SCOTTISH FUNDING COUNCIL SELF-EVALUATION

2015

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WEST COLLEGE SCOTLAND

Introduction

It is now more than two years since the creation of West College Scotland. In those two years, the College has undergone important merger work, including identifying efficiencies, making better use of resources, systems integration, embedding new structures and harmonising the way we work. Throughout this process, we have sought not just to minimise disruption to our students and customers but to improve our teaching and support services.

The Senior Management Team acknowledges that merger work has, at times, been difficult and has consumed much energy. This was expected and accounted for and we are confident that despite the intensity of work, the student experience continues to be enhanced by the benefits of scale, the development of a cohesive and relevant regional curriculum portfolio and by access to a wider range of facilities and expertise. We are also confident that the College's ambition to be a leader in the West region and in the sector more widely and to be recognised as such is already being realised.

The College has already moved on from merger and is firmly focused on the future, developing West College Scotland (WCS) as a large-scale regional organisation, offering training and vocational education and playing a leadership role across the West of Scotland.

About us

Employing
1,200
People (800 FTES)

Teaching
30,000
Students

Serving
a Regional Population of
1.2million

Based in
3 Main Towns
Greenock, Paisley
and Clydebank

WEST COLLEGE
SCOTLAND

Benefits of Scale

Capabilities, Expertise & Facilities

Teaching and support staff have used the opportunities presented by merger to innovate, share knowledge and spread good practice across campuses. Support and teaching staff are encouraged to work across campuses where staff identify clear educational or service provision benefits in doing so. All curriculum areas have been supportive of encouraging staff to teach classes across campuses. This has been done on an entirely voluntary basis and also assists the exchange of best practice and ideas. Staff 'mobility' is emerging organically and is being driven by staff rather than by a top-down management approach. We are confident that this approach has contributed to the buy-in from staff and the positive attitude of staff to working across the Region. The shared feeling of the Educational Leadership Team is that the College is also benefiting from the import of external sources of expertise, knowledge and best practice, through wider and more enthusiastic participation in national specialist groups. The view of the Assistant Principals is that staff are attending more external groups because the load is spread amongst a larger group of people, who then offer feedback to colleagues.

Cooperation and collaboration between staff – teaching and support -- has been a major priority for the College since merger and feeds into the culture work which the College has also undertaken since merger. On a practical level, the cross-campus working of the Faculty of Care and Life Sciences is illustrative of much that has occurred since merger. The Faculty's three Heads of Sector have met fortnightly (rotating across campuses) with all 19 Curriculum Quality Leaders (CQLs).

Typically, the first part of the meeting will see invited input from guest speakers, support staff managers and administrators. Thereafter, the Heads of Sector work with each of their CQLs on sector-specific-items. The College feels that one clear advantage of this structure is that it facilitates cross-College networking and the exchange of ideas across subject areas and support areas, as well as across campuses. This model is replicated three times a year for formal all-staff Faculty Days, which have facilitated sharing of ideas and material. (See Science at Greenock).

The legacy colleges each had specialist areas available to students. Access to two areas in particular has improved since merger: media students from other campuses have benefited from the TV studio, camera equipment and editing facilities at Finnart St campus in Greenock; and Engineering and Construction students (including senior-phase school pupils from Clydebank) have seen their learning experience enhanced through access to the facilities in the Institute of Construction and Engineering building on the Paisley campus.

Science at Greenock

The way in which the science team at Greenock approached merger and developed from it, provides an excellent example of how it has benefited students and staff. Following formal and informal knowledge exchanges, the 2014-15 Science curriculum at Clydebank was changed so that it mirrored the Greenock model. This meant focusing away from Higher programmes to NC group awards, with an emphasis on vocational and practical skills. The change was challenging for staff. However, cross campus working and the sharing of practice meant the curriculum changed with minimal impact on staff and students. In a similar way, prior to merger, teams in different campuses made different use of Moodle. This academic session, all teams are maximising the use of Moodle to support students.

Laboratory technicians have also spent time in each other's locations, successfully identifying best-practice and adopting it across all campuses. This allows staff access to similar resources and facilities, ensuring they are able to deliver the same learning experiences to our students.

Curriculum Review

The College puts the highest importance on curriculum review processes as the most effective way of developing a coherent regional curriculum which is aligned to the needs of local employers.

The three legacy colleges had all continually adapted their curriculums to meet local needs, focused on employment and progression. Many of WCS's changes are, therefore, built on previous good practice, extended employer links and progression opportunities.

Review processes began before merger and have now developed beyond the sharing of best practice and harmonisation. Reviews of provision are robust, critical processes which use external intelligence, for example Skills Development Scotland's Regional Skills Assessments, to assess the employment needs of the region. The College also wants to use its own resources when it can to help inform curriculum review and is currently studying an internal report commissioned to examine the skills gap in the Scottish IT sector.

The College's Corporate Plan has now been refreshed (see below) and this will be used to inform our annual Curriculum Planning and Review process. As we embark on this process for 2016, the three Assistant Principals and Heads of Sectors have a clear understanding of the full regional picture and the relative strengths and weaknesses of curriculum areas.

As curriculum staff have developed a WCS culture and identity, anxieties about changes and possible threats have receded and openness to changes in provision have increasingly been welcomed. Staff see themselves as facilitators of enhanced learning, understanding that amendments to provision, efficiencies and doing things differently, can better meet employers' demands and employment opportunities for WCS students.

Doing it better as a larger college

We have used our scale to forge a leadership role in the West region. Being the second-largest college in Scotland, with 30,000 students, 1,200 staff and a multi-million pound turnover, has given the College kudos and credibility across the region. A regional footprint and perspective, combined with an elevated level of influence and authority, is a significant benefit of merger.

The College is seeking to exploit this in order to market the institution as a natural leader, playing a pivotal role in the region and as an important driver of policy, especially as it relates to the DYW and STEM agendas. The College's view is that this is something which is already gaining traction among important stakeholders, where we are seen as one of the "go to" organisations across the region.

We are establishing mutually beneficial partnerships with local authorities, schools, Chambers of Commerce and a range of civic organisations.

In September 2015, the College initiated and lead a DYW cross-regional symposium with our five local authorities. The session was attended by Chief Executives, Directors of Education, Head teachers and Council education officers from across the Region. The overarching purpose of the session was to propose and gain commitment to working regionally, across local authority boundaries, on DYW priorities; exploring a regional approach to the development of (i) a STEM strategy, (ii) a Regional School-College curriculum and (iii) Foundation Apprenticeships. In other words, inviting Local authorities to take a Regional perspective and approach.

The College is also the 'host' organisation for the Region's employer-led Invest in Developing the Young Workforce, with the West Region proposal having been formally approved by the National Group. Again, the leadership role played by the College has been critical in what is a complex landscape of stakeholders across secondary and tertiary education, economic development, Chambers of Commerce, skills/sector agencies and employers.

As a larger college, we are using our scale to forge partnerships in a number of estates and regeneration projects, including the Queens Quay Development in Clydebank and the Paisley 2021 City of Culture bid. Other developments include the exploration of shared services models, such as workforce development and secondments with the National Jubilee Hospital in Clydebank.

In May 2014, the College issued an Estates Statement of Strategic Intent in regard to its own estate, much of which is in urgent need of renewal. This outlined a long-term approach to the many challenges and identified three fundamental principles: that the College (i) stays relevant to the needs of our communities; (ii) takes a key role in shaping successful places; and (iii) makes a difference by being leaders. The College is already working actively with the Scottish Futures Trust and the SFC in presenting solutions to the condition of the estate. Moving forward, the College has already committed to working not only with job centres, local authorities and other education providers, for example, but the full range of business, from SME's to those global companies which have a presence in our region.

WITS Symposium

A strategic ambition for the College is to be a leader and innovator in teaching technologies. This area of activity is led by the Technology & Innovation team. In September 2015, assisted by the College's marketing team, they organised the WCS Information Technology Symposium (WITS) for staff. This workshop-based event attracted 250 WCS staff, corporate sponsorship and external speakers from Scotland and England. The event was held at a venue away from our campuses and received hugely positive feedback from staff and guests. Merger allows us to organise such ambitious events and to attract specialist speakers. WCS hopes to build on this success by organising an international symposium in 2016 or 2017.

The Impact on Business Delivery

The College takes the view that merger has had a positive impact on business delivery and hopes that this is underlined elsewhere in this document. We have continued to deliver high level teaching during the merger period and beyond and, ultimately, the outcomes of merger have supported a better student experience, improved educational attainment and helped sustain a culture of collective ambition.

Through its scale, the College has a greater ability to work with partners at a strategic level. Relationships are equal and this helps the College shape, for example, senior-phase pupils' schools provision. In a similar way, we are able to contribute to town centre regeneration and other civic initiatives.

Streamlined structures; savings through contract rationalisations; adopting the "best of" students support services; and using smarter approaches to such matters as procurement all represent a positive impact on business delivery.

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Impact On Students

Student achievement

Full-time student attainment improved in 2013-14 for both FE and HE. The College believes this improvement was directly due to

(i) the introduction of processes whereby staff shared the analysis of Performance indicators; and

(ii) the sharing of practice across curriculum areas prior to and after merger.

Considerable time was invested in staff knowledge exchange through Faculty days, Portfolio Reviews and Curriculum Planning and Review meetings. As well as having an impact on attainment, this also improved the student experience and provided access to additional qualifications, awards and online learning options.

HE attainment saw the greatest improvement (3%) and teaching staff consider that the harmonisation of entry criteria and interview practice for HE courses contributed to this significant improvement. Approximately 300 students progressed from HNC or HND courses to a university degree course.

Improving progression

Students in all campuses benefit in that articulation arrangements with universities have been standardised upwards across the College. In other words, they enjoy the best of the pre-existing articulation arrangements, as well as new arrangements which the College has developed with universities.

In the area of Care and Life Science, the Assistant Principal meets quarterly with her counterpart Deans at Glasgow Caledonian University and the University of the West of Scotland, alongside other Assistant Principals from partner colleges. Such meetings provide opportunities to resolve challenges collectively, to take a regional view and to work on future projects for the benefits of students.

Such arrangements were not possible with three legacy colleges. The post-merger scale of WCS makes such relationships desirable, feasible and manageable. They also indicate that the College is acknowledged as an important strategic partner by the universities and others organisations. Since merger, the College has reached new articulation agreements with Glasgow Caledonian University and Heriot Watt University. This work was undertaken by the Faculty of Creative Industries and has seen students progress to 3rd year of degree courses at both universities.

Within the College, students have much-improved clearly pathways. For example, before merger, HNC students completing their course and wanting to move to HND may have required to apply to another college if their existing college didn't run the HND course. Acceptance would have depended on available space and whether their HNC had a similar unit content. However, prior to merger, all WCS HN provision was standardised to ensure any student in HNC or HND first year had the same opportunities to progress, no matter on which campus they started. Students have responded to the improved progression options and increasingly choose to take up places in other campuses.

Some communities in the region are noted for a lack of labour mobility and the College feels that students moving between campuses and across the region is, for many of them, another useful preparation for the world of work.

Employers Aiding Progression

The College since merger has worked to engage employers so that they provide "real life" work experience for students.

Keppie Design Ltd is a Glasgow-based architect and design business, employing 160 staff. For two terms, the Art & Design students worked closely with Keppie Director David Ross on a "live" project to redesign a working space for the company's city centre headquarters. Site visits, client interviews and working to a demanding brief gave them an immersive experience of a real working environment. HND student Danielle Stewart won the competition and all those involved built up strong portfolios. Some have gone straight on to 2nd year degree courses at Glasgow School of Art and Edinburgh School of Art, others to 3rd year at Glasgow Caledonian and Heriot Watt universities. David Ross of Keppie returns to the College as a guest lecturer.

Improved curriculum

The College is now able to offer a more coherent regional curriculum to prospective students. It is also able to offer them a wider choice of study.

For example, in 2014, WCS brought together 100 motor vehicle students from all campuses to receive Hybrid Motor Vehicle training at the Clydebank Campus. At that time, the Clydebank campus was the only campus with a Hybrid Motor Vehicle and lecturer qualified to deliver this training.

In a bid to enhance the skills set of all current motor vehicle students across the region, WCS secured funding from Scotland's Colleges and the Energy Skills Partnership (ESP). Selected by their lecturers to take part in the course, this multi-campus initiative saw students from Clydebank, Greenock and Paisley come together in mixed groups to share experiences and to learn more about green automotive technology at workshops run at Clydebank. The additional skills gained have helped with employment opportunities and articulation.

This has also been a rewarding experience for lecturing staff, helping them to know each other, share knowledge and develop a single-culture approach.

Likewise, over the past two years, Care staff across all campuses have worked collegiately to prepare and implement new national qualifications in Care at SCQF levels 4, 5 and 6. This was a major piece of work and it is unlikely the legacy colleges would have had the capacity to undertake the tasks involved – the preparation of delivery materials and assessments – as effectively as this larger cohort did. The workload was spread, best practice was exchanged and different assessment strategies were able to be used.

Importantly, the Care teams have also engaged with local employers throughout this process, ensuring that the new qualifications meet their skills requirements.

Employers Improving The Curriculum

In Hairdressing, Beauty and Make-up Artistry, Employer Engagement events are held throughout the year at all campuses. Local industry representatives are invited to join an Advisory Group and to participate in the work-placement programme. They are also invited to speak to course teams and suggest course design, thereby reflecting up-to-the-minute industry needs. In return, companies are offered CPD sessions free of charge, often in partnership with large international companies such as Fake Bake and Dermalogica. This is particularly attractive to small and micro-businesses.

Responding to recent comments from the Sector Skills Council, visiting employers advise students of the importance of adapting quickly to a "house style". This also underlines to students the importance of gaining employability skills.

On work placements, employers have a named member of staff as their point of contact to help match their needs with the ability of the student.

Students and College life

A pre-exit survey undertaken by more than 2,500 students in 2015, indicated a high level of satisfaction with the College:

- **91% were satisfied with their College experience**
- **96% agreed that "staff encourage students to take responsibility for their learning"**

These findings mirror those of the May 2015 report from HMI Inspectors which noted that almost all students have an enjoyable educational experience and that they contribute to "personalising aspects of their learning through discussions with teaching staff and the views of learners feature strongly in shaping and improving programmes".

While 80% of students surveyed said the Students' Association influences change for the better, the College acknowledges that work remains to be done in the training of class representatives to ensure that students' collective views are collated in a way that allows them fully to influence development at College level.

Social events for students tend still to be organised by campus, although there are some College-wide events. Students are active in charity fundraising and sponsorship activities.

Students engaging in the procurement process

Soon after formal merger, staff and students identified widely varying costs associated with purchasing protective clothing and equipment. Each legacy college had different styles and students and staff moved to standardise them to create a WCS look. Together, they also identified a need to negotiate with suppliers to achieve best value for money.

Across subject areas procurement teams were set up, each agreeing what was needed for their area. Student representatives consulted with their peers about colour, style and other requirements. From feedback, the teams drew up a tender and potential suppliers were contacted. Teams were supported by the College's own professional procurement staff.

As a result, students now pursue vocational provision wearing College-branded uniforms.

This activity is a shift from collaboration to integrative working practices, resulting in a cohort of motivated students who are able to influence change.

Impact on Employers

Delivering to meet the needs of employers

The College has worked hard since merger to develop a leadership position within the local region. We believe we are in a unique position as a single-college region: we have 500 employer partners, we engage in four Community Planning Partnerships and work with three other local authorities. We also provide education and vocational training to more than 3,000 senior-phase pupils and work with more than 40 schools across the region.

We believe this gives us a unique perspective on regional employability needs, enabling us to take cognisance of employers' demands and matching them to the provision we then offer to our schools. The College has recognised this area of activity as one of our major priorities in the next five years.

Our employer partners range from SMEs to multi-national companies, from defence contractors to local authorities. However, our analysis is that employers consider the local educational landscape "cluttered". WCS is making the case to them that we can help "unclutter" the landscape by acting as an important conduit between them, local authorities and other agencies.

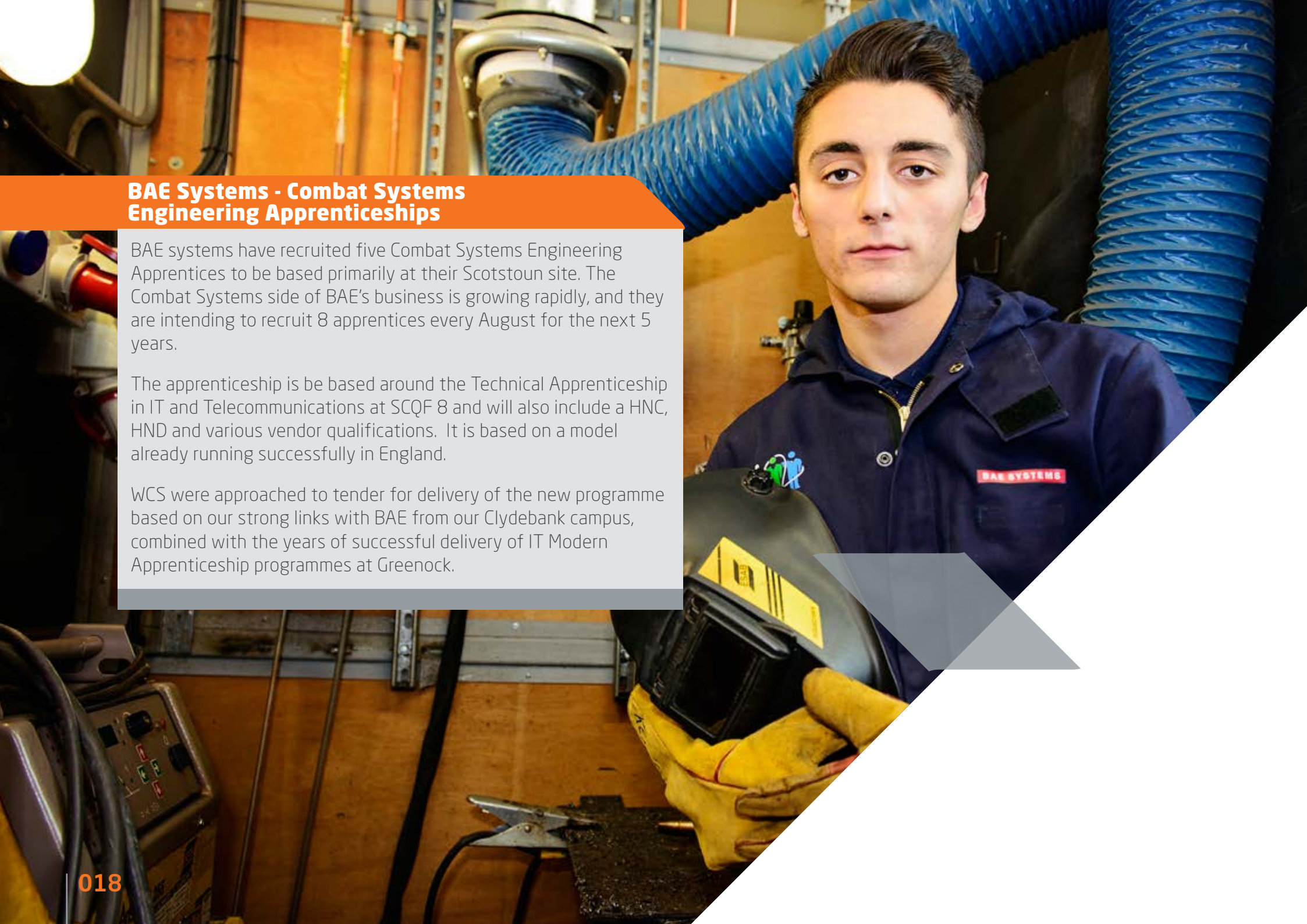
Business & Enterprise

The Business and Enterprise Directorate has been consolidated and has a cross-campus remit with greater capacity to engage with employers. Whereas provision across the three legacy colleges was variable, WCS offers our business partners a named contact within the Directorate. Specialist teams have been put in place, including teams focusing on commercial funding, development funding and international activities.

Thermaflow

The College can also point to real successes in employer engagement, including market development. Thermaflow is a Cumbernauld-based manufacturer of electric boilers who asked the College to train their staff to current legislative standards. A strong business relationship developed as College staff came to understand the company and its products. This meant that as well as providing training, our renewable energy experts helped identify new markets for its products. Managing Director George Curtis said:

> **"West College Scotland's training has helped us develop internal capability in energy assessment and emerging technologies. This has allowed us to expand into new markets and grow our customer base."**



BAE Systems - Combat Systems Engineering Apprenticeships

BAE systems have recruited five Combat Systems Engineering Apprentices to be based primarily at their Scotstoun site. The Combat Systems side of BAE's business is growing rapidly, and they are intending to recruit 8 apprentices every August for the next 5 years.

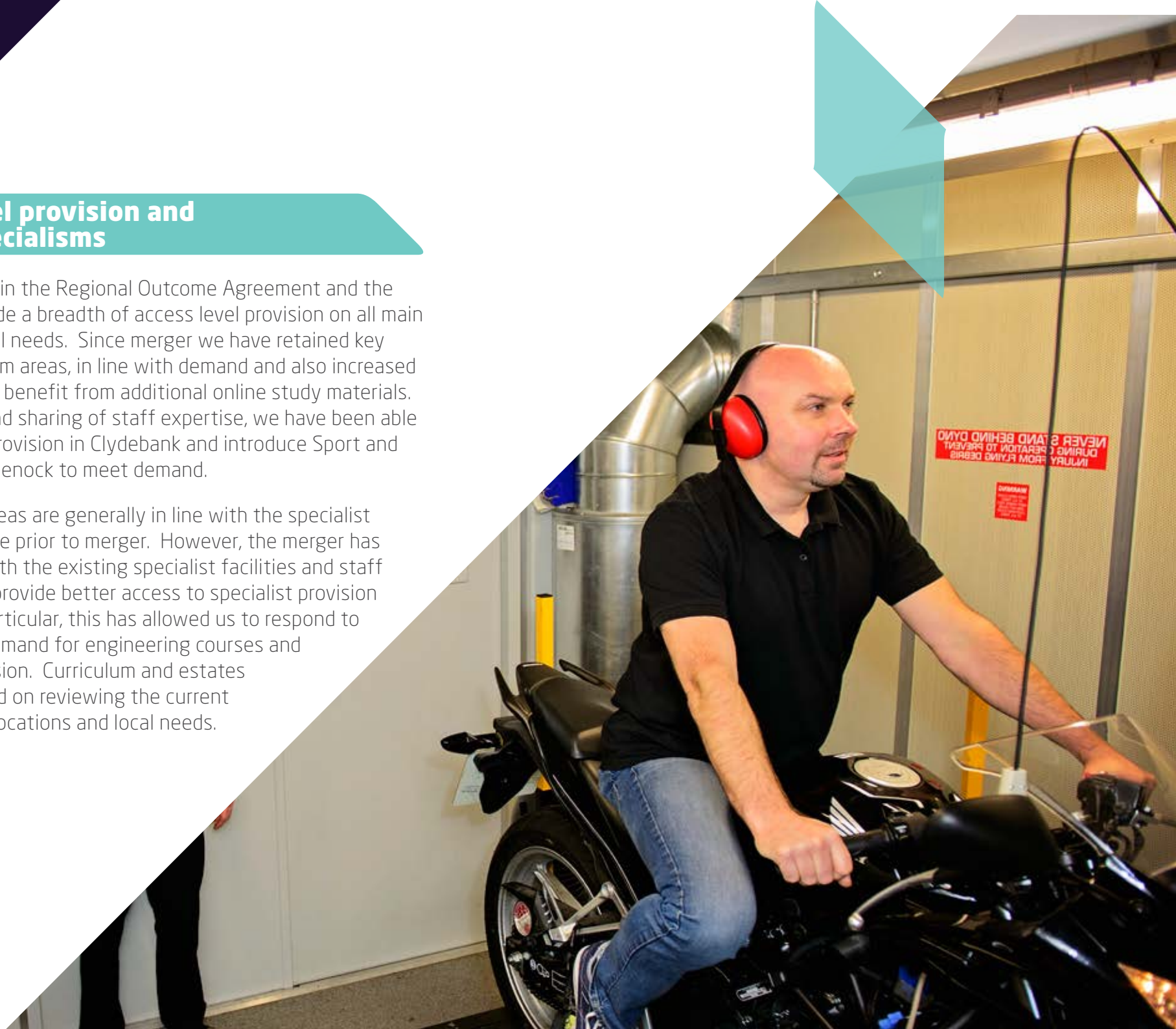
The apprenticeship is be based around the Technical Apprenticeship in IT and Telecommunications at SCQF 8 and will also include a HNC, HND and various vendor qualifications. It is based on a model already running successfully in England.

WCS were approached to tender for delivery of the new programme based on our strong links with BAE from our Clydebank campus, combined with the years of successful delivery of IT Modern Apprenticeship programmes at Greenock.

Core access-level provision and maintaining specialisms

There is a commitment in the Regional Outcome Agreement and the Corporate Plan to provide a breadth of access level provision on all main campuses, to meet local needs. Since merger we have retained key provision in all curriculum areas, in line with demand and also increased options for students to benefit from additional online study materials. Through efficiencies and sharing of staff expertise, we have been able to extend Science FE provision in Clydebank and introduce Sport and Business courses in Greenock to meet demand.

Specialist curriculum areas are generally in line with the specialist facilities already in place prior to merger. However, the merger has enabled us to utilise both the existing specialist facilities and staff expertise available, to provide better access to specialist provision across the region. In particular, this has allowed us to respond to employer and school demand for engineering courses and other commercial provision. Curriculum and estates planning is now focused on reviewing the current facilities in relation to locations and local needs.



Impact on Staff

Supporting staff while maintaining commitment

The College wants to have an engaged, flexible and modern workforce which is proud to work for West College Scotland. The different experiences in the legacy colleges meant some staff arrived at the newly-merged college with, perhaps, less commitment and enthusiasm, while others had no such issues.

What is true is that merger caused anxiety and uncertainty among all staff. They were concerned for their pay, job security, terms and conditions and status. Retaining levels of commitment and enthusiasm among the staff was always going to provide the College with particular challenges.

Aside from supporting staff through the integration and centralisation of services such as IT and payroll, the College also had to put in place mechanisms to support them through the initial harmonisation of terms and conditions, restructuring and, most recently, a complex Job Evaluation process. The College has endeavoured to capture any concerns and to assuage them through the CAP initiative, in particular the encouragement of FAQs on the CAP intranet site, where nearly one-third of questions have related to staffing issues.

The College has taken the view that the most effective way of meeting those challenges is to be as open with staff as we reasonably can be, encouraging them to help build a new culture for the new College and to feel empowered to question and, if need be, challenge senior management.

Internal communications

Another important part of ensuring commitment and enthusiasm from staff is to check that they are receiving important messages in a way that suits them best. In March 2015, the College conducted a review of internal communications based on the findings of an all staff survey. The College has now embarked on some wide-ranging changes in the way we communicate with our staff.

Elsewhere, the College has tried to engage staff in ways which we hope gives them a sense of belonging to West College Scotland. For example, we have recently run competitions among staff to rename the new cross-College catering outlets, as well as the new staff newspaper. Staff have also responded with an impressive level of enthusiasm to calls for contributions to the newspaper.

Industrial relations

Very early on in the merger process, management gave a commitment that there would be no compulsory redundancies. This has been adhered to. At the same time, the College's management also resolved to build constructive relationships with the trade unions, with the trade unions, the EIS, Unison and Unite. Our view is that such relationships have been built and that they have contributed towards the staff trusting the College's senior management.

Joint Consultative and Negotiating Committees continue to meet regularly to discuss important matters and minutes of their meetings are available on the staff intranet.

The last large merger project is a full Job Evaluation (JE) of all non-teaching staff, which has now reached its appeals stage. The College supported staff through the process by, for example, setting up a dedicated JE reference page on the staff intranet where staff could also post questions. The Principal and senior managers also hosted very well attended JE forums at four campuses, and staff were also invited to take an active part in filling in their own JE forms. Any disputes arising have been adjudicated upon by a Steering Group which includes trade union representation.

In many respects, this is illustrative of the approach the College has adopted to all significant merger projects: to communicate, to explain and to support.

Professional development

The College also believes that staff's commitment and enthusiasm is supported by a structured system of continuous professional development. As well as showing a commitment to the staff from the College, it is an important tool in retaining staff. In 2014-15, 900 CPD courses were completed by staff, not including mandatory courses.

Leadership, Governance and Culture

Effective leadership, good governance & corporate planning

The College's executive team and senior management have been supported and encouraged by the Board of Management through the period under review.

For the first year of merger, the Board and its committees met monthly, reflecting the need for close governance arrangements during this critical early period. In April 2014 Michael Yuille stood down as Chair and was replaced by Keith McKellar. More recent changes to the membership of the Board have brought a range of talents and diversity of experience to it.

The College knows that a shared sense of purpose and direction is vital to the success of the merger. Over the past nine months it has undertaken important work to refresh its Corporate Plan 2015-2020. The Board and Senior Management Team have worked closely to develop this plan which includes WCS's high-level Strategic Priorities and Objectives. Co-operation between the Board and senior management took the form of joint workshops, as well as work in committee.

The plan, Collective Ambition, Pride and Passion 2015-20 is now complete and will be launched to all staff this autumn. Teaching and support teams will use it to inform their annual operational planning, allowing individuals (i) to know what their role is in helping the College achieve its objectives; and (ii) collectively, will provide the leadership team with a College-wide operational plan.

Leadership behaviours

The College management has always made it a priority to;

(i) share the strategic objectives of merger; and

(ii) to explain and facilitate specific merger projects.

Much of this work has been done through the CAP initiative (see below).

The senior management has always taken the view that effective leadership requires the trust of the staff and that this is a commodity which had to be earned. They have sought to do this by making themselves as accessible to staff as possible and by adopting the behaviours which staff want to see as characterising the College.

The visibility of the Senior Management Team was a particular challenge, given the scale and geographical spread of the College. The College has endeavoured to mitigate this by, for example, encouraging managers to attend the team meetings of other departments, by encouraging SMT members to attend induction of new staff, when possible, and to accompany the Principal to open-forum events.

In addition, comprehensive notes of the fortnightly Senior Management Team meeting are distributed to all staff and are regularly the subject of questioning via the FAQ site on the intranet.

The leadership team would admit that they have not got everything right but they are persuaded that they do have the trust of staff, something which was commented upon by Education Scotland Inspectors in their report of April 2015.

Culture

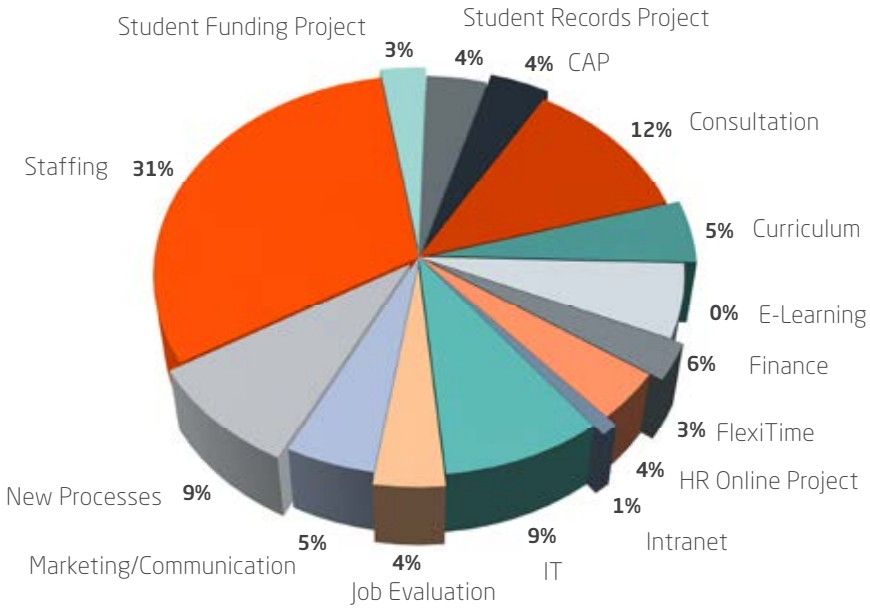
The College was determined that the staff themselves should define the culture of West College Scotland. They told us they wanted it to be "student-focused, well led, supportive, outward-looking, with high standards and trusting."

This underpins what we call The Fourth Way that is, the behaviours and competencies which help create and sustain a new, single WCS culture.

The College has endeavoured to be true to this culture in all its activities and this is now an integral part of its wider Vision. In autumn 2015 the College will embark on the next stage by inviting staff to participate in a survey and focus groups to better understand and tease out exactly what those behaviours are and whether we witness them on a daily basis.

Collective Ambition Programme (CAP): The Fourth Way

To align the culture across campuses, the College in autumn 2013 launched the Collective Ambition Programme (CAP). This was to develop and promote "a two-way feedback mechanism and to positively support College staff to contribute to the present and future direction of West College Scotland".



A CAP team Steering Group was set up to oversee strategy, while a CAP Working Group, comprising managers and staff volunteers initiated and delivered operational aspects of the programme. This included individuals working with relevant departments to organise and develop timetables, internal marketing campaigns and meetings to support major change projects. For example, team members supported and advised HR staff on the introduction of the new HR & Payroll system introduced in autumn 2014.

At the heart of the staff support initiatives was the CAP site on the Staff Intranet. This is where staff are able to ask questions of the Senior Management Team or to find out information about major projects, most recently Job Evaluation. Staff have had nearly 700 questions answered since merger. In addition, the CAP project has arranged for video-casts with the Executive Team, pod casts with the Principal and other members of staff and has arranged several "Ask Audrey" sessions, where the Principal has taken open meetings with staff across campuses.

Issues and challenges for leaders

Engaging, communicating and gaining the trust of an anxious workforce were the main challenges for governance and leadership. The College's effort to research, consult and inform through the Collective Ambition Programme and thereby to build a new College culture – the Fourth Way – illustrates serious intent and positive outcomes in this regard.

The new management team – which was completed in December 2013 – also needed time and space to coalesce. To facilitate this, all senior managers were offered one-to-one mentoring and coaching by a external resource and also attended a two-day residential seminar in early 2014 to align behaviours, objectives and competencies.

The management have also had to lead the staff through harmonisation of pay and conditions, restructuring and, most recently, Job Evaluation. This has been stressful for many members of staff. Management have endeavoured to be as open as possible with staff and to inform them as early as possible on all relevant matters, and to support individuals whose role might have changed as a result of merger.

We have noted elsewhere the challenges attending the maintenance and renewal of our estate. The College estimates, based on a recently-completed conditions survey, that it will require £28m investment over the next 5 years to keep the buildings wind- and watertight and in working condition (£46m over the next 20 years). This estimate does not include costs to improving the internal specification. To meet this challenge and the future expectations of our student body, the College will have to examine new ways of teaching, how we use technology for teaching and learning, the spaces and places we require to satisfy our commercial ambitions and how we work with partners in all of these matters.

However, there is no doubt that the difficult funding environment and unhelpful changes to regulatory environment have also provided challenges. In addition to delivering merger savings, the College's Senior Management Team has also been required to find additional savings in anticipation of future cuts to core funding. There is also a feeling that the need to comply with ONS regulations has been and continues to be onerous and a distraction to our central purpose.

IT Integration and Services

Prior to merger, SFC merger funding and significant College resources were directed towards the procurement and configuration of infrastructure and systems in readiness for merger. Available at vesting were:

- **WCS inter-campus data circuits**
- **WCS Finance system (cloud hosted Symmetry bluQube)**
- **WCS Staff email (on premise Microsoft Exchange on)**
- **WCS Virtual Learning Environment (on premise Moodle)**
- **WCS Staff Intranet (on premise customised Microsoft SharePoint)**
- **WCS consolidated telephony view from existing systems. (Single main contact number \ unified internal numbering and call routing)**

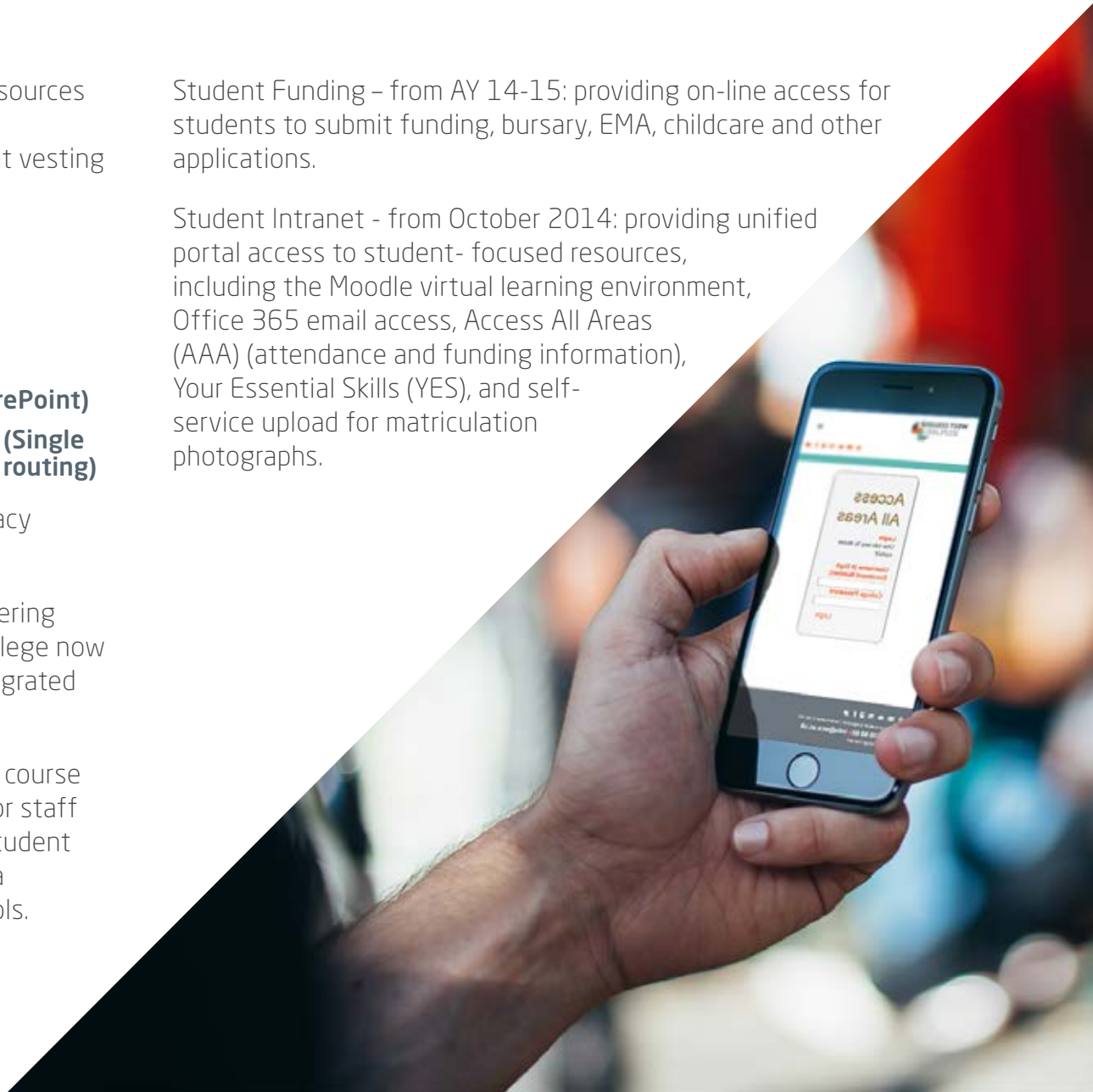
In the first year of merger, the College operated using the legacy systems of the former colleges.

Building on pre-vesting planning, the College focused on delivering efficiencies and improvements for staff and students. The College now has dedicated WCS-wide systems delivering the following integrated on-line capabilities or resources, including:

Student Records - from AY 14-15: providing on-line access to course selection, application, acceptance and enrolment functions. For staff this extends, via the STAR portal, to the on-line provision of student timetable, attendance and register data and recording; and, via Launchpad, functionality-delegated analysis and reporting tools.

Student Funding – from AY 14-15: providing on-line access for students to submit funding, bursary, EMA, childcare and other applications.

Student Intranet - from October 2014: providing unified portal access to student- focused resources, including the Moodle virtual learning environment, Office 365 email access, Access All Areas (AAA) (attendance and funding information), Your Essential Skills (YES), and self-service upload for matriculation photographs.



College Website

The College procured a new website after a highly competitive procurement process. Built, designed and hosted by Frame the site went live in January 2015. It is designed to be device and browser agnostic and provides improved integration with the student records database and supports and online course catalogue that is fully Search Engine Optimised. The College is satisfied that it now has a sector-leading product and is pleased by a significant increase in traffic to the website.

HR & Payroll System

This was a staff-facing project which went live in October 2014. This delivered manager and employee self-service portals for attendance recording (including applying and confirming annual leave), expenses submission and payslip publication.

Active Directory

Active Directory was introduced in July 2014. This is the database which allows staff and students to authenticate their own personal details. This, along with the establishment of a centralised database toolset, facilitated and supported improvements and data integration to the HR & Payroll System, described above.

Supporting Change

The College has undertaken two specific hardware initiatives to support integration and process improvements:

Lecturing staff across all campuses are being provided with laptop computers to enable ready access to on-line resources and support more flexible operation.

Wireless provision across all campuses has configured to align and standardise access at each location, where the provision of the eduroam service allows staff and students to connect with their own devices. Access at Paisley campus has been substantially extended via a complete hardware refresh, undertaken over the 2015 summer recess.

Change has been implemented with minimal planned downtime, whilst the impacts of the small number of unplanned outages or downtime have been managed and minimised.

Efficiencies

The College has achieved efficiencies through a range of approaches, including:

Specific software licences have been consolidated or re-procured to reflect WCS staff and student volumes and requirements.

Inter-campus data links have been used to replace costly legacy off-site provision.

Mobile phone provision has been reviewed and legacy contracts rationalised.

IT Support for Learning and Teaching

IT has also played a key role in supporting the College's ambitions to use technology to enhance how we teach, how our students learn and how we support students and enhance their overall experience. Now that core system delivery is complete, the bulk of 2015-16 funds set aside for Sustainability and Enhancement are being directed towards improving or replacing classroom teaching resource. The College has also recently subscribed to an organisational licence for Adobe Creative Cloud software primarily to support Creative Skills and Computing classes. (DB)

Financial Costs and Savings

Merger has enabled financial savings to be achieved in five main areas:

- **Reduced management and staff costs**
- **Centralised support services**
- **Reduction in general overheads**
- **Improved procurement**
- **Wider use of shared resources**

Costs of Merger

To the end of July 2015 the total cost of merger has been £9.0m, comprising of:

- **£6.0m of Voluntary Severance**
- **£1.5m IT-related integration and merger**
- **£1.5m operational matters (projects, due diligence)**

The College has applied funding of £9.0m to meet these costs with £6.8m being received from the SFC College Transformation Fund.

Savings from Merger

The College has identified £6.6m of recurring merger savings, comprising of:

- **£6.1m as a result of the approved Voluntary Severance (VS) scheme**
- **£0.5m non-staff related costs**

Reduced Management & Staff Costs

101 (FTE) staff left prior to merger in August 2013, with the saving being realised in the first year of merger. A further 35 (FTE) left in the period ending July 2015. Staff cost savings have been recognised in the following areas:

FTE

Management staff	9
Teaching staff	56
Support staff	71
Total	136

Other areas

A number of support services, including Business & Enterprise, Distance Learning and Student Support Funding, have been centralised as a result either of operational requirements or staff reductions. The approach to centralisation of services has been driven by staff who are motivated by improving the service provided and maximising the benefits of co-locating and working as part of a team. This approach has supported our focus on winning the hearts and minds of staff and involving staff in the decision-making process. This has also led to the better use of space as well as improved operating efficiency.

General overheads have reduced to allow annual savings of at least £0.5m (4.7%) in influenceable expenditure. This includes: renegotiated VAT arrangements on utility costs; renegotiation and rationalisation of memberships and subscriptions; reduced marketing budgets; tendering and procurement activity to assist savings against insurance, internal audit, student supplies and student transport.

Other savings being progressed include: copyright licensing agreements, harmonisation of estates maintenance contracts and IT print services.

The College, in the period since merger, has established robust procurement procedures and expects to have a fully qualified procurement team of 3 (FTE) in place by December 2016. The procurement function has contributed to cost savings and has led on a number of significant tender exercises.

The College continues to engage with external partners to review and assess likely opportunities for shared resources and approaches. For example, consideration is being given to a joint tender with Glasgow Colleges for a new finance system , and the College has agreed to a joint approach with the National Jubilee Hospital in Clydebank in providing a placement and training for a Graduate Trainee Accountant.

Measuring costs and savings

The College endeavoured to measure and assess costs, initially, by creating a merger joint Board of Management; by appointing a Project Manager to oversee and drive projects and also by implementing a project-management regime to oversee reporting and decision-making. The College also provided clearly defined initial budget and reporting to the merger Board and SFC and, subsequently, to the new WCS Board and SFC.

Areas where costs were incurred included: voluntary severance; due diligence work, both financial and legal; project management; change and communications consultants; and legal advice.

More difficult to quantify is the level of internal staff resource required to engage with and deliver merger objectives. This is a hidden cost of merger.

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