
Greater Brighton Metropolitan College
Strategic plan 2017–2022
This strategic plan was written in the spring and summer of 2017 and reflects the conditions that the Greater Brighton Metropolitan College faced at that time. It was developed with some understanding of the challenges and opportunities that may occur between now and 2022, but I am acutely aware that we can never fully predict or anticipate all the issues and possibilities that might transpire over the next five years. In June 2017 the world appears less certain and more ambiguous — politically, economically and socially — than many would have predicted even a year ago.

This plan therefore, represents a strategic framework through which the MET can signal its intent, articulate its priorities and paint a picture of what we want our College to look like in 2022. One of the few things we know for certain is that things will change and that staff from across the College — teachers and lecturers, support staff, managers and governors — will need to respond to those changes and, at times, correct our course towards achieving the goals and ambitions we set for our students.

At the same time as developing this plan we have written a companion document that describes the measures through which we will monitor our progress and evaluate our performance. These long-term success measures will provide our staff, our managers and our governors with a set of indicators to help assess how well we are doing in pursuit of our ambitions. These will be supplemented by short-term performance indicators in the form of annual College targets.

During 2017/18 we will develop a series of enabling or supporting strategies covering people, buildings, digital, marketing & student recruitment and curriculum development. These documents will set out much of the detail that underpins our priorities.

Nick Juba
Chief Executive Officer
Across all sectors of our economy young people are changing their jobs and their careers at a rate that was unheard of just a generation ago. The creative industries, a key sector of our regional economy, have led the way in establishing opportunities for portfolio careers and more flexible patterns of work and employment. Platform technologies have created a new gig economy where the relationship between employer and employee is changing. Our region has one of the highest instances of self-employment in the country — a result of the high levels of business starts-ups. A significant majority of these remain small or micro businesses with 90% of our local economy made up of businesses employing fewer than ten members of staff.

An ageing population, increased life-expectancy and the steady rise of the retirement age has changed working patterns with people working for longer but not always in a traditional full-time, office-based environment. These changes are creating growing pressure and demand to up-skill or re-skill as individuals face new challenges throughout their life and work. Continuing professional development opportunities as well as initial vocational education and training will be an important part of the college offer.

The recent general election failed to provide the parliamentary majority that the Prime Minister argued would strengthen her hand in negotiations to leave the European Union. The resultant uncertainty over the status of EU nationals following the triggering of Article 50 suggests that the country may find it more difficult to recruit and retain the talent and the skills required for economic growth and prosperity. Colleges are being placed centre-stage in the debate around the talent pipeline and our capacity to match the supply of skills with labour market demand.

Quite apart from the change arising from Brexit, the government has an ambitious programme of reform across the main areas of activity at the College. Apprenticeships, study programmes and university-level courses are at various stages in the policy cycle. And we have a new industrial strategy to add to the mix.

Technology is often seen as a solution, at least in part, to some of our challenges as applied research in virtual reality and artificial intelligence hint at new ways through which we might access learning. Certainly the traditional model of full-time education delivered in a classroom on college premises will be challenged when individuals and employers can simulate virtual environments or teach remotely, as we are already seeing in medicine and elsewhere. Face-to-face learning will not be disappearing anytime soon but colleges will need to explore how existing and new technologies can enhance and improve the student experience.
It is less than three months since two distinct and individual organisations merged to create a new College. The significance of this is not to be underestimated and integrating the two Colleges into a single organisation will be one of the dominant themes during the life of this plan.

For our new College to thrive and prosper in an external environment characterised by complexity, uncertainty and above all change, it will need to address a number of challenges between now and 2022:

1. Maintaining and improving outcomes for students
2. Increasing student applications and enrolments
3. Retaining, recruiting and developing our staff
4. Managing our finances to support investment in our curriculum, our buildings and our technology.

But some things remain the same...

If the world within and without the College is changing, we must take comfort from what remains the same. Our students.

The demand for the College from our students and our communities remains undiminished. The MET has been delivering for students since the Brighton School of Art & Science opened in the Great Kitchen of the Royal Pavilion in 1858. Students provide the anchor point for everything we do and allow us to make sense of what’s going on around us.

Holding on to the certainty of delivering for our students – and viewing all of our decisions through the lens of their experience – is what will make navigating our environment and responding to the changes manageable and, in many cases, straightforward.

Throughout the document we will use the term student to refer to all people, young and old, apprentices and undergraduates, adult learners and 16 year olds, artists and plumbers, hairdressers and scientists who study at the MET.

And, when the plan refers to ‘our local communities’ we are speaking in the first instance of the geography of Greater Brighton; from Newhaven in the East to Worthing in the west and Gatwick in the North. The MET will serve students and communities across East, West and Mid Sussex – in Worthing, Shoreham and Brighton and beyond – including the Coast2Capital and SSSC Local Enterprise Partnership regions.
Our purpose:
What we will be famous for…
Unlocking potential.
Celebrating ambition.
Transforming lives.

Our vision:
The future we want to see…
To be recognised by students,
staff, employers and all our
communities as an exceptional
provider of technical, vocational
and professional education.

Our mission:
The things we’ll do to achieve
our vision…
By equipping our students with
the knowledge and skills they
need, we will prepare them for
life and for work. By encouraging,
supporting and inspiring them, we
will build the self-belief, confidence
and resilience they need to meet
their goals and aspirations.
Our values

Our values are the things we believe in and live by. At the MET we are:

**Ambitious**
To succeed in life, even the most talented people have to show tenacity and drive. Our students work hard now to build themselves a brighter future.

**Inclusive**
We welcome people from all walks of life, in all subjects, in one of the UK’s most vibrant and cosmopolitan city regions. We recognise that people have different starting points and different goals.

**Creative**
We are known for our creative spirit. Everyone at the College is encouraged to take risks and solve problems in new and innovative ways.

**Community focused**
For 150 years our College has produced some of our region’s greatest talent. Working together, we are all delivering for our local community.

**Excellent**
We strive for excellence in everything we do. In our own work and in our expectations of our students.
In order to achieve our vision for the MET we will work to deliver on five priorities. We see priorities 1 and 2 as the essence or core of our strategic plan, representing the outcomes we want to achieve by 2022. They make clear our commitment to our students and place the quality of our education and training centre stage.

Priorities 3, 4 and 5 set out how we will mobilise ourselves through our staff, our financial and physical resources and our relationships with other organisations to deliver for our students. They will act as enablers, creating an environment in which we can deliver against our commitment to our students.

Achieving the vision, and delivering against our priorities, will see us work across two interdependent and related themes between now and 2022. These themes are evident in all five priorities and relate to the two dominant contextual factors that the MET faces.

I. Post merger integration: establishing a single college with common operating principles, policies, practices, culture and behaviour.

II. Growth: through organic growth in core markets (16-18 year olds, apprentices, and commercial courses) and through partnership (to extend our current activity or to enter new markets).

The timings of these two phases will be fluid and opportunities for growth will not be passed by should they come earlier than anticipated. The basic premise however, is that we focus initially on integrating and building our new organisation, while creating the environment for growth that we expect to deliver later in the life of the plan.
Delivering an exceptional student experience
In 2022 we will be delivering an exceptional student experience when:

- Each and every one of our students feels welcome and supported to reach their full potential
- Students are on the right courses as a result of excellent recruitment and effective advice and guidance
- Students feel safe and are helped to develop the resilience required for life within and beyond the MET
- Students receive high quality information, advice and guidance on their career and employment options
- Students consistently experience good or better teaching, learning and assessment, and have their individual achievements recognised and celebrated
- Outcomes for students and apprentices are amongst the best in the South East
- Student feedback shows consistently high levels of satisfaction regardless of the campus attended or subject studied
- Teaching staff are unequivocally ambitious for their students, setting high expectations and ensuring that students make excellent progress regardless of their starting point or prior achievement
- The MET is widely recognised by students, parents, employers and the communities of Greater Brighton as the place to go for high quality vocational, professional and technical education
- The reputation and standing of the MET translates into a growing share of enrolments across our key markets (16-18 year olds, adults, apprentices and undergraduates)
- Our students progress to further or higher education and employment

Every student has a basic right for the teaching and learning on their course to be outstanding. This fundamental premise is at the heart of everything we do and informs all of the decisions we make.

Our students come from diverse starting points to study at different levels across multiple subjects and qualifications. Their experiences — the progress they make and what they achieve while they’re at the MET — will always come first and will be driven by a collective ambition and high expectations for what every individual can achieve.

Students at the MET can expect high quality outcomes in terms of their completion, attainment and progression, and those outcomes will be recognised by local and regional businesses and communities and by external agencies and inspectors within the sector.

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Getting our offer right

Priority 2
The world is changing and the MET must respond to these changes by equipping our students with the knowledge, skills and understanding required to succeed in life and in work.

Over the life of this plan we will review our offer to ensure that all of our courses and qualifications provide both the broad foundations and specific skills that prepare every student for life beyond the College. Our provision must reflect and balance the aspirations, ambitions and expectations of our students with the economic priorities of the region and the creation of jobs within our local labour market. Students who graduate from the MET must leave not only with knowledge and skills that prepare them for their first job, but with the capability and wherewithal to build a career and a life within our region and beyond.

This will require collaboration and partnership with businesses, Local Enterprise Partnerships, local authorities, the Greater Brighton Economic Board and others to ensure that we understand and respond to local priorities and skills needs. At the same time, we will respond to national policy changes impacting upon further and higher education and skills, seeking to balance the priorities of central government with the specific priorities of our local students and communities.

This approach is consistent with the commercial, educational and ethical imperative to give our students what they need to thrive in the 21st century. The MET will position itself as the place to go for students who are serious about getting on in life and in work. Creating a compelling educational offer decisively aligned to students’ next steps will be central to our recruitment activity and maintaining and growing our income. The MET must differentiate its offer and clearly articulate why students should come to us and not to a local school, sixth form or university.

This approach does not diminish our responsibility or desire to work with those further from the labour market, or requiring greater levels of support, and we remain fully committed to the vulnerable and disadvantaged in our community. Inclusivity is at the heart of our values and the College will continue to deliver for those who might otherwise fail to find an appropriate and compelling educational experience elsewhere in the region. The College is proud of its diverse and distinctive student body and will continue to celebrate and welcome everyone in our community.

Priority two will be underpinned by curriculum development and marketing & student recruitment strategies.

In 2022 we will have got our offer right when we have:

- Redesigned our qualification and curriculum offer for 16-18 year olds taking account of both the Skills Plan (or subsequent policy) and local and regional economic priorities
- Reviewed and realigned our offer to university level students, clearly differentiating our higher education offer from other local providers
- Effectively responded to and implemented apprenticeship reforms with both the MET and GBSkills (our subsidiary company) delivering a compelling apprenticeship offer to local apprentices and employers
- Reviewed, developed and extended our offer to individuals and employers providing a range of commercial and professional programmes to support workforce development and continuing professional development needs
- Maintained an inclusive and progression-focused offer for students requiring additional support
- Built the MET brand, identity and reputation on the quality of our curriculum offer
- Communicated the broader benefits and opportunities of technical and vocational education within the city region to support understanding amongst careers advisors, parents and carers, teaching staff in schools and prospective students
Becoming an employer of choice
Becoming an employer of choice

Our ability to deliver on our ambitions will be dependent on the capacity and capability of our lecturing, support and management staff to teach, inspire, motivate and support our students.

Over the life of this strategic plan the MET must become an employer of choice for our c1,200 staff. We need to hold on to, nurture and develop the talent we already have and this will require new approaches to reward, wellbeing, continuing professional development and career progression.

We will also develop more effective mechanisms to attract new talent and to address long-standing challenges to recruit to hard-to-fill vacancies.

We will work to ensure outstanding leadership and management at all levels of the organisation, from first line managers to our Board of Governors.

Priority 3 will be underpinned by a detailed people strategy to be developed in 2017/18.

In 2022 we will be an employer of choice when:

- Staff terms and conditions are fair and equitable across the College and pay is aligned to national benchmarks set by the Association of Colleges
- A single College culture and ethos pervades that respects the individuality of campuses and curriculum areas, but clearly reflects the values of the MET as a single organisation
- Effective leadership is evident throughout all levels of the College
- Staff feedback is sought and acted upon through staff forums and whole College surveys
- Clear communication channels exist between all layers of the organisation. Staff throughout the College understand the College’s purpose and priorities
- Appraisals and objective setting ensures that every member of staff has a clear understanding of their manager’s expectations and there are structured opportunities to review performance and professional development
- High performance – wherever it occurs – is recognised and celebrated through a total reward strategy including a range of measures and schemes
- Staff turnover aligns with sector benchmarks
- Clear and structured opportunities and pathways for staff progression are identified and introduced
- Continuing professional development supports the whole staff body
- The health, wellbeing and safety of staff are actively supported through a set of relevant interventions and services
- Discrimination in all its forms is challenged through the design and implementation of an Equality Impact Assessment Framework
- A common set of college-wide systems and processes from interview and enrolment through timetabling, self assessment and management reporting, is in place
- Governance is outstanding with a highly effective board monitoring performance, supporting and challenging the executive team to deliver against strategic priorities and annual performance indicators
Building partnerships
At its heart, the MET is a social enterprise that exists to serve the education and training needs of our local and regional communities.

The partnerships we build with those communities, and our capacity to understand and meet their requirements, will determine the extent to which the MET is judged to ‘succeed’ by our friends, colleagues and peers across the region.

At the same time, the partnerships we choose to foster must contribute to the achievement of our own institutional objectives. Our ability to deliver for our students is predicated on the relationships we build with local authorities (officers and politicians), schools, colleges and universities, government agencies such as the Local Enterprise Partnership, our lenders, FE regulators and funders, and above all, employers.

In 2022 we will have built partnerships that:

- Ensure that we are the first port of call for local authorities when partnership are required to deliver educational priorities
- Secure the trust and confidence of our regulators, funders and lenders who will view the MET as a sustainable and high performing College that delivers against expectations
- Properly embed us in local civic infrastructure and decision-making and ensure our representation throughout the community at all all levels of management and governance from City Management Board and Greater Brighton Economic Board to local community events
- Facilitate genuine employer and business engagement into curriculum design and delivery, resulting in a relevant and up-to-date curriculum that properly prepares students for work and employment
- Allow us to diversify income streams and grow the percentage of third stream (non-grant funded) income generated by the MET and by GBSkills through apprenticeships, professional courses, international and other workforce development services for individuals and employers
- Create a common on-line application process for the three major post-16 providers in the Brighton area, strengthening ‘The Accord’ between the MET, Varndean College and BHASVIC
- Extend our partnerships with schools across Brighton, East Sussex and West Sussex through a significantly extended range of school liaison activities
- Maintain strong relationships with local universities
- Build our influence and extend our reach for the benefit of student experience, the development of the curriculum or strengthening financial sustainability

Our ability to design, deliver and assess a curriculum that equips our students and apprentices with the skills they need to find and sustain employment will be increasingly dependent on our relationships with local and regional businesses. The MET will seek to extend our relationships with employers through new structures, curriculum design processes and other mechanisms for employer engagement. In addition, we will be building a dedicated suite of workforce development products and services – offered by the College and by our subsidiary GBSkills - aimed solely at providing our local businesses with the talent they need to grow and thrive. The MET will position itself as the place for local employers to source their talent pipeline.

Partnership will also provide the means to extend our influence and capacity to deliver against regional or national priorities. The MET will explore how partnerships might support the extension of existing activities as well the possibility of developing new products/services and entering into new markets.
Making our money, buildings and technology work
Technology will play an increasingly important role in supporting our staff to work efficiently and collaboratively using common systems and processes required to operate as a single college. Similarly, developments in technology will continue to provide opportunities for enhancing teaching and learning and the overall student experience. The MET will ensure that all its students have the digital skills required by today’s labour market, and the digital literacy to fully engage with life in the digital world.

Our money, buildings and technology – along with our staff – are the primary enablers for delivering an exceptional student experience.

Over the life of this strategic plan the MET will work to meet our financial objectives, prime amongst which is the need to generate sufficient cash to invest in our staff, our curriculum, our buildings and our information technology. This will require a steady and resolute focus on the primary levers of efficiency: class sizes, staff and space utilisation.

It will also require a comprehensive whole college approach to student recruitment – the principle determinant of College income – to support growth in our core markets of 16-18 year olds, adult learners and apprentices, whilst arresting the decline in the number of higher education students enrolling at the MET.

Maintaining and improving the high standard of our buildings in Worthing and Shoreham will be central to our estates strategy. Building on the improvements made to the campus in East Brighton and addressing the challenges in Central Brighton will all contribute to delivering the exceptional student experience set out in Priority 1.

In 2022 our money, buildings and technology will be working when:

The College has established a long-term sustainable financial position where:
• Annual income increases year on year in real terms after allowing for inflation
• Staff costs (adjusted for subcontractors) are below 60% of income
• Cash generated from operations exceeds 5%
• The College has more than 30 days ‘cash in hand’ and a Current Ratio in excess of 1.2
• Borrowing as a proportion of income is below 33%
• Our Financial Health rating as measured by the Education & Skills Funding Agency is ‘Good’ or ‘Outstanding’

Implementation of the Central Campus upgrade project has commenced

A fully documented maintenance strategy is in place for all other College sites

We have conducted a review – and begun to implement recommendations – of our whole College estates strategy in support of effective and efficient space utilisation

We have fully implemented single corporate systems, supporting efficient and effective business processes, for our MIS, Finance and HR/Payroll functions

Technology enhances every aspect of the student journey, from initial advice and guidance, to teaching, learning and assessment enlivened by flexible access to high quality digital / multimedia resources

All staff are supported and inspired to explore digital solutions to support collaboration, efficiency and creativity

The transformational potential of digital is exploited across all aspects of the business

Making our money, buildings and technology work