



Further Education and Skills Actionable Agenda

for a Prosperous, Productive and Fair Jersey

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

There have been several recent strategy documents aimed at shaping and reforming skills and further education (FE) provision in Jersey. Additionally, there have been several other strategy documents responding to economic and social developments that see skills provision as being integral to the future prosperity of Jersey.

In the case of the former, though action plans were produced to ensure the delivery against strategic intent, actual action has been forestalled by the pandemic, staff absences and lack of dedicated funding. In the case of the latter, though skills were seen as an essential enabler in ensuring continued economic prosperity and in underwriting social equity, few specific actions have been proposed. In addition, those that were proposed were often aimed as much at school education, as at FE and adult skills provision.

There is an urgent need to develop an 'actionable agenda' to ensure that Jersey has a robust, adaptable and effective further education and skills system for the future. To a significant extent, this agenda needs only to group proposals from existing strategies for post-16 education and the review of school funding.

There are, however, further areas that the pandemic, together with Jersey's commitment to carbon-neutrality by 2030, have brought to the fore and which have not been fully addressed within the pre-existing strategies.

These further areas are most particularly concerned with ensuring Jersey has a skills **system** that enables its population to be skilled, reskilled and upskilled through life. To enable such a 'through-life' approach, the emphasis should be upon making Jersey's existing provision more systematic and coordinated. The current system, has a multiplicity of actors and undue complexity generated by a requirement for one-off business cases for funding and a related tendency toward incremental regulation.

Predominantly, this paper proposes the re-allocation of existing funds into a Skills Fund. There will, however, be a need for modest additional resources, in the form of a unified Skills Fund for post-19 education. There will also be a need for the re-provision of the Highlands College campus, which is no longer fit for purpose.

The Skills Fund will allow Jersey to draw upon best international practice, and lessons learned on-Island from the Fiscal Stimulus Fund 'Retrain' initiative. This, together with the re-provision of the Highlands campus, offers an opportunity to realise many of the ambitions for further education and skills for a prosperous, productive and fair Jersey.

CONTEXT

Numerous reports and strategies have indicated that Jersey's economic model, though currently successful, is being challenged by developments including post-Brexit and post-pandemic labour shortages, high living costs and land constraints.

Due to its scale and orientation, Jersey's economy is likely to continue to be shaped by external forces that are beyond its direct control, including AI and the re-shaping of the labour market. To confront these challenges, and to continue to prosper, Jersey's economy will need to be agile and adaptable whilst respecting the Island's traditions and values. There will also be a need - particularly in the face of existing, and most likely continuing, labour shortages, and international competition - to be more productive.

A necessary (though not sufficient) condition for an agile, adaptable and productive economy is an effective skills system that is similarly agile and adaptable. In seeking models to follow in developing such an agile and adaptable skills system, due regard needs to be given to the economy and society that it serves. Jersey has market-led economy with high degree of dependency on service industries, though with continuingly important agricultural and fisheries sectors.

Adopting elements of skills systems developed to meet the needs of more managed economies based upon manufactured products (eg Germany) should be viewed with caution. Likewise, as a relatively low-tax and spend economy, parallels with skills systems in Nordic countries are problematic.

As a consequence, the most likely examples of best and transferable practice are to be found in comparable economies and social models, most particularly all four nations in the UK, Australia, Canada, and (to a lesser extent) the Netherlands and Luxembourg.

There are, generally, 4 differentiating functions that high performing further education and skills systems exhibit wherever they are found:

- 1) A close and continuous exchange with industry/employers to inform qualification content and- most importantly in the Jersey context- the curricula mix offered in its system. This interaction has been termed a '**two-way street.**' This exchange between providers and customers, needs, as far as possible, to be unmediated, to promote agility and adaptability.
- 2) Accountability in an FE and skills system needs to be jointly responsive to both students and employers, as well as to the Government as regulator and funder. FE colleges and other providers need therefore to be both **student-centric and employer responsive.**
- 3) Excellent technical and professional education in FE Colleges and other providers requires teachers who are **dual professionals**; that is, both expert teachers and expert practitioners in their trade or profession. This requirement has implications for the recruitment and continuous professional development (CPD) of teachers and lecturers.
- 4) Since technical and professional education is integrally concerned with preparing students for the world of work, as well as their personal development, it benefits from a clear **line of sight** to the workplace. A critical element of this line of sight is the quality and character of facilities provided for learning which must as far as possible be a duplicate of the student's intended future workplace.

Each of these 4 differentiating conditions have a role in informing the recommendations that follow.

16-19 TECHNICAL AND PROFESSIONAL EDUCATION

Jersey is an outlier in several respects, in relation to 16-18 education. Most notably:

- 1) As noted in the Independent Review of School Funding, its level of funding for this stage of schooling is lower than most OECD nations.
- 2) The legally presumed age for leaving education and/or training is still 16. In all of the nations of the UK, the participation age is now 18. The same is true for most European nations.
- 3) There is no formal provision made for young people with special educational needs to continue in full-time education after the age of 18. The entitlement in the UK is to age 25 for this group.

Funding for full-time education of 16–18-year-olds at Highlands College is essentially historically based and re-based. The original calculation and formula upon which this allocation is made has not been updated, nor applied, for at least 10 years.

Most critically, the allocation, as currently made, does not take account of the number of students recruited, thereby presenting a potential disincentive for the College to recruit more students. It is only due to the ethics of the College Executive and Board, that this disincentive has not translated into recruitment practices.

Further, the College's commitment to providing catch-up provision to students who have not achieved benchmark standards in English and maths at 11-16 schools is not recognised, nor is the work that it does with students with high needs and/or from disadvantaged backgrounds. All of these categories of student are over-represented at Highlands, compared to 16-18 provision in schools and Hautlieu.

The Independent Review of School Funding also concluded that 16–18-year-olds at Highlands College received less per capita funding than the same age group in schools, including Hautlieu. This has clear implications for the regard in which vocational education is held compared to academic provision and is deeply unfair given overall level of disadvantage amongst students at the College.

Curriculum provision at Highlands College is wide and achievement rates compare well to the best colleges in each of the four UK nations. But the mix of provision is not subject to any formal external oversight or accountability. Hence, the degree to which the curriculum is shaped by labour market need is guided by college staff and leaders, and particularly by the capabilities of existing staff. In this form, it risks being student-centric without necessarily being employer-centric.

Though provision to young people who are NEET (Not in Education, Employment or Training) is high quality, identification and referral of such young people is not joined up between Government departments. Moreover, without any legal requirement for young people to be in education or employment with training up to age 18, there is no formal basis for NEET prevention.

SKILLS AND EDUCATION POST-19

Adult Skills

Though 16-18 education in Jersey is an outlier in several regards as far as international norms are concerned, it is in post-19 education that disparities are most apparent. The relative lack of systematic through-life learning beyond age 19 is most striking. Unless following an apprenticeship, or a university course (either in the UK, another overseas location or University College Jersey), there is no systematic and stable entitlement to adult education.

As well as wider benefits in terms of well-being, adult education provides a bedrock for the skilling, re-skilling and upskilling that could underwrite Jersey's continued economic success. Whilst there is some training delivered in the workplace by Jersey employers, and Highlands College and other providers offer courses on a full cost recovery basis, there is a need for the Government to either pump-prime provision, or otherwise cover gaps where the market will not provide, as employers or individuals are unable to invest.

One key area of pump-priming is likely to be required is in pursuit of a carbon-neutral economy, where skills will need to be updated in order to facilitate the introduction of emerging technologies such as heat pumps and electric vehicles.

The current investment in digital skills is an example of an area where Jersey already makes such investment. However, even here research indicates that development of digital skills presupposes a level of literacy and numeracy. There is, though, no standing entitlement to adult literacy and numeracy education in Jersey, whether this be as a first or second language.

There is no easily available data on literacy and numeracy levels in Jersey, but there is no reason to suppose that these levels are significantly different to the UK nations, where some level of entitled provision is made for adults. It is also likely, as in other nations, that numeracy and literacy levels are lower in economically disadvantaged groups, with a consequent impact on social equity and sustainability.

Moreover, a flexible and skilled workforce can only be achieved if adults can access re-skilling; without basic numeracy and literacy, and increasingly digital skills, they are unlikely to be able to access re-skilling provision.

Apprenticeships

Jersey's apprenticeship system has some strong features, most notably the mentoring and coaching support that is provided to young apprentices under the Trackers scheme. Apart from the Trackers support, however, it is essentially a 'parallel' system, rather than an 'integrated' system with off-the-job learning at Highlands, or with other providers, following a parallel trajectory from learning in the workplace.

An integrated strategy where learning in the workplace is extended and developed off the job would require more consistent assessment in the workplace and project work in college that is related directly to workplace experience. Such an approach would, however, require more staff and resource.

The costs of apprenticeship provision in Jersey is notably opaque, and most likely significantly underfunded, being effectively cross-subsidised from other funding schemes within Highlands College. A cooperative review of apprenticeship provision is underway between Skills Jersey, Highlands College and Edge (a charity expert in vocational education).

As well as recommending a further review of apprenticeship funding, the current review also proposes that funding for all apprenticeship provision be routed via Highlands College, which currently makes over 90% of the provision, with the proviso that they sub-contract provision where necessary and advantageous. This would have the benefit of reducing bureaucratic overheads and allow for more direct conversations with employers regarding provision.

Improvements in apprenticeship funding and more streamlined administration would allow Jersey to build upon the strengths of the current system to expand apprenticeship provision for young people and for existing employees to upskill.

Higher Technical and Professional Skills

As noted in Jersey Skills Strategy 2017-2022, a further area where Jersey lags behind other jurisdictions is in the provision of higher technical and professional skills at levels 4 and 5 (ie above A level equivalent but below full degree).

Such qualifications are most often focused on the needs of employers, offer a route for employees to improve their skills and prospects, and can improve productivity. They are also cost-effective compared to full degree provision (not least in a situation when most full degree provision is made away from Jersey).

Such provision is, however, inconsistently funded in Jersey and some key sectors are not fully engaged in this level of provision, including finance. Higher level apprenticeships are gaining traction in this area in the UK and in Australia, but part-time study, either individually or supported by an employer should also be available.

Higher Education

Higher education, beyond higher technical and professional skills, is not the direct concern of this paper, but many correspondents referred to the loss of Jersey graduates from the Island after they complete their studies in the UK and elsewhere. There are no politically acceptable or practicable means of forcing Jersey graduates to return to the Island.

More could be done, though, to communicate with undergraduates studying off-island, and subsequently as graduates, to help encourage their return, either immediately after graduating, or later.

One such means would be paid internships in Jersey businesses in vacations, particularly aimed at students without prior links to the industries concerned. The UK charity Career Ready has experience in arranging such internships with 'blue chip' firms in England and Scotland, particularly for students from disadvantaged backgrounds.

An entitlement to industry relevant short courses at a degree level, or lower level, would provide a further means by which graduating students could be encouraged to return to Jersey. For example, a graduating engineering graduate could complete a HND in applied engineering, or an arts graduate could complete a professional qualification such as marketing on returning to Jersey.

Population Policy

The draft population policy recently debated in the States Assembly,¹ identifies the constraints upon the population growth in Jersey and the interrelated constraints in importing skilled labour to redress emerging skills gaps.

The ministerial forward commits Jersey to:

'prioritise education, skills and lifelong learning to ensure that citizens are equipped to do the jobs that local businesses are going to need, and grow our talent pipeline for the future.'

The policy further argues that:

'That there was clear support for more action to be taken to improve education and skills training in the island to reduce the need for inward migration.'

The actions proposed below are fully consonant with the aims of the population policy. Moreover, in the public survey that informed the population policy, the need to invest in lifelong learning so that local workers can be retrained to adapt to new jobs and technology was the highest scoring policy option (76%).

STRUCTURES AND GOVERNANCE

Departmental Structures

Across the world, ownership of skills and further education policy oscillates between ministerial departments including education, economic and labour departments. This oscillation serves to demonstrate that policy in this area has cross-departmental dependencies, reflecting the requirement to be both student-centric and employer-responsive.

In many countries there is effectively co-ownership and development of policy in this area in order to recognise all dimensions,. In Jersey, this responsibility currently lies with Children, Young People Education and Skills (CYPES), but the Economy Department has a close interest in the way in which employers are supported, while Strategic Policy, Planning and Performance (SPPP) has a similarly close interest in relation to cross-cutting implications of policy in this area.

Employer Engagement

Jersey has a plethora of employer and sector based representative bodies, many of which are highly committed to the skills agenda. Skills Jersey has done good work in supporting the development of skills strategies in key sectors, but overall engagement with employers to support skills development and further education is not systematised. As a result, worthwhile strategies like the independent Economic Council's report, and the Workforce Strategy developed by the Jersey Employer Group, risk becoming further strategy without action.

Moreover, best practice observed in effective working between employers and training providers, as in the case of the Construction Sector, will not be more widely applied unless it is encouraged within a more established architecture.

¹ <https://statesassembly.gov.je/assemblypropositions/2021/p.116-2021.pdf> debated Feb 22.

The relatively recently established Jersey Employers' Group (JEG) is well-placed to provide an overarching structure for a more comprehensive two-way street conversation between education providers and employers, identifying skills key gaps, informing the curricula mix at Highlands College and advising on the balance of public investment in skills at the College, or with other providers.

To carry out this role JEG would, however, need to have access to up to date labour market intelligence and secretariat support. Both functions could potentially be provided by elements of Skills Jersey, supported by SPPP and/or Statistics Jersey, but would also require further investment in data collation and interpretation.

Highlands College

The curricula offer within a further education college and wider system must change more frequently and more extensively than that in schools (or universities), if it is to match the needs of the economy and employers, as well as students. Such agility and adaptability at Highlands College is constrained by current governance, HR practices and funding arrangements.

The need for greater autonomy in schools and Highlands College was identified in the Independent Review of School Funding, but the measure of autonomy required of an FE college is of a different order to a school with a more stable and fixed curricula offer.

A move to fully incorporated status - as is the case of colleges in England - is both impracticable and inappropriate in the small jurisdiction of Jersey. However, a review of Highlands College's status should be carried out.

Alternatives could include arms-length body status for all, or parts of the College, and/or setting up a subsidiary company to deliver employer-facing provision for adults at full-cost, or subsidised by Government of Jersey funding. Such greater autonomy would enable greater speed of response to arising requirements and forward investment in facilities, equipment and staff development.

Clearly, increased autonomy would need to be accompanied by greater accountability, both to the College Board, but also through agreed outcomes. These outcomes could be agreed in conjunction with JEG and CYPES and/or Department for the Economy on a rolling three-year basis. Correspondingly, with a formula derived funding for 16–18-year-olds, HE funding through current means, and separate funding for adult skills, the College would need to live within its means.

There would, however, be benefit in the College being able to generate and roll-forward surpluses (despite the constraints on funding compared to schools, Highlands has not accrued a significant deficit in recent past, indicating a good level of financial management and awareness in the Executive and the Board). The legal status of the College will, of course, be a factor in this regard.

Additional freedoms are also critical in relation to recruitment and employment practices if the College is to be able to vary its own skills mix to meet changing curriculum demands.

Consideration should also be given to the relationship of the College, which provides 90% of on- island HE, 90% of apprenticeships and 95% of vocational education, to CYPES. As in Guernsey, the College Principal could, in the future, be dual-hatted as College CEO and principal Skills Advisor to CYPES.

RE-PROVISION OF THE HIGHLANDS COLLEGE CAMPUS

Partially through an inability to accrue surpluses to fund estate renewal and the absence of a managed asset register, the Highlands Campus is no longer fit for purpose. This is the case in terms of generic teaching spaces which have become inflexible and expensive to maintain, but particularly in terms of providing the 'line of sight' to work that is a feature of good quality technical and professional education.

There are various options for the re-provision of the Highlands campus, including a well-developed plan for development within the current college estate footprint, but there may be further options that could be considered, including the co-use of employer facilities for training and a hub and spoke arrangement. Whatever form the re-provision of the campus takes, it will provide the opportunity for various elements of the skills offer in Jersey to be brought together as a 'shop window' to employers and Islanders, demonstrating the seriousness with which the Government of Jersey takes the development of a robust and productive workforce.

In the context of a re-provisioned campus, Highlands College could develop into a series of 'branded offers' relating to particular sectors and based upon partnerships with employers (eg Hospitality Academy, Engineering Academy, Digital Academy, 16-18 College, University College, Business Schools).

In some cases, the College would deliver provision directly, in others it would act as landlord to partners (as in the case of the current arrangements with the Institute of Law and the Marine Research Department of Exeter University).

A re-provisioned campus could also provide the opportunity to attract overseas students in a sustainable way, making use of Jersey's attractions as a safe and pleasant study destination. Accommodation needs for this purpose could usefully be coordinated with residential accommodation for the new hospital at Overdale.

DATA

Data relating to Jersey's FE and Skills system is partial and is not joined up with other government databases. This thereby precludes the potential to develop and utilise timely labour market intelligence to facilitate NEET identification and prevention, and the analysis of the impact of educational interventions.

FUNDING

Applying the rationale outlined above and enabling the actions that follow will have funding implications that will need to be calculated.

However, changes to the funding formula needed for 16-18 education - and to provide for a Jersey Skills Fund - would be controllable on an annual basis: the former through control of the core funding rate, and the latter through the sum allocated by year. Funds for the re-provision of the Highlands campus will need to be identified within the next Government Plan, but this need has been registered in preliminary discussions. The staffing implications of the proposals are intended to be cost-neutral.

ACTIONS

The actions proposed here aim to address the issues facing Jersey's FE and skills system, drawing upon the rationale above and the recommendations in preceding strategy documents. This include: the Strategy for Post-16 Education published in 2019, the report of the Independent Economic Council in 2021, The Big Education Conversation, The Independent Review of School Funding, and the Jersey Workforce Strategy.

They have also been informed by emerging recommendations of the ongoing Inclusion Review and the review of Higher Education funding. They are fully aligned with the draft Common Population Policy which was debated on 8 February 2022.

16-19 Technical Education

1. Raise the participation age to age 18, with a corresponding entitlement and requirement for all young people to be in full-time education, or employment with training.
2. Young people that do not gain a level 3 qualification by age 18 to have the option of continuing full-time education until age 19.
3. Young people with special education needs to be entitled to full-time education until age 25.
4. Funding to follow the learner for all 16–19-year-olds (and up to age 25 for SEND), based upon a transparent formula.²
5. Provide additional funding beyond core funding for young people who do not achieve a benchmark standard in English and mMaths. These young people to receive tuition in English and maths in addition to their core technical or academic studies.
6. The curricula mix offered at Highlands College to be subject to consultation with JEG.

Skills and Education Post-19

7. A Jersey Skills Fund to be established to enable a systematic approach to be taken in skilling, re-skilling and up-skilling Jersey's workforce.³
8. Separately, but critically, funding to be made available for adult numeracy and literacy up to level 2, including for speakers of overseas languages if they meet existing residency requirements.
9. The allocation of funds to the Jersey Skills Fund to be made initially on an annual basis, with consideration being given to moving to a 3-year indicative budget.
10. Private providers to be able to bid for funding from the Jersey Skills Fund, or act as a sub-contractor to Highlands College.
11. The mix of courses to be funded from the Jersey Skills Fund to be informed by consultation with JEG.

Apprenticeships

12. As recommended in the recent Jersey Apprenticeships review, funding for all apprenticeships to be routed via Highlands College.

² The formula proposed by the Independent School Funding Review provides a model that could be developed for this purpose

³ The *Retrain* scheme developed by Skills Jersey under the Fiscal Stimulus could provide the foundation of a permanent Jersey Skills Fund with provision for those actively seeking work (ASW), those seeking to change jobs and those seeking to increase their skills to Level 3-5 in priority sectors.

13. The costs of apprenticeship delivery to be reviewed and adjusted to realistic levels.
14. A further review to be completed to determine how best to further integrate off-the-job and on-the-job learning in apprenticeships.

Higher Technical and Professional Education

15. Higher apprenticeships in a wider range of trades and professions to be promoted in conjunction with JEG, as an alternative to traditional higher education.
16. The range of level 4 and 5 qualifications funded via the existing higher education funding provisions to be reviewed and potentially extended.
17. In sectors critical to the economy, level 4 and 5 qualifications to be made available to graduates returning from overseas study, via an extension to the existing higher education funding scheme.

Higher Education

18. CYPES and Skills Jersey to maintain communication with Jersey students studying overseas, promoting job opportunities in Jersey.
19. Paid vacation internships in Finance and other sectors to be promoted to Jersey students studying overseas.

Departmental Structures

20. Provision to be made for cross-departmental representation between CYPES and the Department for the Economy whenever FE and Skills are being discussed, with policy documents relating to skills being routinely circulated to the Minister for Economic Development, Tourism, Sport and Culture. .
21. Establish a Principal Skills Advisor to CYPES and the Department for the Economy.

Employer Engagement

22. Establish JEG as a permanent consultative body, advising on the curricula mix offered at Highlands College and the allocation of funding from the Jersey Skills Fund, with secretariat functions provided by Skills Jersey.
23. JEG supported by Skills Jersey to develop skills strategies for each of the key business sectors in Jersey.
24. Skills Jersey to develop more comprehensive labour market intelligence to inform JEG's considerations.

Highlands College

25. Review the legal status of Highlands College with a view to increasing its autonomy, in order to respond more quickly and effectively to changing skills requirements in Jersey's workforce.
26. Allow the College greater freedom to shape, re-shape and develop its workforce to underwrite greater flexibility and responsiveness.
27. Consistent with greater autonomy, accountability arrangements for the College to be made more formal and to extend beyond budgetary controls, most likely to be in the form of an outcome agreement, developed in conjunction with CYPES and JEG.
28. Functions of Skills Jersey to be reviewed with a view to reallocating functions within CYPES
29. The Digital Skills Academy to serve as an exemplar in Highlands College of developing a series of branded 'offers' corresponding to particular industry sectors.

Re-provision of the Highlands Campus

30. Funding to be secured to re-provide the Highlands Campus to be informed by existing business cases.
31. In parallel, an options study to be completed on the most cost-effective means of re-providing the campus, including a hub and spoke model.
32. The re-provided campus to be seen as a shop window for FE and Skills to students, parents and employers.
33. The re-provided campus to be a vehicle for collaboration between Highlands College and other providers in Jersey, as well as prospective university partners.

Data

34. The data requirements of a responsive and effective skills system to be factored into the planned Integrated Technology System (ITS).
35. Skills Jersey to commission improved labour market intelligence to be used by CYPES, JEG and Highlands College to inform curriculum planning and accountability.
36. Consideration to be given to the use of the JY number as a unique learner identifier allowing student progress to be followed through all Government-funded education; this number to be cross-referenced to revenue records to allow for assessment of effectiveness of Government-funded educational interventions.

Funding

37. Model and assess the funding requirements of the actions proposed.