



**QUEEN ELIZABETH**  
Sixth Form College

# ACCOUNTABILITY AGREEMENT

2023

## Section One: Purpose

Queen Elizabeth Sixth Form College is located in Darlington, one of the unitary authorities which combine to form the Tees Valley. We draw our students from a wide geographical area including North Yorkshire, County Durham and Teesside, as well as Darlington itself. The College's inclusive mission is effective in enabling students with a wide range of abilities, and from a broad variety of backgrounds, to develop relevant skills and progress successfully to further study, apprenticeships and employment. The majority of students each year (circa 700) leave the College to progress to university, from which they follow pathways into employment and help to meet national skills needs. Nevertheless, a sizeable minority (circa 250) each year opt for immediate progression into apprenticeships and local employment, where they meet more local skills requirements. Thus the College plays a significant role in contributing to both local and national agendas. In order to maximise the impact of our contribution, and to meet emerging skills needs, we have developed a strategic plan and curriculum that embrace the skills agenda.

### Our Vision

*To provide a transformational learning experience that equips students with the knowledge, confidence and skills to flourish in their lives, careers and communities.*

This vision is supported by a set of shared values and a Strategic Plan. The Strategic Plan organises our strategic aims into five key strands as follows:



## Our Resources

Key strategic developments during the current academic year include the completion of a capital project, part funded by the Post-16 Capacity Fund, which provides an additional five classrooms plus associated office and admin space. The English department, which is key to our literacy work, will be relocated in the new build and their current accommodation will be developed during Summer 2023 into a student services hub to provide integrated services for students. We have also invested £1.2m in an expansion and total refurbishment of student catering and social space. All of these projects will be operational from August 2023.

## Our Curriculum

The design and delivery of our curriculum are crucial to ensuring the positive impact of the College on the lives of our students and the provision of appropriately skilled young people ready for work or further study.

We have made careful decisions about the size and scope of our curriculum in order to enable students to fulfil their ambitions whilst supporting vital skills development. The vast majority of our courses are at Level 3, where students can combine smaller sized applied subjects with a wide range of A Levels. Our Level 2 offer now focuses exclusively on the key areas of English and Maths GCSE, with the vast majority of students achieving those vital qualifications before leaving the College.

Our curriculum design at whole college level is a statement of our values and intent, with 5 hour blocks at both Level 3 and Level 2, an extensive enrichment programme, dedicated Guided Independent Learning sessions and a 2.5 hours per week Progress Tutoring model. We have significantly increased our focus on skills development through subject and tutorial sessions, which are informed through our Curriculum Board of local employers, individual subject Employment Champions and liaison with our ERB. We have also developed a comprehensive action plan in response to priorities identified in the LSIP.

Our aim is for our students to leave College with a commitment to lifelong learning and personal development; equipped to make a productive contribution to the local, national and global economy; and ready to play a positive role in their communities as adult citizens.

In addition to formal qualifications, we understand that our students must also possess the skills needed to fulfil their potential. We categorise these skills as:

Skills for  
Learning

Skills for  
Work

Skills for  
Life

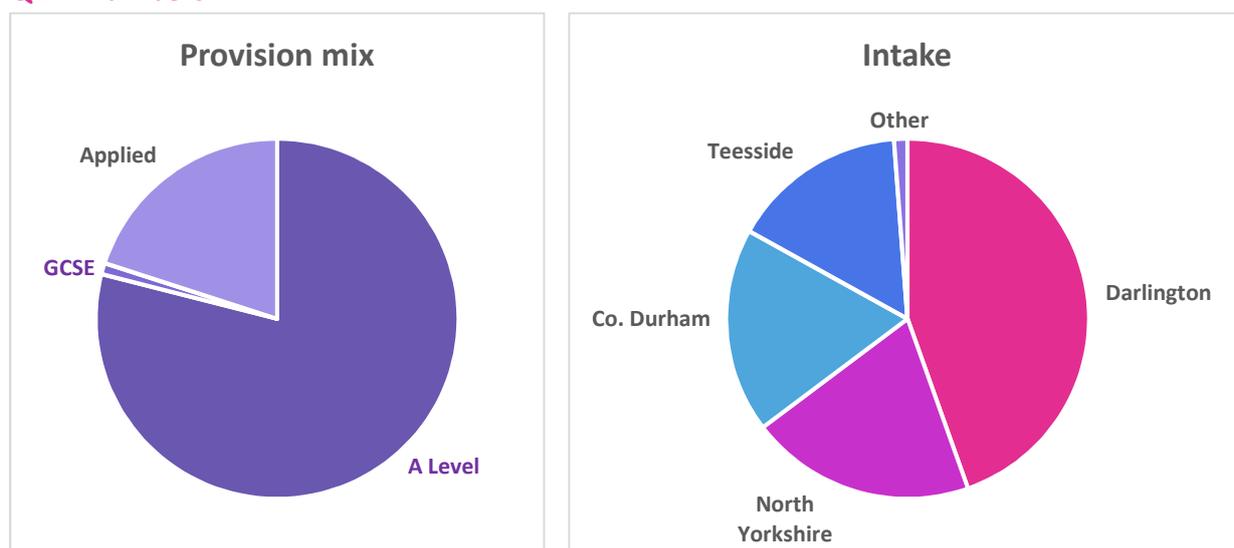
Our approach to identifying and nurturing these skills are detailed in later sections of this document.

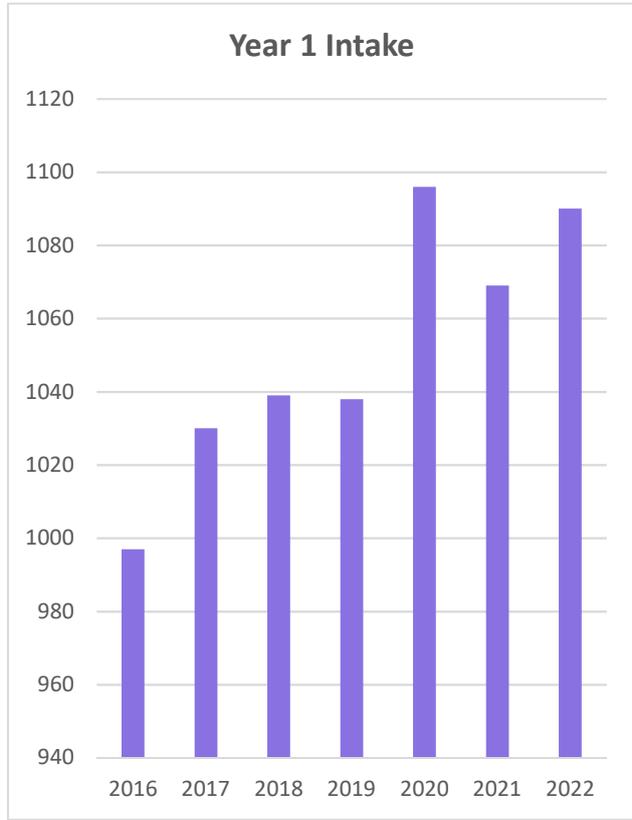
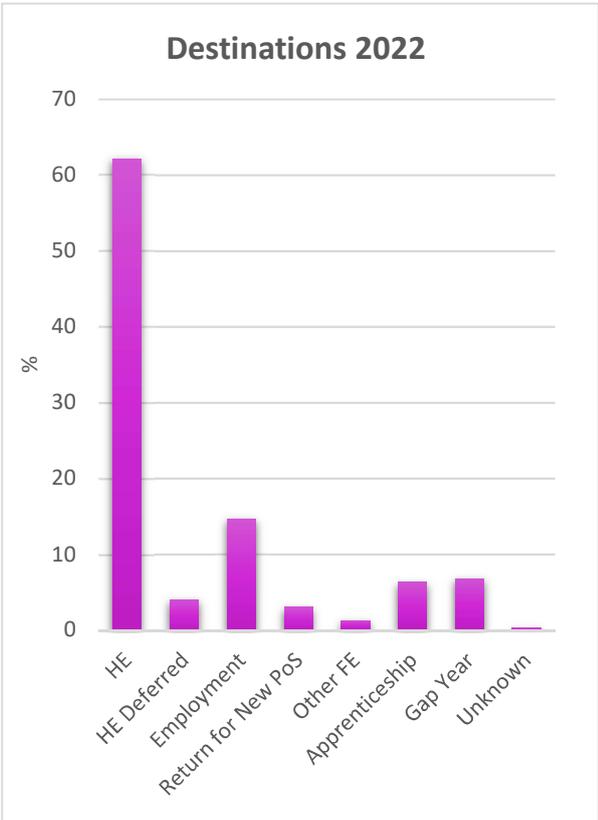
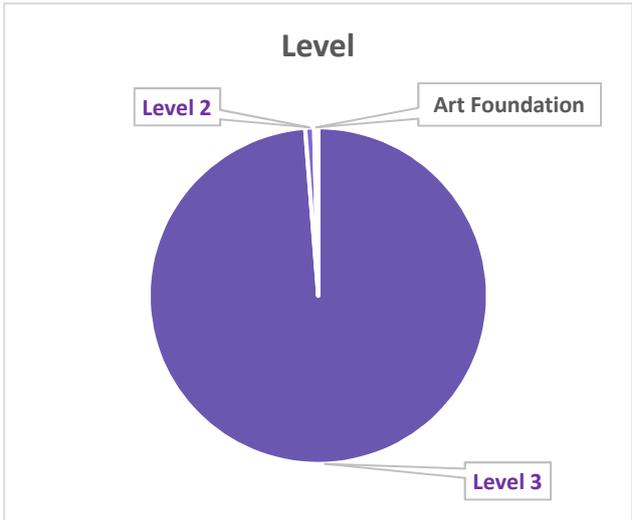
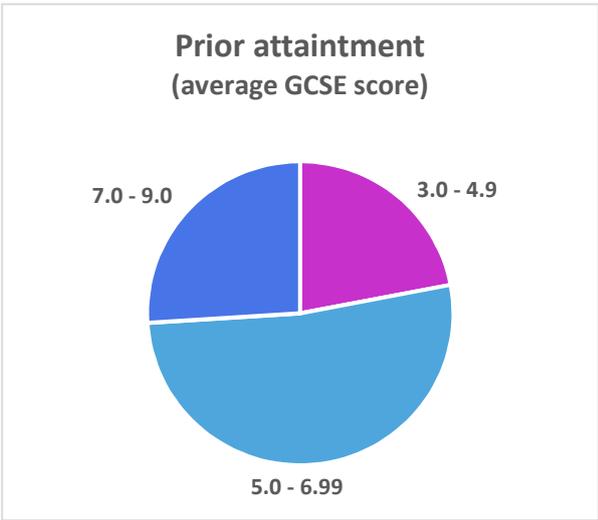
## Section Two: Context and Place

QE is a specialist sixth form college with an inclusive mission. The College's catchment area is economically diverse but includes some of the most disadvantaged wards in the country. Of the 316 Local Authorities, Darlington is the 70<sup>th</sup> most deprived, placing it in the bottom 25% nationally (ONS). The percentage of students from ethnic minority groups at the College is higher than that of the local population at 11.6% in 2021/22. The prior attainment of students with regards to their average GCSE score also illustrates the inclusive nature of the College. Despite the fact that fewer than 50% of our students come from a family with parental experience of Higher Education, the percentage of QE students progressing to UK HE institutions is 9% higher than the national rate (DfE destinations) and our students outperform both the state sector and sixth form college sector performance averages whilst in Higher Education (HESA 2023).

The vast majority of provision currently offered by the College is at Level 3. The College offers 30 Advanced Level subjects, 9 Level 3 Applied General subjects, resit GCSEs in English and Mathematics and a one-year pre-degree Art Foundation course. The College plays an essential role in the local community, which is recognised by key stakeholders including employers, education providers and civic and community groups. The nature of our vision and curriculum make QE an ideal college from which to gain a place at university and in 2022 our students progressed to 92 different Higher Education institutions. Our contribution to the skills agenda is therefore national as well as local and successful HE progression forms a very important part of our strategy. This is of particular importance to the local area given that in 2020 just 33.2% of Tees Valley's work age residents were qualified to degree level compared to 43% nationally (Tees Valley Trailblazer LSIP).

### QE in numbers





Nine students with Education Health Care Plans in 2022-23

- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5
- 6
- 7
- 8
- 9



## Enrichment

Over 40 different enrichment activities open to all students...

Combined Cadet Force  
Duke of Edinburgh  
Future Engineers  
Student Association  
Volunteering

Over 60 different subject specific enrichment activities...

Film and Media projects with real clients  
Physics Masterclass  
Finance and Money Management

Over 170 College trips and visiting speakers so far in 2022-23...

Cyber Security Masterclass  
Glaxo-Smithkline  
Health & Social Care Careers Expo  
National Horizons Centre  
Northern Film Studios

## Darlington Economy and Labour Market

### Industry Breakdown

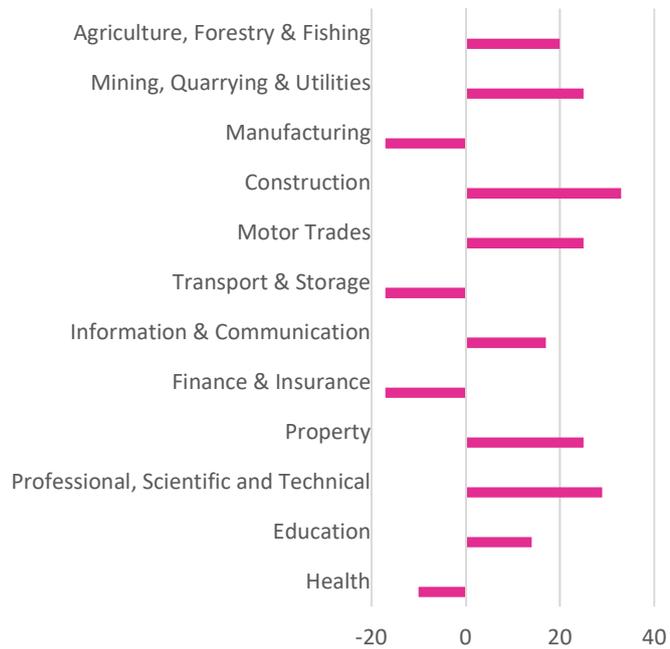
The largest industry in Darlington's economy is Health, followed by Retail and Transport. The following table provides a job breakdown for Darlington's largest employment sectors.

Industry	Number	Percentage
Health	9,000	16.9%
Retail	5,000	9.4%
Transport & Storage	5,000	9.4%
Professional, Scientific & Technical	4,500	8.5%
Public Administration & Defence	4,500	8.5%
Education	4,000	7.5%
Accommodation & Food Services	3,500	6.6%
Information & Communication	3,500	6.6%
Business Administration & Support Services	3,000	5.6%
Manufacturing	2,500	4.7%

[Source: ONS Data]

### Growth Industries

Darlington's fastest growing industry is Construction. Jobs in the sector grew by 33% between 2020 and 2021. In contrast, the greatest decline was in Manufacturing, which decreased by 17% over the same period.



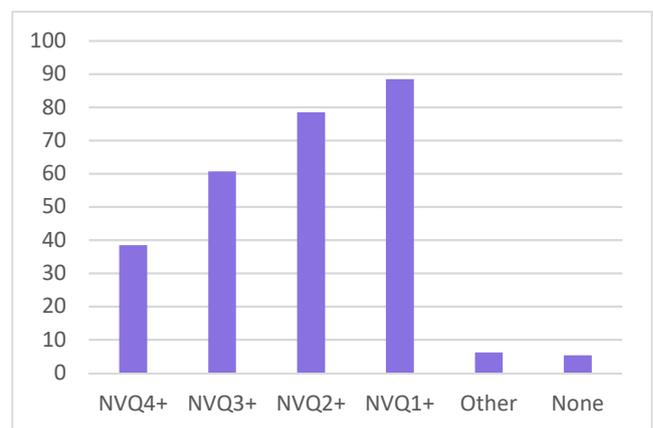
[Source: ONS Data]

### Working Age Population

Only 38.5% of Darlington's working-age population have a degree or higher level qualification. This is below the 43% degree level qualification rate for England.

### Qualification Classifications

- **NVQ 4:** Degree or equivalent
- **NVQ 3:** 2 or more A levels or equivalent
- **NVQ 2:** 5 or more GCSEs at grades A-C or equivalent
- **NVQ 1:** fewer than 5 GCSEs at grades A-C or equivalent
- **NVQ Other:** includes foreign qualifications and some professional qualifications



[Source: ONS Data]



Located in the far west of the Tees Valley, Darlington is within the remit of the Tees Valley Trailblazer Local Skills Improvement Plan published by The North East England Chamber of Commerce in 2022. We also recognise the fact that a significant number of our students are not Tees Valley residents and the plans we formulate will also take into account the priorities of other relevant LSIPs as they are developed. This will include the Durham LSIP, led by the North East Automotive Alliance and the North Yorkshire LSIP, led by the West & North Yorkshire Chamber of Commerce. We are actively involved in liaising with both and whilst there is much common ground in terms of the skills across all three LSIPs, we are conscious of the need to give some consideration to Agri-skills and the Visitor Economy of North Yorkshire in our plans going forward.

The Tees Valley Trailblazer LSIP, in addition to highlighting the need to help young people understand and be attracted to careers in the low carbon industries, stresses the importance that employers place on 'personal attributes' in the future workforce:

*“An increased focus on the development of personal attributes and attitudes to create a ‘more rounded’ individual. For example, this could include the development of skills such as adaptability, flexibility, innovation, problem solving, creative thinking, professional attitude, work ethic and career management. Employers want to bring motivated people into their organisations who are keen to progress, have the ambition to excel at their job, have open minds and a desire to innovate and try out new approaches.”*

Thus, QE's focus on 'personal development', including the acquisition of Skills for Learning, Skills for Work and Skills for Life is ideally aligned with Tees Valley's priorities.

## Section Three: Approach to Developing Annual Accountability Statement

We define our approach to skills in our skills guide, a document that is shared with and understood by all staff and embedded in our curriculum design and the choices we make in structuring our teaching and learning. We also have a dedicated action plan, “*Meeting Skills Needs: Skills for Learning, Work and Life*”, included in our Whole College Quality Improvement Plan, which is reviewed termly at Board level. We are clear about national, regional and local priorities and have created programmes for students that help them to learn about employers’ needs as well as tracking their progress in developing the skills required in the workplace. This is achieved through:

- Subject specific skills delivery
- Local employment and skills updates through the Tutorial Programme
- Skills Builder workshops and tracking for all students
- The ‘Job Ready Programme’ for students progressing directly to employment
- Timetabled guided independent learning sessions for all students in which they learn about the science and practice of learning
- Support from our specialist team comprising two Careers Advisors, a Work Experience Co-ordinator and a Job Coach.

In developing our approach we have consulted with:

### NEEC Assistant Director of Policy

While the final draft of the LSIP was in production, we met with the LSIP lead who identified the key skills and priorities that employers were looking for in future employees as:

- Communication
- Confidence
- Digital
- Problem Solving
- Professional Characteristics
- Research

These cross cutting skills needs are being developed for students in dedicated sessions in the tutorial programme and through the academic curriculum.



### **Tees Valley Trailblazer**

The Trailblazer LSIP published in 2022 identifies growth employment areas in the Tees Valley as:

- Enabling decarbonisation
- Homes and buildings
- Industrial energy
- Power
- Transport

### **Darlington Economic Campus Round Tables**

The arrival of the Economic Campus in Darlington is planned to bring 1200 civil service jobs to the town, plus many more secondary employment opportunities. Regular roundtable meetings with senior campus staff enable us to track developments and consider solutions to productivity issues including provision of an appropriately skilled workforce, as well as direct job and apprenticeship opportunities communicated directly to our students.

### **Local Authority**

The College has strong links with the local authority who provide updates on key projects and major developments in the town.

### **Curriculum Board (local employers)**

Our College Curriculum Board was created with the purpose of creating a regular sounding board with local employers and ensures a purposeful and collaborative mechanism through which we can explore plans, review actions and shape our provision in order to meet local as well as national needs.

### **Employment Champions**

Each of our circa 40 subject areas has identified an Employment Champion from industry to inform their curriculum planning and decision making, and to support the subjects' work in developing appropriate skills and behaviours in our students.

### **Darlington Education Strategy Group (ESG)**

QE's Principal is the post-16 representative on the ESG. This group meets to discuss and also steer local education strategies and ensures that consultative approaches are taken to key issues such as pupil transition and management of demographic change. Collaboration with the ESG enables us to plan provision in a co-ordinated manner that takes into account the entire learning journey of

students and helps us match their previous experience to provision at the College, which in turn shapes our approach to the skills agenda.

### **11-19 Partnership**

QE's Principal is Vice Chair of the 11-19 Partnership which, like the ESG, facilitates a collegiate approach across the town. Important areas such as SEN provision and transfer of information are co-ordinated through the Partnership, which has representatives from every Secondary and FE provider plus a Primary representative. Here, provider characteristics and offers are discussed and approaches shared.

### **Darlington College**

Darlington has one other FE college provider, Darlington College. The relationship between the colleges is very constructive and over time we have developed complementary curriculums that offer students breadth with minimal duplication. QE's provision is academic with some mixed provision at Level 3, whilst Darlington College focuses on vocational provision across the levels.

All of the above stakeholders informed our approach and continue to shape the development of our curriculum delivery.

## Section Four: Contribution to national, regional and local priorities

### National Skills Priorities

- Construction
- Digital and Technology
- Engineering
- Haulage and Logistics
- Health and Social Care
- Manufacturing
- Science and Mathematics

### Tees Valley LSIP cross-cutting skills needs

- Communication
- Confidence
- Digital
- Problem Solving
- Professional Characteristics
- Research

Action	Intended Outcome/Impact	Target Date
Relaunch the QE Future Engineers Scheme	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Increase the number of students entering into engineering employment and embarking on engineering apprenticeships</li><li>• Increase the number of applications to engineering and related courses at university</li><li>• Improve understanding of engineering opportunities for L3 and L4 qualified engineers</li><li>• Increase contact between local engineering employers and students to develop careers and skills pathways into engineering industries</li></ul>	October 2023



Action	Intended Outcome/Impact	Target Date
Develop the work of the Curriculum Board in informing the College's curriculum decision making	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensure that the curriculum decisions we make at both whole college and subject level are informed not only by national skills priorities and the Tees Valley LSIP, but also by key employers who are able to identify needs and opportunities through a richer and more regular range of contacts with senior leaders, subject leaders and students</li> <li>• Develop a deeper understanding of the local employment market and use this to provide a bespoke Tutorial Programme that contains ideas and information generated directly by the work of the Curriculum Board</li> </ul>	Ongoing throughout the 2022-23 academic year
Ensure that all subject departments have reviewed their use of Employment Champions and included actions for 2023/24 in their Subject Level Quality Improvement Plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Improve understanding of skills amongst academic staff</li> <li>• Increase the range of subject specific skills/employment activities taking place throughout the academic year to develop students' experience of work related activity</li> <li>• Maintain strong links with a wide variety of employers as a resource for students</li> <li>• Assist in embedding a skills development culture in all subjects including those considered 'academic'</li> </ul>	October 2023
Maintain and develop the Employment/Skills content of the Tutorial Programme in response to LSIP priorities and needs, including through the Skills Builder programme. Develop the 'Job Ready' scheme for those students who choose not to progress into Higher Education or progression from QE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 'Skills Builder' was introduced for all students in 2022/23 and is well understood by subject departments who have begun to embed skills development much more explicitly into their planning. The impact of 'Skills Builder' now needs to be reviewed for 2023/24 and refined, where necessary, to ensure the greatest impact for students.</li> <li>• The Job Ready programme ensures that all students not progressing to HE have regular and meaningful contact with the QE Job Coach to help them prepare for and identify job opportunities as well as completing a work skills development package.</li> </ul>	November 2023



Action	Intended Outcome/Impact	Target Date
Improve students' 'digital' knowledge and skills in response to the Tees Valley LSIP	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide Guided Independent Learning sessions in a self-directed package requiring a higher level of digital proficiency from students</li> <li>• Track digital skills development through the GIL programme to ensure student engagement and progress towards greater independence through digital skills</li> </ul>	October 2023
Create and deliver a literacy strategy that foregrounds competencies for the world of work	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Support both students' academic progress and their professional characteristics by ensuring that literacy is a key component of students' experience at College.</li> <li>• Ensure that all subject departments have a carefully planned approach to literacy that encompasses both subject specific language used and more generic understanding of the importance of language used in employment contexts</li> </ul>	December 2023
Develop our relationships and partnerships with local universities, particularly with those enrolling significant numbers of our students	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Establish a more structured relationship with key local universities helping students to follow a clear pathway from L3 through L4 to employment</li> <li>• Review our curriculum offer to ensure that productive pathways have been established and that we are explicit about the ways in which our programmes of study assist in meeting national and local priorities</li> </ul>	January 2024
Integrate the priorities of North Yorkshire and County Durham LSIPs into our skills strategy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Broaden the scope of our skills strategy to ensure that students who live outside of the Tees Valley are aware of and prepared to meet local priorities in their own LSIP area</li> </ul>	December 2023



## Section Five: Corporation Statement

The Board of the College Corporation approved this Accountability Agreement on Thursday 25<sup>th</sup> May 2023.

## Section Six: Hyperlink

This Accountability Agreement is available to view at [www.qeliz.ac.uk/accountability-agreement](http://www.qeliz.ac.uk/accountability-agreement)

## Section Seven: Supporting Documentation

- Strategic Plan 2022-25
- Tees Valley Trailblazer Local Skills Improvement Plan
- Skills Guide
- Curriculum Intent