

Further Education Colleges

1. Introduction

There are nine Further Education (FE) colleges in Lancashire which has run a broadly tertiary system of post-16 education since the 1970s. Under a tertiary system most secondary schools cater for pupils aged 11 – 16 at which age the majority progress to an FE college rather than a School Sixth Form. At the moment 83% of young people aged 17 are in FE colleges.

The nine FE colleges of Lancashire have all been assessed as either 'Outstanding' or 'Good' by Ofsted. This means that the Lancashire colleges have the widest incidence of excellence in FE in England. The FE colleges of Lancashire collaborate extensively together to improve their offer to young people. The principals of all the Lancashire Colleges meet regularly and I Chair that group.

FE provides a full range of courses for young people across Lancashire. This includes study at entry level or at foundation, intermediate and advanced level in all academic and vocational specialisms. We provide a wide range of courses for young people aged 16 – 25 with special educational needs. FE has long prioritised getting young people ready for either higher education or employment. Now that Lancashire has a Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) and a Skills Board we are even more focused on these twin aims and have commissioned research into our local labour markets to ensure that young people in FE receive the core and softer skills for them to progress in the world of work. FE in Lancashire is not only about qualifications; we strive to provide a full education that gives learners the soft skills that employer's value. The Lancashire LEP Skills Board is chaired by Amanda Melton, the principal of Nelson & Colne College.

2. The FE Colleges of Lancashire

There are nine FE college across Lancashire:-

- Accrington & Rossendale College
- Burnley College
- Lancaster & Morecambe College
- Cardinal Newman College
- Myerscough College
- Nelson & Colne College
- Preston's College
- Runshaw College
- West Lancs College

Cardinal Newman College is a Sixth Form College specialising largely in A Levels and Myerscough College is a land based college specialising in training for agricultural and rural trades. As a condition of funding all FE colleges offer courses in English and maths to students who did not secure good GCSE passes in these subjects whilst at school.

The FE sector in Lancashire is surprisingly large. We employ over 4,300 people and work with over 7,000 local employers each year. The annual revenue of the nine colleges above is £183m pa. As businesses we contribute over £275m Gross Added Value each year to Lancashire's economy. The value of the qualifications gained by students is £1.5bn in annual lifetime benefits.

One issue for the FE sector is funding. We are not funded by the government the same way as schools with sixth forms which receive slightly more funding for each 18 year old. However, maintained schools and academies can both recover VAT costs from HMRC whereas colleges bear VAT as a cost. The Department for Education and local councils provide 100% grants for capital expenditure for schools with sixth forms whereas colleges have to cover some of the funding direct. These two factors account for a gap in funding of about £200 per pupil pa between schools and colleges. FE colleges also provide vocational courses in the engineering or construction sectors which are much more expensive to deliver than A Levels. It is also worth noting that nationally 29% of students in FE come from disadvantaged neighbourhoods whereas for school sixth forms that figure is 19%.

The following table gives an indication of the size and quality of our sector. To measure the effectiveness of our education and training of young people we focus on participation, achievement and progression. Participation refers to the number of young people involved in education or training. Achievement or success rates measure the proportion of young people starting a course who finish the course and pass it. Progression rates measure the proportion of young people who find work or progress to further relevant study having completed a course at an FE college.

All Lancashire FE Colleges			All Lancs Providers
16–18 Learner numbers, 2013/14	Classroom based	18,760	
	Work based	1,910	
	Total	20,670	
16 – 18 Success rates, 2013/ 14	Level 1	93.6%	84.8%
	Level 2	89.4%	89.3%
	Level 3	95.0%	95.0%
	All	90.9%	88.6%

In recent years the government has raised the age for participating in education or training from 16 to 17 at the moment and 18 for the next academic year. All FE colleges work hard to provide an enticing range of options for study and training that meet the needs of young people and the 21st century world of work. We also work hard to minimise the number of young people who are NEET (Not engaged in education employment and training.) We make full use of European funding to provide courses that either prevent young people from becoming NEET in the first place or to help them into education, employment or training if they are already NEET.

3. Progression to Jobs and Higher Education

What young people want are the education and skills to enable them to get into the employment sector they aspire to or to go to university and join the labour market later. The Lancashire Colleges funded a £40,000 research study into some of the priority local employment sectors including advanced engineering & manufacturing, health & social care, financial & professional services, tourism, energy & the environment, construction and the creative, digital & media sector. We track these

sectors to see where skill shortages are emerging and how we can evolve our courses so they best meet the needs of employers.

Apprenticeships are an increasingly popular and reliable method for managing the bridge between education and work. 16 – 18 year olds make up 1,910 (38%) of the 5,070 apprentices in FE across Lancashire. FE is responsible for 38% of all the apprenticeships on offer across Lancs. The rest are largely delivered by private training providers.

FE in Lancashire is unusual because of the amount of higher education on offer. Two colleges in our sub-region are amongst the top four providers nationally of higher education in further education. 4,400 young people progress from local colleges to higher education every year. We work with the Skills Board of the LEP and its Skills Hub to ensure that the education and training we provide is as responsive as possible to the changing needs of local employers. Between them the Lancashire Colleges provide over 140 different Foundation Degrees which represents an excellent progression route at 18. Most people studying Foundation Degrees are employed and their studies are improving their promotion prospects. We work in partnership with employers large and small in all sectors to deliver high quality apprenticeship for young people to help them get on in today's fast changing labour markets.

4. Summary

- 4.1 There are nine FE colleges in Lancashire
- 4.2 Across Lancashire 83% of 16 – 18 year olds are in FE colleges rather than in school sixth forms
- 4.3 All local colleges in have been assessed by Ofsted as 'Outstanding' or 'Good' enabling. Lancashire to have the widest incidence of excellence in FE across England.
- 4.4 Local FE colleges provide a full range of academic & vocational courses from entry level to advanced level with Myerscough College focusing on land based & rural provision and Cardinal Newman as a Sixth Form College specialising in A Levels.
- 4.5 All colleges provide a full range courses for young people aged 16 – 25 with special needs.
- 4.6 FE colleges across Lancs focus on getting young people into higher education or employment.
- 4.7 The FE sector across Lancs is surprisingly large with an annual income of £183m & over 4,300 staff. Local colleges have strong relationships with employers to helping raise the productivity of 7,000 local businesses.
- 4.8 Colleges work hard to minimise the number of young people who are NEET.
- 4.9 Colleges are finding that Apprenticeships are an increasingly popular bridge between education and the world of work.
- 4.10 The Lancashire Colleges commissioned a study of local labour markets and found:-
 - Local FE colleges contribute over £275m pa to the gross value added of our local economy and the annual lifetime value of the qualifications gained by students is £1.5bn.
 - The number of enrolments onto HE courses in FE across Lancs is the joint highest of any of the 39 LEP areas across England. Lancs is joint highest with London which has six times the population. For STEM

courses (science, technology, engineering & maths) Lancs is number one in England leaving London far behind.

4.11 We work closely with the local LEP and its Skills Board to ensure that the courses we provide are meeting the needs of local employers.

I hope this has given you a flavour of the breadth of activity of the Further Education sector in Lancs. I am now happy to try to answer your questions.

David Wood

Principal, Lancaster & Morecambe College Chair, The Lancashire Colleges