

James Watt College

Learning Strategy - Learning@JWC

This Strategy highlights key 'Learning' priorities for James Watt College (JWC) over the next three years and identifies a framework for its implementation. It is derived from the college's vision, strategic direction, values and its common purpose as outlined in diagram Fig 1. It will also act as a conduit for discussion and subsequent decisions.

In particular the Learning Strategy is concerned with the fulfilment of the college's commitment to exceed learner and stakeholder expectations, to provide a high quality learning experience, to engage all learners in enhancing their own learning and to be active participants in the life and work of the college as articulated in the 2009 -12 Strategic Plan.

The college places a strong emphasis in working in partnership with employers, the community and voluntary sectors, government and accrediting bodies to contribute to the economic, social and cultural development of the communities of Inverclyde and North Ayrshire promoting equality and diversity throughout all aspects of the organisation.

Our Vision

A place of learning, empowerment and change

Our Common Purpose

It's all about learning

Our Values

- Empower Learners and Staff
- Treat each other with courtesy, dignity and respect
- Promote an environment of inclusiveness, openness and trust
- Demonstrate integrity and fairness in all we do
- Enable learners to be creative, motivated and ambitious
- Offer challenging, supportive, inspirational lifelong learning for learners and staff
- Proactive in meeting the needs of the economy

Our Strategic Aims

Aim 1

Develop a learning experience which exceeds learner and stakeholder expectations and a college ethos that commits to the common purpose 'It's all about learning'

Aim 2

Ensure effective governance, strategic planning, financial and organisational management of the college

Aim 3

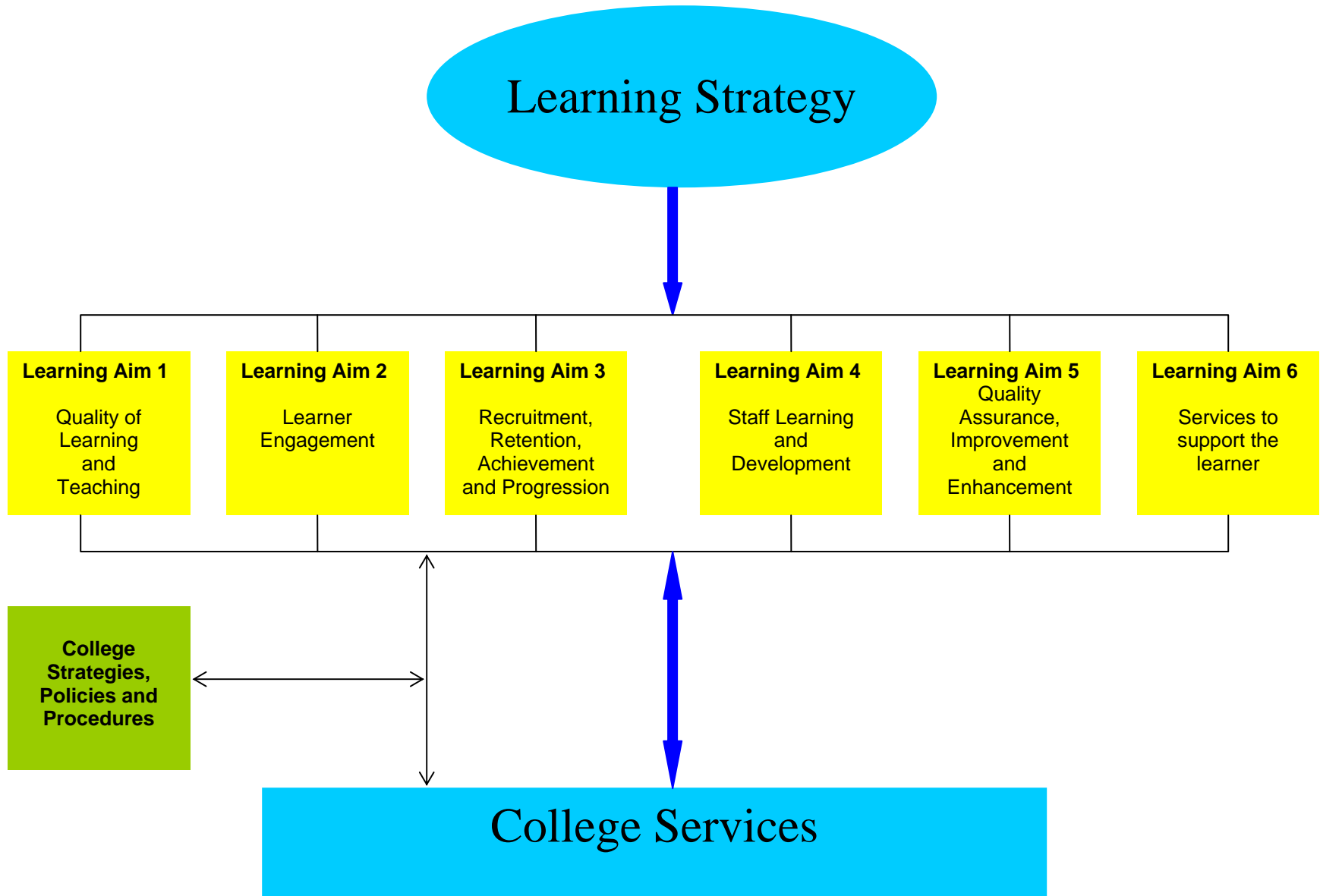
Continuously enhance the quality of the learner experience

Aim 4

Enhance the College reputation and influence locally, nationally and internationally, seeking to be at the heart of the community

Aim 5

Develop and promote a harmonious learning and working environment



1. Introduction

- 1.1 The Learning Strategy is designed to underpin all other College Strategies (Learning & Development, Human Resources, ICT, Marketing, Communications, Estates, Equality & Diversity, and Environmental, Health & Safety).
- 1.2 The Learning Strategy provides a framework for identifying and addressing the needs of learners across all areas of the College. It aims to ensure learners benefit from carefully designed learning that promotes learner-oriented activities and assists them in becoming independent critical lifelong learners.
- 1.3 The Strategy itself will be subject to regular reviews in relation to its currency, emerging priorities and the feedback arising from the evaluation of the strategy's implementation. It will be reviewed annually in May.

2. Scope and Purpose

- 2.1 The Learning Strategy outlines the importance of the achievement of the College's Vision and Strategic plan. It also outlines the need to manage the full range of support services to develop enhancement strategies and interventions to support learners in achieving their goals and aspirations.
- 2.2 In identifying key priorities, the Learning Strategy **is not** in itself the Strategic Plan for James Watt College, but rather provides a framework for further discussions and identification of enhancement across the whole college in all our delivery and support services. This will be achieved through ownership of the strategy across all areas of the college, each individual area will have the flexibility to implement the aims and objectives of the Learning strategy to suit their particular circumstances. This will be evident through the production of Operational plans, college Strategies, policy and procedures and college processes that will **support each** Learning Aim.

3. Definition of Terms

- 3.1 The term 'Learning' in this strategy is used in its broadest sense is *'the act, process, or experience of gaining knowledge or skill.'*
- 3.2 This definition supports not only the more traditional forms of Learning but also E-learning, blended learning, games technologies, electronic libraries and databases, multimedia courseware and computer-mediated communication.

4. Strategic aims of the Learning Strategy

This strategy has six main Learning aims:

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|----------------|--|
| Learning Aim 1 | To enhance the quality of Learning and Teaching and the overall learner experience |
| Learning Aim 2 | To develop a culture of Learner Engagement |

Learning Aim 3	To improve and enhance Recruitment, Retention, Achievement and Progression
Learning Aim 4	To inform Staff Learning and Development priorities
Learning Aim 5	To embed a culture of Quality Assurance, Improvement and Enhancement
Learning Aim 6	To enhance the Services to support the learner

In addition, the Learning Strategy aims to support a planning and development process which is:

- straight forward and clear
- flexible in operation
- clearly linked to organisational priorities and agreed work priorities
- clearly linked to agreed standards of quality
- contextualised, taking account of local circumstances, emerging priorities and resource constraints
- pragmatically planned

5. Strategic Objectives of the Learning Strategy - Learning@JWC

5.1 Learning Aim 1 - Quality of Learning and Teaching:

To enhance the quality of Learning and Teaching and the overall learner experience.

Learning Aim 1- Objectives

To continue to develop James Watt College as an innovative learning organisation it needs to focus and embed approaches to pedagogy, curriculum programme planning and design and innovative approaches to learning and teaching. A key focus, therefore, of the strategy is to promote and foster creativity and innovation across all aspects of college provision. This will be achieved through staff and learner forums, operational planning, portfolio review and self evaluation processes.

The following objectives will support the achievement of Learning Aim 1:

- Enable learners how to learn
- To identify and disseminate the means of promoting learner creativity within the curriculum
- To promote collaborative working within, and between disciplines, between staff and learners, promoting multidisciplinary and interdisciplinary curriculum innovation and programme provision
- To embed Curriculum for Excellence across all aspects of Learning, health and well-being, actively promoting it for all
- To promote and disseminate effective innovation in the pedagogy of teaching and the evaluation of learning and teaching through a voluntary process of peer review

- To encourage staff participation in development opportunities to update and enhance their academic, professional and teaching skills, to update learning and teaching methodologies and encourage reflection on professional practice
- To effectively use ICT in learning & teaching
- To ensure that appropriate recognition and (re)accreditation is maintained for all programmes, with positive outcomes from all external scrutiny and review
- To enhance and extend citizenship and entrepreneurial skills
- To encourage and support curriculum innovations and other initiatives designed to increase the employability of learners, promoting the development of skills and attributes which will strengthen learners' employability, including career management skills
- To encourage curriculum innovation that is designed to increase professionalism and the employability of students and promote civic responsibilities within learners
- To widen and strengthen links with industry and local employers to meet local and regional skills needs
- To increase and enhance work-related and work-based learning opportunities
- To embed the use of Personal Learning Plans for all learners.

5.2 Learning Aim 2 - Learner Engagement

To develop a culture of Learner Engagement

Learning Aim 2 - Objectives

The college is committed to providing opportunities for its learners to develop the skills, knowledge and personal attributes that will enhance their employability on completion of their programme, by placing particular emphasis on integrating curriculum content with industry practice. This will consolidate and stimulate learning and create opportunities for learners to reflect on the relevance of course content and put what they learn into practice. Learners will be encouraged to take ownership by embracing Learner Engagement in its widest sense.

The following objectives will support the achievement of Learning Aim 2

- Engage learners in all areas of college life
- Engage learners in decision-making across the college, build on learner feedback and move towards engagement
- Support, empower and motivate learners to become engaged in their learning
- Develop a culture of learner engagement across all areas of the college
- Facilitate the development of an updated constitution for the Student Association and keep it under regular review
- Provide dedicated staff support to the Student Association
- Work with the elected representatives of the Student Association and class representatives as the elected representatives of the student body
- Keep the system of two part-time Presidents under review to ensure effectiveness of learner engagement
- Provide financial support for the activities of the student association

5.3 Learning Aim 3 - Retention & Achievement

To improve and enhance Recruitment, Retention, Achievement and Progression

Learning Aim 3 - Objectives

A key challenge for the College in the next three years is to design and implement more effective monitoring and intervention to enhance learner recruitment, retention, achievement and progression. This will necessitate a comprehensive, integrated and co-ordinated approach, beginning with pre-entry and continuing through to recruitment, admissions, induction, guidance and progression. Successful implementation of the Strategy will, therefore, seek to maintain James Watt College's position as a sector leader for widening access and in turn reducing levels of social inequality

The following objectives will support the achievement of Learning Aim 3

- Exploring the possibility of developing a more flexible regulatory framework for academic standards, learning, teaching and assessment methods
- Promote outreach activities to raise aspirations of potential applicants and improve the number of applications from traditionally disadvantaged and excluded communities
- To create a seamless transition between different forms of learning and levels of programmes
- To promote the development of learners' core skills including numeracy and literacy to enhance their overall performance, their continuation and aid their progression into labour market employment and/or further study
- To promote and embed equality and diversity in all aspects of the learner experience
- To improve learner attendance
- To facilitate transition and progression between school, college and university, by continuing to promote and develop progression pathways and agreements with collaborative partner institutions
- To increase the use of Virtual Learning Environment (VLE), mobile learning technologies and blended learning approaches to make learning as accessible and learner-centred as possible.

5.4 Learning Aim 4 - Staff Learning and Development

To inform Staff Learning & Development priorities

Learning Aim 4 - Objectives

Learning and Development is an integral part of the College's strategic planning process. It provides a framework for development opportunities designed to improve the knowledge, skills and behaviours of staff. This approach will lead to enhanced personal growth and effectiveness of individuals, teams and the College.

The College is strongly committed to supporting Continuing Professional Development, recognising that the quality of the college provision is realised through the professional skills of its staff.

The following objectives will support the achievement of Learning Aim 4

- An induction programme that introduces new staff into the ethos, policy framework and structure of James Watt College, including the Safeguarding Policy, the Equality and Diversity policy and an introduction to learning, teaching and assessment
- Development opportunities for staff to update and enhance their academic, professional and teaching skills. Staff are given the opportunity to update learning and teaching methodologies and encourage reflective professional practice
- Opportunities are provided to support teaching staff to obtain the PDA: Teaching in FE and/or Teaching Qualifications (FE) to ensure quality of delivery for all Learners
- Opportunities are provided to enhance professional capabilities for those delivering learner support services
- Programmes to develop the ability of staff to develop curriculum that allows learners to demonstrate independence and self reliance in their learning
- Develop staff ability to engage learners in reflective practice of their learning to enable a positive contribution to shaping their own learning and contribute to the curriculum design and delivery processes
- Develop staff awareness of the skills level required by staff of different ways in which learning may be supported through flexible and interactive methods, using the ICT infrastructure effectively where appropriate
- To embed the use of Personal Learning Plans for all learners
- Contribute to, and learn from, networks which develop best practice in learning and teaching in the Sector
- Develop ways of enhancing the skills of staff in networking and teambuilding, both within the James Watt College and with employers, learners and communities
- Promote opportunities to enhance the management skills of staff undertaking positions of leadership and responsibility in James Watt College.

5.5 Learning Aim 5 - Quality improvement, assurance and enhancement

To embed a culture of quality assurance, improvement and enhancement

Learning Aim 5 - Objectives

In order to improve the quality of learner experience, the College acknowledges the need to recruit and retain the highest quality staff. The College also recognises that the good practice in learning and teaching currently demonstrated by many individuals and several subject areas is deserving of wider dissemination. Improved mechanisms to share and further develop good practice locally, nationally and internationally will be sought through learning enhancement strategies.

The following objectives will support the achievement of Learning Aim 5:

- To provide a learner-centred approach to learning, teaching and assessment
- To provide a challenging but supportive learning environment, that supports learners to engage and learn with fellow learners from diverse backgrounds and identities
- To focus on assessment as a means of promoting learner's learning as well as providing evidence of that learning
- To develop ownership of quality assurance, improvement and enhancement at course team level
- To develop an audit process that ensures the highest standard of provision within learning, teaching and assessment
- To implement a process of Self evaluation throughout the college curriculum and service areas
- To review standards and quality assurance mechanisms and quality management procedures to reflect the breadth of learning, teaching and assessment approaches being used
- To develop personal tutoring, studies skills advice and peer mentoring systems that meet the needs of learners
- To identify improved mechanisms to share and further develop good practice locally, nationally and internationally
- To develop and implement new ways of obtaining learners' views on the quality of learning and teaching.

5.6 Learning Aim 6 - Services to support the learner

To enhance the services to support the learner

Learning Aim 6 - Objectives

A supportive learning and teaching environment is crucial to provide learners and staff with the support they need to learn and teach. A welcoming environment promotes empowerment and confidence and it encourages equality and diversity. A comprehensive and integrated approach to the quality of the learner experience is required to achieve high standards. Our most important interaction with learners occurs in the classroom, interaction also importantly occurs within admissions, registration, funding, learner support, accommodation, finance and other key services. It is imperative that the interactions learners have with all staff are productive and courteous, thus personifying James Watt College's commitment to excellence and high quality.

The physical, social and technological environments are also central to the learner experience. Well designed, flexible, technology-enabled learning spaces can help to energise, motivate and inspire learners and staff. This will in turn encourage, facilitate and support collaborative and peer learning. In short, our environment is instrumental in changing practice. These areas will need further consideration, improvement and investment over the next five years, if the Strategy is to be successful.

The following objectives will support the achievement of Learning Aim 6:

- Improve marketing, recruitment and admissions processes to support learners to make informed choices
- Provide information, advice and guidance to anyone considering coming to college and provide a wide range of services to support students during their studies
- To provide advice and assistance on a financial and funding related matters to promote and widen access to programmes of study
- To provide ICT, Learning Centres and a Virtual Learning Environment
- Ensure the highest levels of commitment to health and safety across the organisation
- Introduce a programme of physical improvements, in line with the Estate Strategy providing staff and learners with an enhanced learning environment
- Develop social networking spaces for use by learners and the community
- Provide extended learning support systems to ensure that learners with additional support needs are given advice and support in relation to their specific needs
- provide a wide range of resources designed to optimise the learning experience including libraries, nurseries, refectories and social spaces.

6. Roles and Responsibility for Learning@JWC

Responsibility for Learning@JWC occurs at three levels:

The College

The leadership team and all Managers will have responsibility for ensuring all staff and learners understand their role in the ownership and implementation of Learning@JWC and will:

- (a) Communicate the Learning Strategy to all staff and learners.
- (b) Drive the implementation of the Learning Strategy and its aims and objectives throughout all areas of the college.
- (c) Establish indicators against which the effectiveness of the Learning Strategy will be evaluated and measured.
- (d) Ensure the Learning Strategy is updated to take account of changes in National priorities from Scottish government, Scottish Funding Council to inform the college's Strategic direction.
- (e) Support staff in the context of a changing IT environment, including e learning activity.

Learning Managers and Service Area Managers:

All College managers are required to ensure that staff and learners are provided with the necessary opportunities to take ownership of the learning strategy in accordance with the following:

- (a) Provide leadership for all staff and learners in applying the aims and objectives of the Learning Strategy.
- (b) Ensure the effective integration into the Centre/Service Area Planning Processes and self evaluation.
- (c) Implement the strategy within their areas of responsibility and within the constraints of resources available.
- (d) Establish objectives to aid the evaluation and impact of the Learning Strategy in their area of responsibility.
- (e) Encourage staff to take ownership of their professional development to update their professional skills, learning and teaching methodologies and encourage reflective professional practice.

Individuals

Learners

Learners have a responsibility to meet the requirements of the learning strategy and are expected to:

- (a) Take responsibility for their own learning.
- (b) Access the support and resources provided by the Student Association to enhance their learning experience and participate in the life and work of the college.
- (c) Fully express views on the quality of the learner experience and participate in the evaluation of learning and teaching and wider college evaluations.
- (d) Access the guidance and support services available to enhance their learning experience.
- (e) Develop the skills, knowledge and personal attributes that will enhance their employability with the aid of Personal Learning Plans.
- (f) Reflect on the relevance of course content and put what they have learnt into practice.
- (g) Take responsibility for their attitude and behaviour within the learning environment and treat the college, staff and fellow learners with dignity and respect.
- (h) Follow the “responsibilities of learners” as outlined in their induction programme for their course.
- (i) Adhere to College policies and procedures.
- (j) Attend learning, tutorial and guidance opportunities regularly and on time.

- (k) Submit assignments/assessments and make their lecturer, guidance tutor/Programme Leader aware of any reason why assessments/assignments cannot be completed on time prior to deadline for completion.

Staff

All staff have a responsibility for ensuring they understand their role in the ownership and implementation of the Learning Strategy - Learning@JWC and its aims and objectives and are encouraged to:

- (a) Plan and take ultimate responsibility for their career and professional development.
- (b) Identify their learning needs and ensure they have the required up-to-date skills to provide a quality learning experience.
- (c) Take ownership within lessons and programmes to encourage engagement with learners.
- (d) Ensure adherence to equality & diversity within all learning materials.
- (e) Ensure learner feedback received is acted upon and learners are kept informed of their progress.
- (f) Provide guidance and support and refer learners to appropriate learners services as required.
- (g) Provide a learner-centred approach to learning, teaching and assessment.
- (h) Encourage and support curriculum innovation and other initiatives designed to increase the employability of learners, the development of skills and display attributes which will strengthen learners' employability.
- (i) Widen and strengthen links with industry and local employers to ensure relevance in the design and delivery of programmes.
- (j) Participate in reflective professional practice.
- (k) Adhere to College policies and procedures.
- (l) Attend learning, tutorial and guidance classes in advance of start times.

7. Responsibility

- 7.1 The Vice Principal – Learning & Skills is responsible for the extent, quality, effectiveness and overall management of Learning@JamesWattCollege.

7.2 The Learning Strategy will be co-ordinated, monitored and reviewed by the Assistant Principal – Learning Enhancement and Development and progress reported to the Learning and Teaching Committee of the Board of Management annually.

7.3 Learning Managers and Service Area Managers will be responsible for the implementation of the Learning Strategy within their centres and areas embedding it across all programmes and services.

8. Equality of Opportunity

8.1 All learners will be given the opportunity to participate in programmes that are appropriate to their level

8.2 All learners will be given the opportunity to participate in the life and work of the college and provide feedback on their learning experience.

8.3 Decisions taken on the prioritisation of learner activities, will be taken within the context of the organisational objectives, operational areas and government legislation.

8.4 James Watt College puts equality and diversity at the heart of its values which includes treating each other with courtesy, dignity and respect. The college will also promote an environment which is inclusive, open and built on trust, which enables us to demonstrate integrity and fairness in all that we do.

8.5 The college recognises that we are all complex beings with multiple identities across all of the equality strands of age, gender, race, disability, religion & belief and sexual orientation. In this regard the college commits to making sure that in its employment and education practice, that individuals or groups will not be discriminated against

9. Monitoring and Evaluation of Learning@JWC

The primary responsibility for implementing this Learning Strategy and associated Policy rests with the Assistant Principal – Learning Enhancement & Development.

The college will monitor and evaluate the implementation of the Learning Strategy through the following:

- Systematic feedback and enhancement through the college self evaluation process
- Portfolio review process
- Key performance Indicators
- Learner on-course evaluation
- Learner engagement monitoring and evaluation
- Quality and Standards sub committee
- Validation and Approval sub committee
- Learning & Teaching Committee
- Equality Monitoring
- College Enhancement Forum

The Learning Strategy will be communicated to all staff and learners throughout the college with an ongoing communications campaign and will be posted on the staff intranet.