

KNOWLEDGE TRANSFER & EMPLOYER ENGAGEMENT STRATEGY

Introduction

This strategy will aim to maximise the transfer of all forms of knowledge arising from the activities of Oatridge College to its customers. The strategy will be client-led and address the needs of all stakeholders in the landbased industries, sector organisations and public agencies. It will also promote entrepreneurship and the commercialisation of College expertise. The strategy's four aims are to:

- ensure clients are involved in the planning, implementation and review of Oatridge College's knowledge transfer and employer engagement activities
- fund the best ideas for knowledge transfer and employer engagement across the College remit and enable the development of partnerships between the College and Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (SMEs)
- make knowledge transfer an integral part of Oatridge College's strategic planning and operational delivery
- promote entrepreneurship, industry networking, partnership working and the commercialisation of College expertise

General aim

In line with Oatridge College's Mission Statement, and reflecting an extensive and on-going track record of successful knowledge transfer activity, the College aims to disseminate and exploit any sector-focussed research, knowledge, skills, expertise and ideas that are in demand for the benefit of the rural industries in the Lothians, Scotland and beyond. These capabilities will be promoted through various local, national and international programmes, allowing equal access for all. Ultimately this will help further enhance the position of Oatridge College as a vocational institution where underpinning knowledge and practical application are combined to the benefit of landbased employers and the wider rural economy.

Specific aims - delivering the strategy

The key actions necessary to meet the four aims in the strategy are outlined below.

1. Involve employers and other stakeholders in planning, implementation and review

To achieve employer involvement in the delivery of the College's objectives it will be necessary to:

- build and maintain links between SMEs and representative bodies within the landbased industries and Oatridge College
- consult key clients and service users and take into account their needs in developing key policy documents, such as future versions of the Strategic Plan
- carry out periodic surveys of employer needs and preferences for routes to knowledge transfer, and for knowledge transfer schemes and mechanisms
- encourage proposals for working in partnership with employers and industry

- maintain and enhance the presence of employers on the College's Industry Liaison Groups and other advisory and decision-making bodies, and involve them in programme review and evaluation

2. Identify funding and encourage collaboration through strategic partnerships

External and additional funding will be identified in order to facilitate knowledge transfer activities and specific projects/initiatives. External funding may include European structural funds (such as ESF or ERDF) as well as grants received from non-EU agencies. The additional funding received during 2007-10 from the Scottish Funding Council will also be ring-fenced solely for the purpose of increasing the College's knowledge transfer and employer engagement remit. As part of this remit collaboration with key sector bodies, other training & knowledge transfer providers and the Sector Skills Council (Lantra) will be encouraged in order to:

- share best practice in knowledge transfer delivery and avoid duplication of effort
- pool expertise and resources, and improve economies of scale
- collaborate on specific knowledge transfer initiatives, events and related activities

3. Include knowledge transfer in departmental strategic planning

To ensure that new knowledge and best practice available within the College is put to use, it will be necessary for each department to develop its own Knowledge Transfer Statement. Each Statement must include an analysis of the:

- potential clients and benefits of the expertise which exists within the department
- likely synergies between departments to avoid duplication and maximise collaboration when exploiting College expertise
- optimal knowledge transfer routes and appropriate mechanisms (eg. Industry Liaison Groups, commercial short courses and technical updates, events and conferences, online/distance learning, knowledge transfer partnerships)

To enable delivery of the knowledge transfer and employer engagement strategy, departments must, at a minimum, budget for networking with their client group (landbased employers, sole traders and industry bodies).

4. Promote entrepreneurship and SME development

In order to contribute to a more innovative and better-skilled Scottish landbased sector, Oatridge College will:

- promote entrepreneurship, Continuous Professional Development and business development throughout the industry via initiatives such as the Landbased Industries Support Service (LISS)
- in collaboration with other colleges, industry bodies and business support agencies, assist businesses to diversify, grow sustainably and compete effectively by improving access to skills training, business information, technical guidance and networking resources