



Ruskin College Oxford

Part of the University of West London Group

[Ruskin College Annual Accountability Statement 2023/24

Purpose

Ruskin College Oxford was founded in 1899 to enable access to higher education opportunities for all, not just the elite. As part of this mission Ruskin is committed to supporting access routes into HE, alongside its core purpose of providing HE opportunities. This accountability statement relates solely to the work Ruskin does to support routes to HE, rather than its whole purpose and mission. This Accountability Statement should be read in the context of our overarching mission, vision and values:

Mission

To provide the best level of education and inclusion opportunities to those who may be excluded or disadvantaged, and to transform their lives.

Vision

A society where everyone has access to quality education regardless of their background, and the opportunity to fulfil their potential.

Values

- ✓ Students first: providing inspirational teaching and learning opportunities
- ✓ Respect: valuing everyone, all the time
- ✓ Equality, diversity and inclusion: creating a supportive environment
- ✓ Excellence: setting high expectations
- ✓ Pride, celebration and loyalty: positive attitudes towards studying and working

Context and Place

Ruskin College is based in Oxford, and currently supports around 2000 learners per year. These are predominantly on introductory Trade Union courses, delivered in partnership with Trade Unions for the members around the country (including in London where the activity is supported by funding from the Greater London Authority). In 2021 the University of West London acquired the College in order to ensure its survival, and it is now a wholly owned subsidiary of the University.

Ruskin College has always had a focus and outlook that is National, drawing on a century of activity to support a widening access to higher education. Since taking over Ruskin College, the University has been developing a vision for Ruskin College to provide a link to local Further Education with 'stepping-stones' to Higher Education, through undergraduate and post-graduate degrees (modular and free standing; full and part-time) apprenticeships, and a broader curriculum, provision at different skills levels (Level 3 and foundation). One of the aims is to take advantage funding changes over the next few years to create a highly modularised portfolio that can be accessed as short credit bearing CPD, shorter awards (CertHE, DipHE) or full standard degree (by module or by stage), alongside a focus on rebuilding the HE portfolio, which has always been the College's core mission.

This will offer multiple entry points and the ability for learners to accumulate credit toward the next award or qualification. The curriculum will be set within the rubric 'public service careers' and will include inter alia: public administration, health and social care (to include child, mental health, and standard nursing), education and early childhood, allied health, criminal justice, voluntary and community work, politics and trade union activity. These areas will have the following themes embedded within them:

- Leadership, management, and representation in not-for-profit sector
- Education, health and social care, dementia care, early childhood
- Digital knowledge, data analysis, digital communications, social media etc.
- Public administration, human and social science, criminal justice, sustainability, voluntary and community work, trade unions, and gender studies

A 'Skills escalator' approach will ensure that all elements of the curriculum, at all levels, will allow progression for learners as well as entry points that are appropriate for their stage of learning. In practice, this means that the skills focus for Ruskin will be on higher level skills and the FE curriculum in development will broadly create pathways to these degrees as part of this skills escalator (see Appendix 1), including pathways that led learners to other providers on their educational journey.

Approach to developing the accountability statement

From a starting point of reviewing on the Oxfordshire LEP Skills Advisory Panel Skills and Labour Market Research, A Report by Hatch Regeneris plus the University's wider understanding of the labour market analysis within the UK, a viable plan for Ruskin College has been formulated to meet the needs of both the local and national communities and the wider stakeholder demands, recognising and considering the expertise Ruskin College can provide.

This Accountability Statement has been developed from the vision the Board and UWL have for Ruskin, to develop an escalator that supports those engaging with relatively low levels of learning (Community Learning and short TU Representative training) all the way to post-graduate study. This is ambitious, and UWL recognises this will take time to develop. Key factors underpinning this approach are:

- Starting point and previous reviews undertaken by Ruskin: UWL undertook an immediate review of provision as part of the turnaround and agreed to proceed with initiatives that formed part of the escalator – an idea initially proposed when UWL considered participation in the Structure and Prospects Appraisal for Ruskin College. Account was taken of a report commissioned prior to UWL taking over on local skills needs. Discussions with staff over existing contacts and capability was instructive with regard to the development and decisions around the introduction of new Community Learning provision.
- National Skills needs, and the need to ensure Higher Education provides real value for money to those that self-fund through loans. The broad curriculum focus will be on 'public service', an approach which will build on the links with the Trade Unions and UWL's strength in professional health & social care courses and policing combined with the desire to differentiate an offer for a market. It is anticipated that ultimately the offer needs to be flexible and blended in approach, drawing on Ruskin's history as a residential college and taking advantage of learning technologies now available to widen reach. A key initiative that is seen as pivotal will be the development of Lifelong Learning entitlements (anticipated for 2025) that open new routes for individuals to gain degrees over a longer more flexible time period.
- Union Skills needs. In October 2021 UWL committed to continue to support our Union partners with their initial TU Representative training. This involves agreeing and co-designing curriculum content as well planning delivery. The next stage is to develop progression pathways ultimately to be embedding in a planned degree in Trade Union studies, with supporting Level 3 provision to provide a progression to this degree. Early discussions have also been held around moving an existing postgraduate programme to Ruskin College, to support higher-level skills and leadership development within the Unions.
- Oxford Skills Needs. As part of this development Ruskin is engaging with Oxford County Council, local NHS organisations, job clubs, a variety of local community and voluntary groups, Ox Cam ARC, OxLEP (including participating in provider networks), and with Thames Valley Chamber of Commerce as part of their role in developing the LSIP. A key will be ongoing identification of provision which supports the evolving LSIP and to identify how to retain more graduates with Higher level skills in the regions. Part of this development has also seen a recent move to reintroduce community learning, based on discussions with local groups in what their members would want. Ruskin sees this as the start of their skills and educational journey, and the next phase will be establishing progression (both within Ruskin/UWL and the wider regional education sector).

- London Skills needs (as Ruskin has traditionally drawn down AEB funding for the GLA region based on TU Education provision). The GLA is also keen for a greater visibility of Ruskin, and this is being provisionally based as 'Ruskin in London'. Through UWL's links into the skills ecosystem for London (as an Apprenticeship provider, provider of Higher-level skills and education, and through GLA-AEB funded provision), UWL is already engaged with the development of the LSIP and local bodies such as the West London Alliance, West London Business, and local and city-wide Chambers of Commerce. The 'Ruskin in London' offer will complement other local provision, with a particular focus on working with our Union partners on their skills needs and tackling in-work poverty of their members through supporting them to develop their skills.
- Keeping promises: With regard to skills provision, the recent history of Ruskin College prior to its acquisition by UWL was a series of inflated promises followed by non-delivery or cancelled courses. This has resulted in scepticism and a lack of trust. Since taking over, UWL has committed to ensuring that we fulfil our promises and maintain the continuity of the courses that we run, accepting in the short-term this may not always be immediately self-sustaining but can be run within the broader picture of Ruskin's financial health.
- Integration into UWL: The acquisition of Ruskin by UWL brings new possibilities, notably the internal progression to courses delivered by Ruskin and to those within a broader UWL portfolio. As part of this process, functional skills provision will be brought into alignment with UWL's provision. This integration brings resources (online library access etc.) while allowing Ruskin to retain (or rediscover) its individual focus and positioning for HE. This does mean, however, that discussion of impact on skills needs blurs the realms of FE and HE (beyond the specific remit of this Accountability Agreement).
- Financial Viability: Historic poor management has left a legacy that UWL continues to address. UWL has committed to ensuring Ruskin is financially viable and has effectively turned round the position in remarkable time. All future development must reinforce and support this position and therefore developments and investments of resources must be planned and rolled out in financially sustainable ways. Ultimately the full skills and education escalator will mean the TU Education and Community Learning courses are feeder programmes, thereby reducing the pressure upon them to be completely self-sustaining financially.

Contribution to National, Regional and local priorities

Aim/Objective	Impact and/or Contribution towards National, Regional and Local Priorities for Learning and Skills
Engage with local stakeholders and providers to ensure any FE developments aimed at the local market complementary to existing provision, and contribute to local skills needs	<p>Key Activity:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review of Community Learning portfolio to reflect emerging LSIP • Development of Community Learning 'Digital Skills' provision (minimum one additional course with 30 learners during 23/24) • Launch of L1-2 Functional Skills courses (with 50 learners during 23/24) <p>Impact/Contribution:</p> <p>This activity will continue to build a stronger connection for Ruskin to the local community. Reflecting the needs of local employers, this will provide opportunities for learners to gain skills that will enhance their employability.</p> <p>This links to Ruskin's Strategic Aim</p> <p>1: Re-energise Ruskin College and its brand</p> <p>2: Create a 'mixed-economy' institution with a blend of FE and HE</p> <p>4: Re-configure lifelong learning</p> <p>5: Drive widening participation, access and opportunity</p> <p>6: Develop a credit-based knowledge and skills escalator with multiple entry points</p>
Explore opportunities for funding a variety of courses as part of the Ruskin Escalator, but where more appropriate build routes of referral to other local providers.	<p>Key Activity:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In year launch of planned Functional Skills courses at Level s 1 and 2 (with 50 learners during 23/24) • Options appraisal, planning and project management of the development of a new 'Pre-Access' provision to provide a route through to Access to HE courses for Community Learners (as part of the Ruskin Skills Escalator). Planned for a launch in September 2024. • Builds stronger networks and relationships with other local providers to establish progression pathways. <p>Impact/Contribution:</p> <p>Providing opportunities for social mobility and leveraging education to enhance life opportunities is at the core of Ruskin Colleges' mission. Ruskin recognizes that scale, and its core focus on developing a robust and sustainable HE provision, means it is unlikely to be able to offer an extensive range of FE courses. Therefore, the priority is to focus on a limited development of FE provision, matched to areas of local skills need. Coupled with enhancing relationships with other local FE providers, pathways for learners to develop skills needed to support employment will be more firmly established.</p> <p>This links to Ruskin's Strategic Aim</p> <p>1: Re-energise Ruskin College and its brand</p> <p>2: Create a 'mixed-economy' institution with a blend of FE and HE</p> <p>4: Re-configure lifelong learning</p> <p>5: Drive widening participation, access and opportunity</p> <p>6: Develop a credit-based knowledge and skills escalator with multiple entry points</p>

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<p>Work with core TU partners to ensure longer term viability TU Education at Ruskin</p>	<p>Key Activities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Secure agreement with main Trade Unions partners to ensure financial sustainability of a national offer, in the context of future increased devolution of AEB funding. Develop appropriate funded HE courses suitable for TU representatives, to develop and progress within their Union roles. <p>Impact/Contribution:</p> <p>This builds on Ruskin Colleges well-established contribution to building skills within the national workforce, through the development of Trade's Union Representatives. The key Union relationships map to areas of national skills priority (in particular: construction, manufacturing, digital and technology, health and social care, haulage and logistics, and engineering). In a difficult financial context for being able to offer a national approach to Unions, the development of a sustainable HE provision allows for FE-level TU courses to act as a feeder. Through reducing the risk that this skills provision will be unsustainable through AEB funding, this key skills provision will be safeguarded.</p> <p>This links to Ruskin's Strategic Aim</p> <p>1: Re-energise Ruskin College and its brand</p> <p>2: Create a 'mixed-economy' institution with a blend of FE and HE</p> <p>6: Develop a credit-based knowledge and skills escalator with multiple entry points</p>
<p>Promote learner preparation for next steps</p>	<p>Key Activities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Enhancing progression for Community Learners (to respond to an area for further improvement highlighted by Ofsted, through: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> implementing new practice for recording planned next steps from community learners, and support to identify potential progression routes on an individual basis building from more robust initial assessment processes enhancing the focus and progression assessment for the Job Club. 'Progression sessions' to be implemented for all courses to advise upon further courses, volunteering opportunities and possible employment opportunities <p>Impact/Contribution:</p> <p>This activity will support local skills development, by providing clear information, advice and guidance to learners on potential pathways to further develop and enhance their skills.</p> <p>This links to Ruskin's Strategic Aim</p> <p>1: Re-energise Ruskin College and its brand</p> <p>2: Create a 'mixed-economy' institution with a blend of FE and HE</p> <p>4: Re-configure lifelong learning</p> <p>5: Drive widening participation, access and opportunity</p> <p>6: Develop a credit-based knowledge and skills escalator with multiple entry points</p>

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Achieve a rating of 'Good' for Ofsted	<p>Key Activities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve 'Safeguarding' to ensure both 'Leadership and Management' and overall effectiveness achieve an overall inspection grading of 'Good' • Building on the grading of other aspects of provision as 'Good' enhance this through implementing continual improvement and development of the skills escalator <p>Impact/Contribution:</p> <p>This activity will support local skills development, by enhancing what we deliver and ensuring Ruskin College is recognised as a strong provider of local, regional and national skills provision.</p> <p>This links to Ruskin's Strategic Aim</p> <p>1: Re-energise Ruskin College and its brand</p> <p>4: Re-configure lifelong learning</p> <p>5: Drive widening participation, access and opportunity</p> <p>6: Develop a credit-based knowledge and skills escalator with multiple entry points</p>

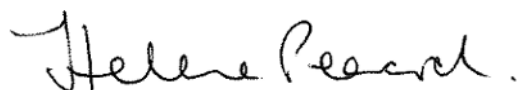
Corporate Statement

On behalf of Ruskin College Oxford, it is hereby confirmed that the plan as set out above reflects an agreed statement of purpose, aims and objectives as approved by the Board of Trustees on 25th April 2023.

The plan will be published on the college's website, and can be accessed from the following link:

<https://www.ruskin.ac.uk/accountability-statement>

Chair of Trustees Dated: 20 July 2023



Principal and Accounting Officer



Other relevant documents

Appendix 1: Ruskin College Skills Escalator

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Pre	Level 1&2	Level 3																		
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Level 4

TU HE Modules (Pathways extension)
Oxford (blended)
Ruskin in London

UG Degree

TU degree (inc APEL of L4)
Oxford (blended)
Ruskin in London

Ruskin degree portfolio
Oxford
Oxford (blended)

PG Degree

Union Leadership
Oxford (blended)
Ruskin in London

Ruskin PG portfolio
Oxford
Oxford (blended)

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