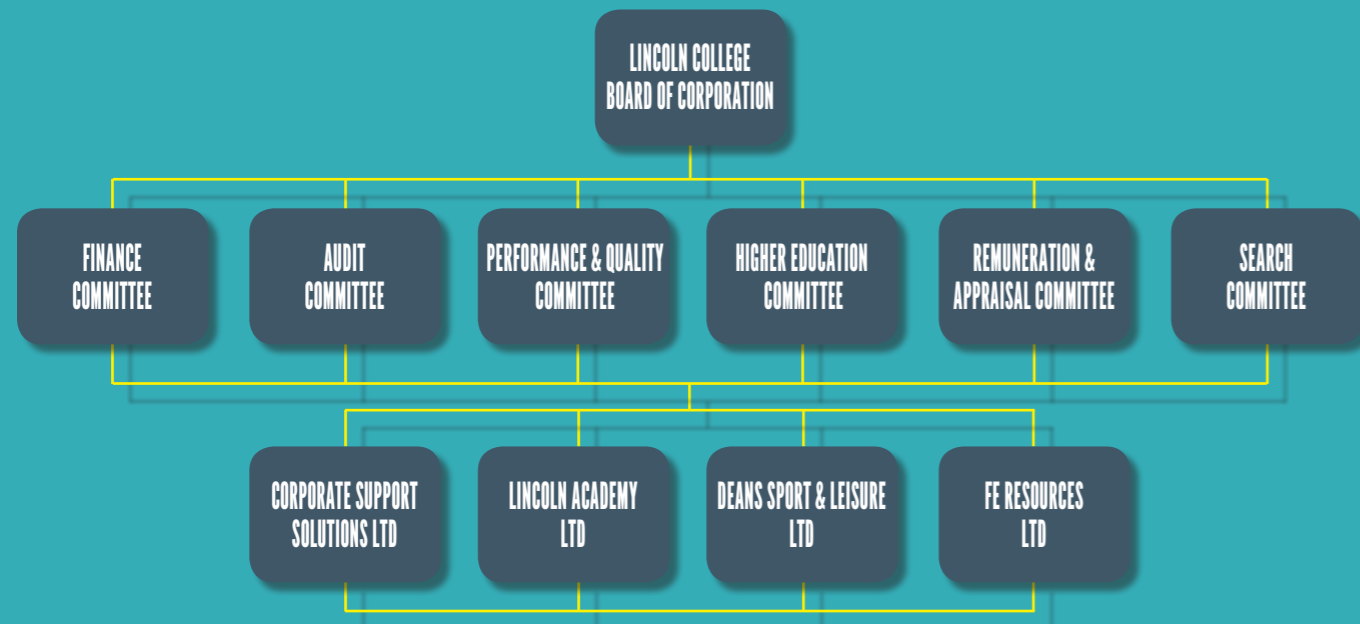
Our Structure

The Lincoln College Group structure is our strategic response to repeated funding cuts for the Further Education sector over many years. It is a structural way of growing in size and creating alternative income streams so that we can continue to deliver the best possible education and training in Lincoln and Newark. Our people will quite naturally identify with their own department first, their organisation second and thereafter any wider organisational structure that they are part of. For example, it is perfectly understandable that someone teaching a particular subject would identify with their courses first, their subject department second and their broader curriculum "school" third. If they are delivering in only one of our Colleges they would likely identify strongly with that College. It is also important that we all have a shared understanding of our whole organisation which is the purpose of this section.

The key characteristics of our Group are that it will:

- Make maximum use of the commercial freedoms provided to Colleges when they were incorporated in 1993
- Be capable of attracting inward investment from non-Government sources
- Be divisionalised into component parts with resources and capabilities deployed across the divisions to meet the needs of employers and students
- Manage our finances to respond to different opportunities and threats
- Be capable of scaling easily and quickly to incorporate new organisations (eg, additional Colleges, private sector delivery companies, etc) without a wholesale change to the overall structure of the Group
- Be able to performance-manage all of its divisions

The governance structure of LCG is as follows:

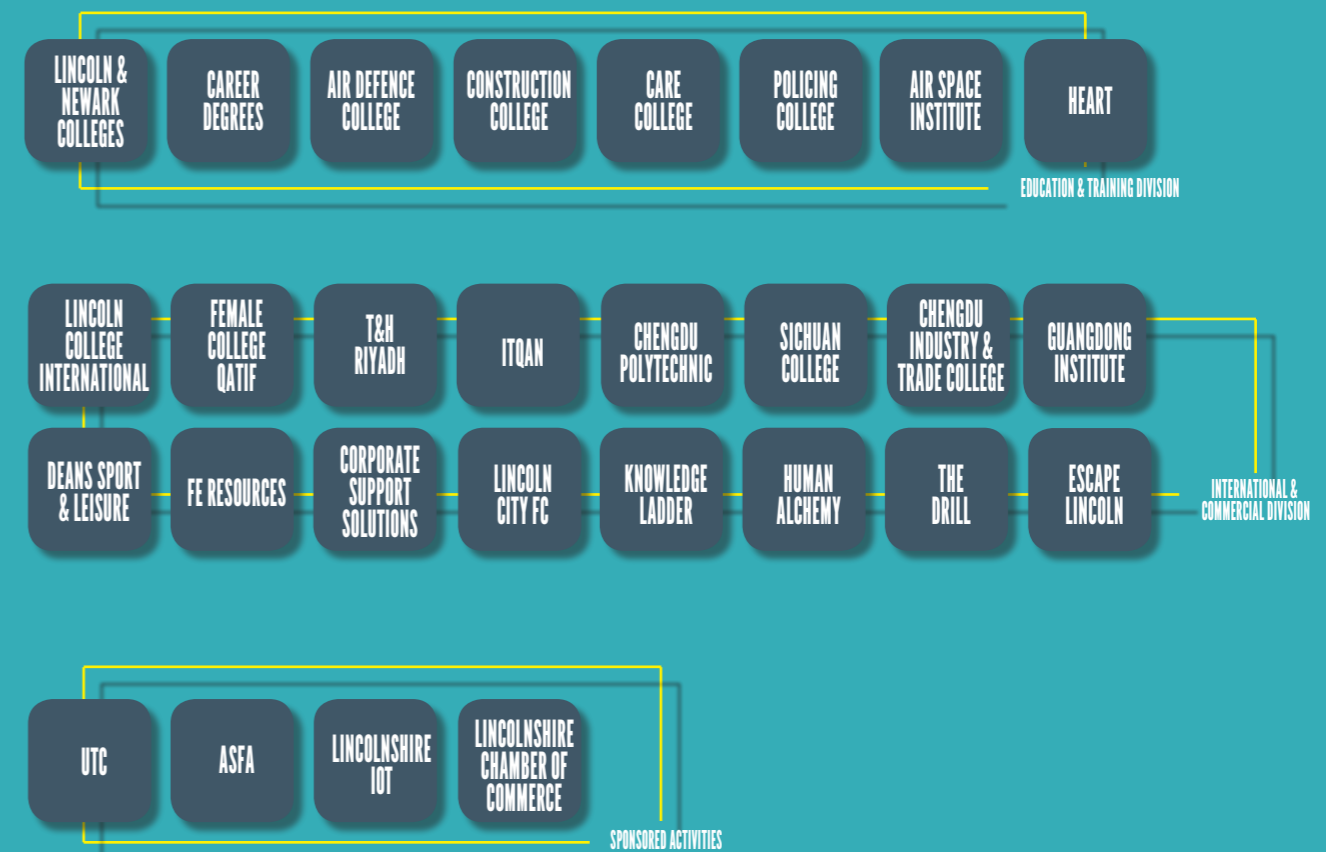


OUR PROVISION AND SERVICES

Staff and students play an important part in our governance structure by filling elected staff and student governor roles on the Board of Corporation and its sub-committees. The Board of Corporation has the ultimate responsibility for ensuring that we operate in line with our Instrument and Articles of Association, our strategy and the Government's funding rules for Further Education Colleges.

Operationally, the Lincoln College Group operates as a matrix structure with two divisions; the Education and Training Division and the International and Commercial Division. The two divisions share services from the support departments.

A summary infographic highlights those divisions below:



CORNERSTONES OF SUCCESS - ANNEX

THE CAPACITY, RECOGNITION AND WELLBEING OF OUR PEOPLE

THE QUALITY & RELEVANCE OF OUR EDUCATION PROVISION

THE CONTRIBUTION FROM OUR UK COMMERCIAL & INTERNATIONAL ACTIVITIES

ENSURING THAT OUR USE OF INFORMATION, FINANCES & ESTATE ENABLES GREAT LEARNING

These cornerstones are underpinned by outstanding governance and highly effective leadership and management across the organisation.

We will be Extraordinary when we focus on these cornerstones, harnessing all of the thoughts, actions and behaviours of the organisation to focus on achieving excellence in education and training. This requires us to innovate and to convert our innovations from concept to reality. The outcome of achieving excellence in education and training is the production of highly skilled and productive people for work for our regional employers; this is paramount and is explicit in our mission.

Each of the cornerstones is explained in more detail in the following pages.

THE CAPACITY, RECOGNITION AND WELLBEING OF OUR PEOPLE

The collective talents and potential of our people is key to achieving our purpose and mission. Our Colleges are populated by talented people who care deeply about improving the lives of others through education and training.

Ensuring that we can attract and retain talent with the right values and guiding behaviours is essential to be able to achieve our purpose and mission. We will support our leaders and managers to ensure that they have the right tools to improve recruitment and retention.

We want to ensure that our people are well-led and motivated by ensuring that our leaders and managers are developed through effective 'Determined to Lead' programmes.

We want the Lincoln College Group to be an Extraordinary place to work and for people to be happy because they are genuinely cared about and supported to perform to the best of their ability.

We want people to feel invested in with targeted and timely professional development opportunities.

We want our people to be healthy, well-rewarded, well-recognised and well-informed.

We want our people to be reflective of the local communities we serve. We want to recognise and celebrate diversity ensuring that the needs and expectations of our people are met.

We will achieve this through seven interconnected themes:



THE QUALITY & RELEVANCE OF OUR EDUCATION PROVISION

Focusing on the Quality of Education and Training – continue on our journey towards an Extraordinary learning experience where students make confident progress through excellent Learning, Assessment and Teaching (LAT), with improved outcomes and destinations. Grow the opportunities for Work Experience, paid work and Industry Placements across the Group.

We are proud to engage with local, regional and national employers to design a curriculum which meets local workforce needs and the priorities of the Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) and the newly formed Local Skills Improvement Plan (LSIP). We will continue to offer students a curriculum that is employer-led and provides them with the knowledge, skills and behaviours that employers value and seek.

We aspire to make Lincoln College an inclusive environment for learning, where all are welcomed and valued. We provide opportunities for all, including the most disadvantaged, creating pathways for progression to chosen careers and future plans.

We will add value, by ensuring that our curriculum is ambitious and designed to give all learners the knowledge and cultural capital they need to succeed in life. We will seek to replicate industry standards and practices to support students to their chosen destinations.

We will continue to develop the skills of teachers through the continued support of ‘dual professionalism’ enhancing both their pedagogical and occupational expertise. LAT practice will be guided by current evidence based practitioner led research and pedagogy theories. Teaching will be designed to help learners to remember in the long term the content they have been taught and to integrate new knowledge into larger concepts.

Teachers will support learners to develop detailed knowledge and skills across the curriculum and as a result achieve well. Learners will gain qualifications that allow them to go on to destinations that meet their interests, aspirations and the intent of the curriculum.



ENSURING THAT OUR USE OF INFORMATION, FINANCES & ESTATE ENABLES GREAT LEARNING

Through strong strategic financial planning and control we will consolidate on several years of good financial results and create even greater financial resilience going forward enabling further investment in our Learning, Assessment and Teaching.

Maintaining a good financial health will enable us to underpin the delivery of the Group Strategy, invest in our people and infrastructure, maintain the confidence of a variety of stakeholders and open up access to inward investment and facilities.

We will target the use of our resources towards activities and innovation that will drive the Group forward and create a sustainable balance between our UK activities and our international and commercial work.

Investment in our estate and learning resources will continue across the life of the strategy and beyond, built on the recent £10m+ of capital investment, funded by a combination of grants and our own reserves.

Lincoln College fundamentally believes in the value of developing data into intelligence, information and knowledge to inform and support decision making leading to extraordinary impact and outcomes.

Our strategy for integrated data and systems is continually applied to enable our data to be consistent, timely and accurate.

Our inclusive and comprehensive approach to data dashboards supports our aim to provide accurate and accessible management information to curriculum, support and management staff.

We strive to be at the leading edge of the intelligent use of data in our sector including developing predictive artificial intelligence machine learning models to enable Extraordinary decision making in support of learner, employer and other stakeholder outcomes.

1. Unify and consolidate data sources into a single version of the truth
2. Achieve data accuracy, consistency and timeliness
3. Promote and embed a data driven culture
4. Understand the FE business model
5. Identify, understand and curate key data sources
6. Develop and distribute data dashboards linked to the academic cycle
7. Understand the FE business model

THE CONTRIBUTION FROM OUR UK COMMERCIAL & INTERNATIONAL ACTIVITIES

We are proud to have a diverse range of UK commercial and international activities which form such an important part of the Lincoln College Group. The Board of Corporation made the strategic decision around 10 years ago to diversify the College's sources of income by growing commercial activities to reduce the reliance on UK Government funding. This was against a backdrop of year-on-year real term declines in funding for the Further Education sector.

The breadth of activities allows the College to reinvest monies to support our wider education and training offer. For example, our commercial revenues directly help the College to fund additional student hours and enrichment activities in all of our employer-led career focused Colleges, such as the Air and Defence College, Policing College and Care College.

To ensure that we can be confident of year-on-year revenues from our commercial ventures there is a strategic drive to diversify the range of contracts in the UK and overseas. This provides greater resilience, with sustainable revenues allowing the College to make medium term investment decisions. In practical terms, this means extending current contracts and winning new ones.

All of our commercial activities align with our education and training ethos. This allows the College to provide students with fantastic opportunities to experience working environments, such as in a restaurant or theatre. It also means we can share learning and cultural links across the globe, for example, students learning together and having the chance to travel overseas. We also help to grow the skills and experience of our staff by offering them chances to work across our different sites.

Our commercial ventures include the following:

- The Drill – a Lincoln City Centre multi-purpose events destination offering music, theatre, community activities, and food and drink
- Human Alchemy – a cutting edge leadership and management consultancy
- Lincoln City Football Club – catering for the first team at their training ground
- Deans Sport and Leisure – a high-quality facility open to the public, staff and students
- Escape Rooms – a range of innovative games to test team building and decision making
- Language training – experienced translators who are helping to train aerospace pilots
- The Knowledge Ladder – a data science business
- Lincoln College International LLC – operating employer focused Colleges in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia since 2014
- China – working in partnership with a number of Colleges to deliver specialised training
- Norway – providing UK based A levels for a network of Norwegian schools



The logo for The Lincoln College Group features a vertical white bar on the left side. To the right of this bar, the text "The Lincoln College Group" is displayed in white. "The" is in a smaller font size, "Lincoln College" is in a larger, bold font size, and "Group" is in a medium font size.

The
Lincoln College
Group