



University of the  
Highlands and Islands  
Argyll College



Briefing Paper March 2017

## Introduction

Argyll College UHI provides high quality innovative educational opportunities, contributing to the development of the Argyll economy and enhancing the quality of life for the communities we serve.

Argyll College is one of the 13 partner institutions of the University of the Highlands and Islands, and we are Argyll's largest provider of further and higher education. Argyll College UHI works closely with the regions schools, giving over 200 school pupils access to college courses as an integral part of their school curriculum. We provide a wide range certified training and professional development opportunities for local businesses.

The college was established in 1997 and since then has grown rapidly, now fulfilling the needs of more than 1600 students across a network of local learning centres located throughout the region.

The institution's annual graduation ceremony is held in Oban and the 2016 event was the largest ever, with 56 different qualifications being conferred to over 100 students, three quarters of whom received a Higher Education Award.

In recent years Argyll College has increased curricular provision and both the number and success rates of students, against a very challenging financial background.



## Who We Are

### Structure

Argyll College UHI Ltd is a not-for-profit limited company and a registered Scottish charity which is governed by a Board of up to 16 Governors. Our principal source of funding is Scottish Funding Council's (SFC) further and higher education funds.

We operate 9 staffed Learning Centres throughout Argyll in the towns of Campbeltown, Dunoon, Lochgilphead (2 centres) and Oban, and the islands of Arran, Bute, Islay and Mull. We also provide access to further and higher education in collaboration with partners in the communities of Helensburgh, Coll and Tiree.

Each Learning centre is equipped with computers, high-speed internet access, video conferencing facilities and student study areas. We offer a flexible approach to learning, allowing study by open and online learning as well as through face to face teaching.

Oban is home to our largest centre. Originally located at Dunstaffnage, we soon outgrew this location and relocated to Glenshellach Business Park in February 2010. In 2016, with teaching space becoming a major issue in this centre, the college reconfigured the bottom floor of the building to provide further teaching space. As a result 11 staff who have college wide remits, including the Principal, have been moved to temporary accommodation in the West Highland Housing Association (WHHA) offices.



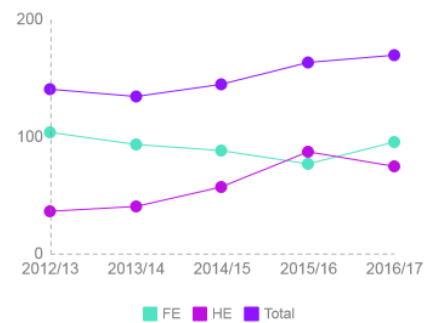
### Student Population

The majority of our full time students (65%) are young people aged between 16 and 24 years old: 72% of FE students are in this age range and 58% of HE students fit this profile.

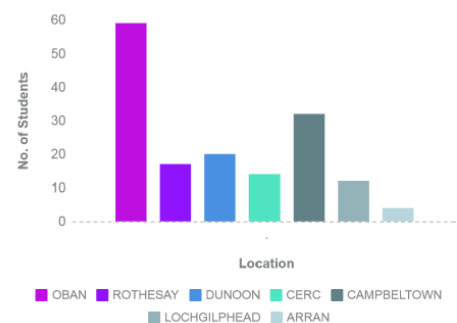
There are currently 463 students based in our Oban centre which constitutes 30% of our entire student population. Of these, 169 are full-time students, a figure which has increased by over 20% in the past five years.

Over that period the number of Further Education students based in Oban has remained relatively static at around 100, but we have seen an increase in students studying Higher Education courses at SCQF level 7 and above, from 36 in 2013/14 to 74 in the current academic year.

Oban Full Time Students



FT FE Students Locations 2015-16



## Staff Resource

Argyll College UHI currently has 251 employees across all centres, and more than a quarter of staff are based in Oban, including the majority of the college's full time staff.

The number of staff employed in our Oban Centre, and temporarily annexed in WHHA, has increased by 28 % since 2014. We currently have 44 teaching staff and 23 support staff based in Oban.

Staff qualifications, particularly in teaching, continue to increase, and we now meet the key Scottish Funding Council indicator of 100% of full time teaching staff having a teaching qualification. Part time teaching staff are also encouraged to access a range of qualifications and this also continues to increase.

## What We Do

### Little Learners' Nursery, Dunstaffnage.

Little Learners' nursery is owned and operated by Argyll College UHI and registered with the Care Inspectorate. The nursery was named Best Independent Nursery in Scotland in 2015 at the Scottish Nursery Awards. The facility provides full day care for up to 32 children from the ages of 3 months to 5 years for 50 weeks of the year and is commissioned by Argyll and Bute council to provide preschool education for children between the ages of 3-5 years who are eligible.

The nursery has operated at full capacity for the last 7 years and currently has 19 children on a waiting list. Demand is so high that in recent years we have been unable to place children.

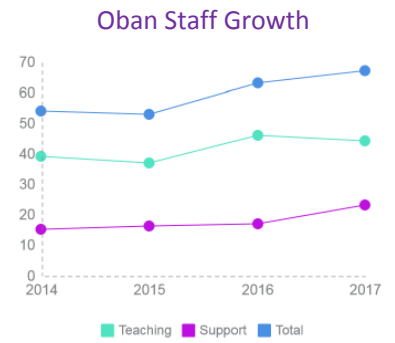
The facility annually supports placement opportunities for six Argyll College students studying Childhood Practice. The number of staff employed in the nursery has increased from 10 in 2013, to a current figure of 18; all staff employed at the nursery, apart from the Nursery Manager, have previously been Argyll College students.

### Schools

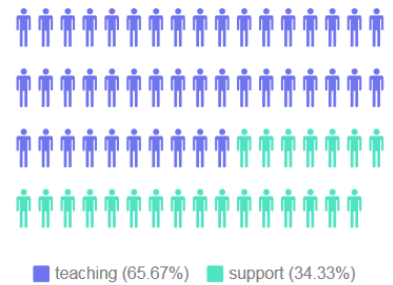
Argyll College UHI work closely with the region's high schools providing Skills for Work courses, Foundation Apprenticeships and Nations 4s, 5s and Highers to senior phase pupils as part of their school curriculum.

In Oban, High School pupils have access to Childcare, Automotive Skills, Engineering Skills, Construction Skills, Rural Skills, Maritime Skills, Cosmetology, Hairdressing, Travel and Tourism, Aquaculture as well as to a range of online first year degree modules from the University of the Highlands and Islands.

In 2016 we implemented a cross curricular 'Field to Fork' competition to encourage senior school pupils to work with local businesses to investigate the area's food and drink and hospitality industries and create a menu of local produce.



### Oban Current Staff



Tobermory High School

Winners of 2016 Field to Fork Competition



## Further Education (FE)

Over 30 individual full and part time Further Education courses (up to SCQF level 6) are available at Argyll College UHI. The curriculum is designed to support the economic growth of Argyll and subjects range from Hospitality and Tourism, to Construction and Engineering, Horticulture and Agriculture to Sport and Maritime as well as Administration, Business and Computing. The student success rates for Hospitality, Land-based Industries and Performing Arts students are higher than the national average for these subjects.

Statistics released by the Scottish Funding Council for the year 2015-16, show the proportion of Further Education (FE) students completing full-time courses at Argyll College UHI has increased by a huge 13.7% over the last three years.

The overall total of 72.3% of successful completions is now nearly 7% above the national average, putting the college ahead of the pack in terms of successfully supporting its FE students through to the end of their chosen courses.

The figures also show a 19.6% increase over the last year in the corresponding figure for part-time Argyll College UHI students (on courses taking up more than 320 hours), which is now 80.6%. This is 6% above the national average.

More than half of FE students progress into Higher Education whilst almost a third go directly into employment.

## Higher Education (HE)<sup>1</sup>

The college delivers a wide range of Higher Education courses (SCQF level 7 and above) including HNCs, HNDs and SVQs, across a curriculum which reflects the Further Education provision and offers clear progression routes for students.

The college has continued to increase the number of students in higher education and is the fastest growing partner of UHI in terms of HE student numbers.

## University of the Highlands and Islands (UHI)

We continue to develop as a partner within the University of the Highlands and Islands. Students can access the range of undergraduate degrees offered by the University.

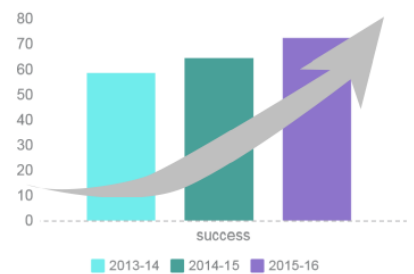
Argyll College delivered the Professional Graduate Diploma in Education (PGDE) for primary teaching in Oban for the first time in 2015-16 in conjunction with A&BC, and will expand this to include the PGDE for secondary teaching in the coming academic year, covering subject areas of business studies, mathematics, home economics, chemistry and science, physics and science, and technical education.

During 2016-17 Argyll College have collaborated closely with SAMs, another academic partner of UHI, to develop and deliver HNC Applied Sciences for the first time in Oban. The course utilises facilities of both partners and provides an entry route to BSc Applied Science with UHI.

<sup>1</sup> Statistics relating to HE student success rates are collated by UHI at a regional level.



Last year 74.9% of full-time, further education students completed their course, and 72.3% of them successfully achieved their qualification.



That's increased by 13.7% over



Argyll College UHI average National Average

80.6% of our part time students, who study for more than 320 hours, have a successful outcome; that's 6% above the national average.

## Supporting the Local Economy

### Working with Partners

We work closely with a range of public, private and third sector partners to deliver our remit, including local employers, Schools, Oban Communities Trust, Bid4Oban, Skills Development Scotland (SDS), JobCentre Plus, Business Gateway, Developing the Young Workforce; and of course A&BC.

### Apprenticeships

We have recently been successful in a bid to SDS to deliver 56 modern apprenticeships (MA) in a wide range of employment areas including Business, Administration, Landbased industries, Engineering, Energy, Hospitality and Tourism, Hairdressing, Sport, Health and Social Care. This constitutes a significant increase in the number and scope of MAs that we can offer and further strengthens the college's engagement with local employers.

### Perle Hotel, Oban

Tourism is a major cornerstone of the Argyll Economy and our FE hospitality students have a higher success rate than the national average. We are working closely with The Perle Hotel to build a lasting relationship which will see us provide training for their staff in the areas of catering and hospitality. The hotel is also keen to provide high quality work placements to ensure that students leave us work ready.

### Rockfield Centre, Oban

In May 2015 Oban Communities Trust took ownership of the former Rockfield School building in the centre of Oban with the ambition to transform it into a creative cultural hub for the town. Argyll College UHI is working with the Trust with the aim of supporting their longer term educational goals.

### Oban as a University Town

Argyll College UHI is a key member of the Oban University Town Steering Group. We support the vision and aims of this initiative and in particular are committed to the identified work streams of 'Developing the Academic Offer' and 'Accommodation'.



## Next Steps

We are working to more closely align our curriculum to local economic drivers and this planning is informed by HIE Skills Investment Plans, the EKOS Compelling Argyll & Bute Report, and information from the Community Planning Partnership. We have identified the following developments for new curriculum areas:

### BSc Nursing

We are eager to position ourselves to deliver the BSc Nursing as part of the recently formed UHI School of Health, Social Care and Wellbeing. Oban would be the location for delivery given our close proximity to Lorne and the Isles District General Hospital which would allow us to mix practical experience in the hospital with theory classes in Argyll College.

### Maritime

Argyll College UHI is committed to providing training that develops a work-ready workforce within the Maritime sector in Argyll. Current provision includes the RYA Powerboat 2 syllabus, VHF, 1st Aid, Marine Diesel, and day / Coastal Skipper Navigation Theory certificates, and SQA Skills for Work Maritime Skills.

Highlands and Islands Enterprise (HIE) have recently commission research into Argyll's Maritime and Aquaculture sectors, and we are aware that there may be a proposal to develop a Maritime Facility near to Oban as part of Oban as a University Town project.

We would be fully supportive of this as it would allow us to significantly expand our current maritime provision to include a range of courses to support the development of the sector. We are currently involved in the development of the new Modern Apprenticeship in Boatbuilding which we would hope to deliver in Oban along with Modern Apprenticeship schemes in Workboats, and Able Seafarer, and the Diploma in Maritime Studies: Marinas and Boatyards, as well as a Modern Apprenticeship in Aquaculture.

### BA Rural Business Management

Argyll College UHI is working with HIE and others to bring this concept to reality and the role of the College would be enhanced by leading a degree programme that is relevant to the needs of local communities and also attractive to students from outwith the area.

A degree with a strong emphasis on entrepreneurship that is focused on the characteristics and challenges of economic development in coastal communities will contribute strongly to this goal.

Our intention is to create a broad-based management qualification that will that will provide learners with the management skills they will need to establish their own business and/or prepare learners for a career in rural business management. Significant focus will be placed on developing entrepreneurial approaches to sustainable community development. The degree will offer a pathway from further education as well as Higher National certificate routes.



## Challenges

Given the growth we've experienced in the past 4 years (20% student numbers and 28% staff numbers in Oban) space in our Oban centre is in great demand.

We will require additional space in Oban to accommodate the new curricular developments outlined above, as well as increase and expand existing curriculum areas. Capital funding is required to allow us to expand the centre at Glenshellach. Despite recent reallocation of space to form two additional teaching rooms we estimate that we actually require double the 1130 square meters that the Oban centre represents.

As we strive to attract more students to Oban from outwith the region, we will need to provide dedicated student accommodation. This is one of the priorities of Oban as a University Town.

The college continues to be challenged by the increase in targeted numbers of credits with diminished unit of resource provided by SFC.

