

# SKILLS FOR A SUSTAINABLE FUTURE

Strategic Plan 2022-2027



SKILLS | KNOWLEDGE | ATTITUDES





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# OUR JOURNEY SO FAR



↓ 1882

Bedford Training College for Teachers was established at the Cauldwell Street campus



↓ 1903

Margaret Stansfeld OBE founded and became Principal of Bedford Physical Training College

Image courtesy of The Bedford Physical Education Old Students' Association (BPEOSA)

↓ 1959

The College at Cauldwell Street was renamed Mander College of Further Education

↓ 1976

Bedford College of Higher Education was created through a merger between Bedford College of Education, Bedford Physical Training College and Mander College

↑ 2012

The Bedford Sixth Form opened providing specialist A-Level education in Bedford town centre

↑ 2009

Bedford College was rated Outstanding by Ofsted and Shuttleworth College became part of Bedford College



↑ 2000

The Bedford Learning Centre opened in Bedford town centre

↑ 1992

Bedford College achieved independent status from local authorities following the Further and Higher Education Act 1992

↓ 2017

Bedford College and Tresham College merged to create The Bedford College Group

↓ 2018

The Bedford College Group was granted membership of the Chartered Institution for Further Education under its Royal Charter and Kettering Learning Centre opened in the town centre

↓ 2020

The Bedford College Group was awarded FE College of the Year 2020







## THE NEXT STEP ON OUR EXCITING JOURNEY

This is the first strategic plan since we became The Bedford College Group, following the merger of Bedford College and Tresham College in 2017. We now have nearly 15,000 learners studying with us. Our strength as the largest further education (FE) college in the region along with the volume and pace of change within our sector, provides new opportunities which we want to develop, in addition to greater risks, which we will mitigate.

Our new strategic plan maintains our previous focus on building and maintaining financial strength and developing consistent high-quality education, but is even more ambitious. Our aims include being an educational leader and a civic leader too, making a vital contribution to a net zero economy and the levelling up and Covid-recovery agenda. We will focus more sharply on the quality of education we provide and further develop the curriculum to help people in our communities flourish.

*In essence our new strategic plan looks to establish The Bedford College Group unarguably as the best and most authoritative provider of post-16 education in the region.*



**Ian Pryce CBE**  
Principal & Chief Executive,  
The Bedford College Group



# THE BEDFORD COLLEGE GROUP TODAY

## CAMPUSES ACROSS THE REGION

**BC Bedford College**  
Cauldwell Street, Bedford, Bedfordshire MK42 9AH

**Bedford Learning Centre**  
88 High Street, Bedford, Bedfordshire MK40 1NN

**Corby Learning Centre**  
40 George Street, Corby, Northamptonshire NN17 1QD

**Kettering Learning Centre**  
9-10 Newland Street, Kettering,  
Northamptonshire NN16 8JH

**NC4M National College for Motorsport**  
Unit 2285, Silverstone Technology Park, Towcester,  
Northamptonshire NN12 8GX

**SC Shuttleworth College**  
Old Warden Park, Biggleswade, Bedfordshire SG18 9DX

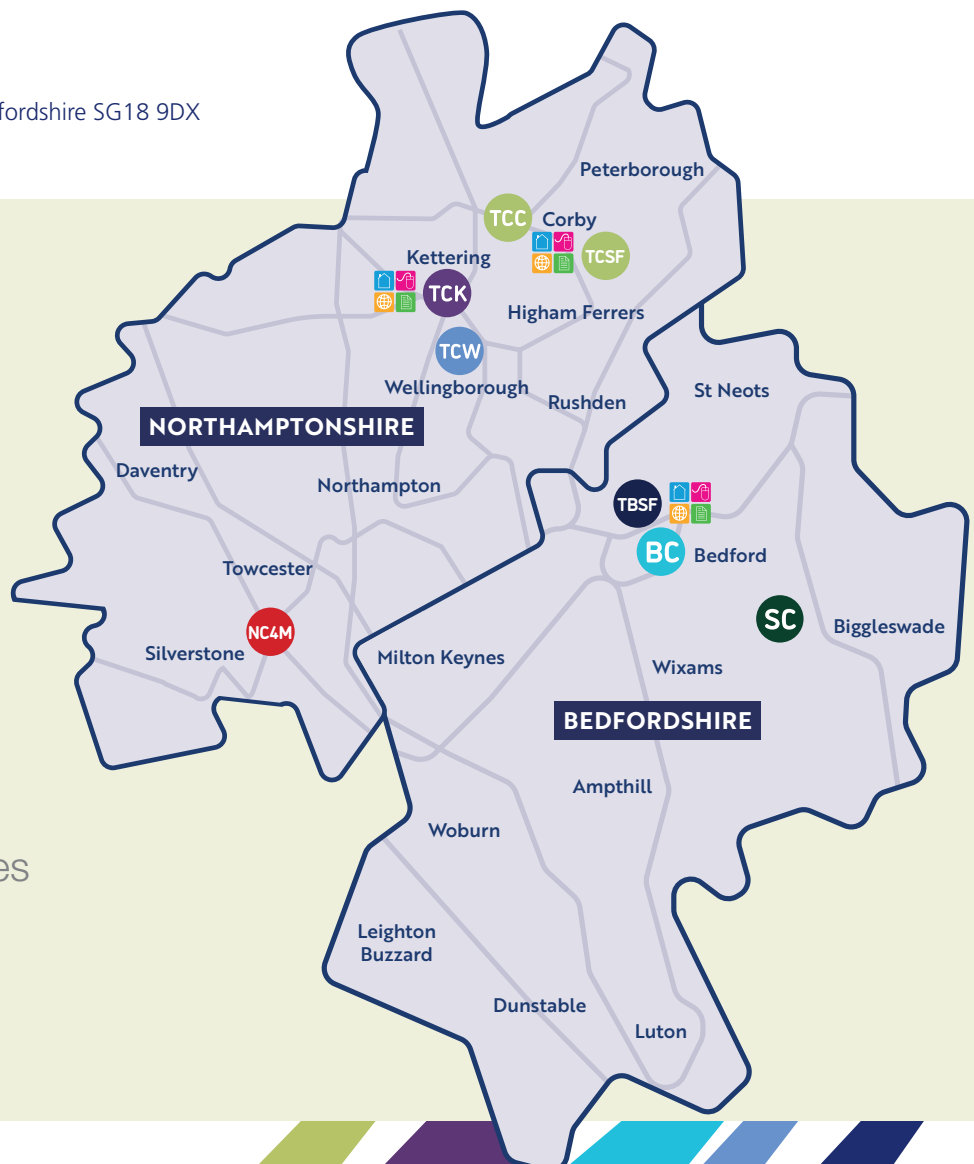
**TBSF The Bedford Sixth Form**  
Bromham Road, Bedford, Bedfordshire MK40 2BS

**TCSF The Corby Sixth Form**  
Elizabeth Street, Corby, Northamptonshire, NN17 1FN

**TCC Tresham College, Corby Campus**  
Oakley Road, Corby, Northamptonshire NN17 1NE

**TCK Tresham College, Kettering Campus**  
Windmill Avenue, Kettering, Northamptonshire NN15 6ER

**TCW Tresham College, Wellingborough Campus**  
Church Street, Wellingborough, Northamptonshire NN8 4PD







# OUR PURPOSE, VISION AND VALUES

## OUR PURPOSE

To help individuals, communities and society flourish through education by raising aspirations and reducing inequality to create a sustainable future.

## OUR VISION

To be the best and most authoritative post-16 educator in the south east midlands.

## OUR VALUES

- **Student centred:**  
At our heart is always doing what is best for our students. We consider students in all of our decision making to create positive outcomes and memorable experiences for every student.
- **Educational excellence:**  
We promote educational excellence by delivering programmes that challenge our students to achieve their ambitions.
- **Teamwork:**  
We are one team who by working together can achieve great things, respecting the opinion and valuing the contribution each of us makes.
- **Continuous improvement:**  
We challenge ourselves to always do better by trying new things, sharing knowledge, reflecting on practice and learning from others.
- **Caring:**  
We care about the wellbeing of our staff, our students, our community and wider society, creating an environment built on trust where we listen, engage with and support each other.
- **Inclusive:**  
We celebrate differences and diversity, recognising that we can learn from each other.

# OUR STRATEGY

## STRATEGIC THEMES

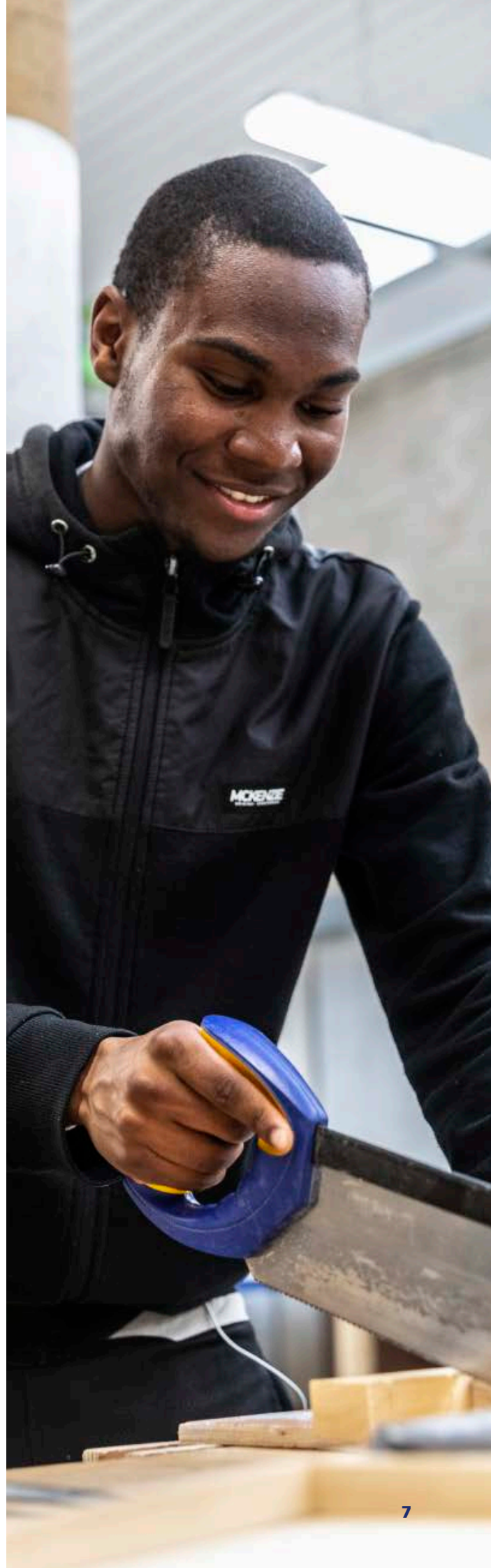
We have three themes that underpin our five year strategic plan:

- 1 Educational and community leadership**
- 2 Educational sustainability**
- 3 Financial sustainability**

Educational and financial sustainability are fundamental if we are to serve our communities for the long-term. If the government is serious about levelling up then our goal of educational leadership will need to embrace community leadership, recognising the interplay between education, other public services, the need to help regenerate economies post-Covid, and the need to move towards a net zero economy.

## OUR STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES

From our three themes we have determined eight key strategic objectives for the next five years which are set out on the following pages.





# OBJECTIVE 1

*To be recognised as a leader in further education and a major source of civic leadership within our communities*

## SOME OF THE WAYS WE WILL ACHIEVE THIS INCLUDE:

- Responding positively to any opportunity to merge with colleges in the region where there is a benefit to the Group
- Continuing to increase our influence on the DfE, education agencies, key sector bodies and employer groups, and use our Senior Management Team to develop a structured approach to that influence
- Significantly growing provision at our new Wellingborough campus so that it reflects the size of population served
- Developing town centre academic provision in Corby in line with the Corby Town Bid
- Improving the connection between our Corby campus and the town centre by continuing to make available our town centre arts, sports and other facilities to the public via our subsidiary BCS Ltd and becoming part of town centre arts and cultural initiatives
- Considering whether we could bring our Bedford town centre operation into the heart of the town centre and expand that operation
- Ensuring our senior leaders are involved in wider community partnerships at a strategic level
- Developing support for our students to become active citizens and community leaders including a greater focus on the student voice and volunteering
- Developing ways of tracking former students for much longer to support civic leadership in its broadest sense and enabling us to ensure our programmes truly deliver good destinations and long-term successes
- Building inclusive boards across the Group's governance structure to enhance decision-making to make best use of the talent we attract
- Focusing the Corporation agenda on educational excellence, curriculum development, inclusion and teaching and learning to reflect the new values and the key focus on the quality of education
- Ensuring the skills needs of all communities we work within are met so that there is accessible, fair and impartial opportunities for all
- Ensuring we are engaged in a welcoming and thriving community which benefits from its diversity
- Considering new support services for employers aimed at helping them grow their businesses including offering specialist accommodation for their staff development or corporate activities
- Using our subsidiary company BCS Ltd to provide non-educational services to our community, especially the use of our assets and sports facilities.

## OUR TARGETS INCLUDE:

- Recognition of the Group as a leader in further education and a major source of civic leadership with its key stakeholders exceeds 80% among all stakeholder groups.





# OBJECTIVE 2

*To achieve consistent standards of educational excellence by making quality of education our top priority*

## SOME OF THE WAYS WE WILL ACHIEVE THIS INCLUDE:

- Developing an educational philosophy that puts student voice at the heart of our provision and binds together our colleges to create 'The Bedford College Way'
- Focusing all programmes on preparing students for their next and future steps, specifically developing the breadth and depth of students' knowledge, skills and attributes, so that the curriculum is a series of experiences in which students can grow, rather than a collection of courses and elements they either pass or fail
- Prioritising the recruitment of teaching staff so we have staffing levels that permit the lengthening of programmes of study to raise skills levels
- Developing exciting enrichment, citizenship, sustainability and community leadership programmes for our younger students
- Ensuring all curriculum areas are engaged in skills competitions and as many students as possible take part
- Improving participation by all characteristics and ensuring there is equity in experience and achievement
- Investing significantly in technologies that improve student learning, student tracking, student data, student achievement, and the ability of students and staff to work from home as well as at college
- Using research to ensure staff develop their own practice and support more staff development
- Developing further our partnership with the 3,000+ employers already engaged with the Group to enhance the student experience
- Staying close to the Department for Education (DfE) to get early information on likely policy change
- Maintaining a comprehensive full-time offer at Levels 2 and 3 across all subject areas and seeking to make campuses like Corby, Kettering and Wellingborough more stand-alone in terms of curriculum offer
- Maintaining a strong higher education and apprenticeship offer across our patch in areas where employers and the community show a clear need, including up to Level 6
- Maintaining an appropriate and proportionate offer to high needs students and those studying at Level 1
- Maintaining a strong focus on student progression
- Exploring whether we can improve our overall offer to the community by allowing other high-quality training organisations to use our platforms
- Continuing to standardise programmes and courses across our campuses so we are using the same awarding bodies, materials, schemes of work, even timetables
- Continuing with efforts to reduce workload and improve staff wellbeing as a key element of improving the quality of education
- Building on our work with staff diversity ambassadors to ensure our curriculum and quality of education is truly inclusive and benefits every part of our community.

## OUR TARGETS INCLUDE:

- Student and staff likelihood to recommend exceeds 90%
- At least 65% of students studying at Level 3 and above
- Student and apprenticeship achievement rates in the top 10% nationally
- Student achievement of high grades above national average
- At least 93% of full-time students leave the Group with a positive destination
- Self-assessed overall provision graded Outstanding
- At least 80% of staff agree that TBCG cares about staff wellbeing.

# OBJECTIVE 3

*To expand higher education, T Levels and our academic programmes*

## SOME OF THE WAYS WE WILL ACHIEVE THIS INCLUDE:

- Creating The Corby Sixth Form College as a new specialist A Level and Level 3 entity for North Northamptonshire
- Developing a wide range of T Level provision at our key campuses and investing strongly in the new curriculum
- Leveraging the move to new higher technical qualifications and our success in gaining funding to develop them with partners such as Pearson
- Developing a University Centre brand as a vehicle to stimulate higher education demand internally and externally
- Raising aspirations in our communities and our students to progress on to higher level qualifications, ensuring fair access to all regardless of differences
- Recognising changes in the way people wish to learn at higher levels and developing technologies to enable far more blended approaches to learning
- Partnering with more specialist universities where this improves the student experience
- Developing new programmes in areas where demand is likely to exist in our patch in the future e.g. future energy and future transport
- Maintaining a strong higher education and apprenticeship offer across our patch in areas where employers and the community show a clear need including up to Level 6 (degree and degree apprenticeships)
- Partnering with high quality industry specialists to provide excellent industry placements and work experience.

## OUR TARGETS INCLUDE:

- At least 1,000 higher education students
- Number of students at The Corby Sixth Form exceeds 500
- At least 500 students studying T Levels
- At least 40% of Level 2 full-time students progress to Level 3
- At least 5% of Level 3 full-time students progress to HE.





# OBJECTIVE 4

*To maintain outstanding financial strength and high capital investment*

## SOME OF THE WAYS WE WILL ACHIEVE THIS INCLUDE:

- Taking a more disciplined approach to projects and investments so we properly resource and assess each one, rather than simply adding to existing workloads
- Ensuring investment is applied in an inclusive approach, undertaking Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) impact assessments for significant decisions and processes
- Pursuing merger opportunities with local colleges where this would not put the Group at serious risk
- Continuing to invest in staff to identify and undertake capital and sustainability bids
- Creating a charity to support efforts to fundraise as a means of financing some projects
- Leveraging the strengths of BCS Ltd and what we are learning about working from home
- Maintaining our current very high levels of capital investment but not moving to deficits or extra borrowing that reduces our financial status to below outstanding
- Developing our Silverstone campus through partnership work with the University of Northampton
- Switching quickly and significantly the focus of investment from major refurbishments to smaller-scale refurbishments and investment in the student experience in every curriculum area
- Maintaining our strong financial model
- Adjusting our staffing models to be sustainable in the medium-term climate.



## OUR TARGETS INCLUDE:

- Income at least £80 million
- Surplus at least £0.5 million
- Minimum annual capital net investment at least £5 million
- Cash reserves at least two months of the Group's annual expenditure
- Staff costs as a percentage of income do not exceed 63%
- Student bursaries at least £2 million annually.

# OBJECTIVE 5

*To provide a better, more comprehensive service to employers and respond to changes in the way people work and learn*

## SOME OF THE WAYS WE WILL ACHIEVE THIS INCLUDE:

- Offering a broader range of programmes to employers rather than assuming apprenticeships are the key products they want
- Focusing on significantly improving the quality of our apprenticeship provision and the service to existing employers, rather than chasing growth in apprenticeship numbers
- Driving collaboration and partnership working with our employers to improve student outcomes
- Considering new support services to employers and especially how we can use technology to support the apprentice at work to reflect actual working practices
- Reconfiguring our employer-facing teams to deliver a more comprehensive service as envisaged in our employer engagement strategy
- Continuing to develop our partnerships with employer bodies and key employers locally as part of our community engagement work
- Using an account management approach to forge strong, mutual beneficial relationships with key employers across the region
- Working with our partners and employers to promote inclusive leadership and ensure equity of access.

## OUR TARGETS INCLUDE:

- Employer likelihood to recommend exceeds 85%
- Key employer retention rates at least 80%.





# OBJECTIVE 6

*To invest in technologies that underpin the transformation required to achieve objectives 2-5*

## SOME OF THE WAYS WE WILL ACHIEVE THIS INCLUDE:

- Appointing an Executive Director of Digital Transformation to expand our capacity and make the right investments
- Developing an innovation culture throughout the Group with the resources to properly implement agreed projects to inform strategic decision making
- Investing further in artificial intelligence in targeted areas to accelerate and make more effective our teaching and learning
- Using technology to understand students better and improve the student experience
- Achieving appropriate certification to provide the confidence to deliver a safe and robust digital infrastructure for our students and staff
- Investing in technology in an innovative way to improve productivity, collaboration, workplace practices and processes, and the sharing of information
- Investing properly in research and information to inform strategic decision making
- Exploring a more balanced approach to working from home including more flexible employment arrangements that generate better wellbeing but also reduce the Group's costs
- Reviewing professional services staff and determining priorities should we find it difficult to recruit the volume of staff we need
- Developing and bidding for funding for technologies that help reduce our carbon emissions.

## OUR TARGETS INCLUDE:

- Minimum investment in IT systems, equipment and people £1m each year
- At least 80% of staff agree that the innovative use of technology has helped to improve workplace practices and the student experience.



# OBJECTIVE 7



*To seek to extend our market leadership, size and scale in the areas we serve*

## SOME OF THE WAYS WE WILL ACHIEVE THIS INCLUDE:

- Increasing our influence with government and relevant bodies
- Ensuring our investment in Wellingborough generates the growth we expect
- Completing the major investments in college buildings (Bedford Tower Block, The Corby Sixth Form and The Bedford Sixth Form expansion)
- Expanding T Levels, academic provision and higher education
- Investing in our Shuttleworth Farm and Silverstone campuses
- Revamping our innovative Learning Centre model and looking to expand the number of centres we have in the community
- Developing our online services in terms of courses, materials, communication with the community and alumni
- Exploring the use of alternative sources of funding to enable expansion as required, if we are constrained in other ways
- Using our market leadership to promote diversity in the community, embracing our uniqueness whilst respecting the differences individuals have
- Developing supported distance learning provision.

## OUR TARGETS INCLUDE:

- Maintain largest provider position/market share in SEMLEP
- FE 16-18 students reach at least 9,000
- Students at Wellingborough Campus reach at least 1,000
- Number of adult students reach at least 8,000
- Apprentices reach at least 2,000
- Number of higher education students reach at least 1,000.





# OBJECTIVE 8

*To make strong progress towards becoming a net zero organisation and a leader in sustainability practices*

## SOME OF THE WAYS WE WILL ACHIEVE THIS INCLUDE:

- Establishing a committee to lead on sustainability and climate action, setting stretching targets that reflect our ambition to become net zero
- Embedding vocationally relevant teaching of climate change and sustainability across our full-time, part-time, apprenticeship and higher education courses
- Developing and delivering a suite of T Levels, apprenticeships and adult courses to support the government's green skills agenda and to meet national and regional needs
- Identifying and accessing available funding to support the design and delivery of new provision for green skills and careers, and to make our estate as energy efficient as possible
- Rationalising our estate to concentrate activities across eight major campuses, coming out of smaller accommodation in Kempston and Corby
- Ensuring new buildings are net zero in operation and implementing an energy efficiency and carbon reduction programme for existing buildings which incorporates sustainable building practices and low carbon technologies
- Reducing energy usage and water consumption through efficient use and management and the adoption of renewable energies
- Changing our purchasing practices so that we focus more on energy efficient and sustainable goods and services, regional sources and seasonal produce
- Adopting a waste management policy which focuses first on waste reduction (particularly food, paper and card) and then reuse and recycling approaches
- Providing viable and accessible sustainable travel options for students and staff to reduce carbon emissions, including replacing existing Group vehicles to the electrical equivalent and providing EV charging points
- Providing carbon literacy training to our students and staff to improve their personal understanding of climate change and sustainability to encourage sustainable practices in all aspects of their lives
- Identifying and actively participating in local, regional and national networking group to develop and take forward partnership opportunities to meet green skills needs.



## OUR TARGETS INCLUDE:

- At least 25% of estate net zero
- Carbon emissions from energy use, water consumption, staff and student travel and purchasing decrease by at least 25%
- At least 80% of students and staff agree that they have adopted new sustainable practices as a result of climate education
- At least 25% reduction in waste produced
- At least 80% of stakeholders agree that TGCG is a leader in sustainability practices
- TBCG is ranked first in SEMLEP for the number of students going into green jobs and developing green skills.



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