

Leadership Success Profile

College of West Anglia
Chief Operating Officer

College of
West Anglia



The Organisation

Organisational Context and Priorities

The College of West Anglia has a clear focus on delivering an excellent, inclusive and safe experience for all learners. The College's strategic direction is centred on a 'learner first' culture, continuous improvement, inclusion throughout the student journey, supporting the ambition for excellence and positive outcomes for all students.

Role purpose

The Chief Operating Officer will act as a trusted strategic advisor to the Principal / Chief Executive Officer and the Corporation, providing professional leadership across Finance, Human Resources, Health and Safety, Funding and Property Services. The role is central to ensuring the College remains financially resilient, operationally effective and well positioned to deliver its strategic ambitions.

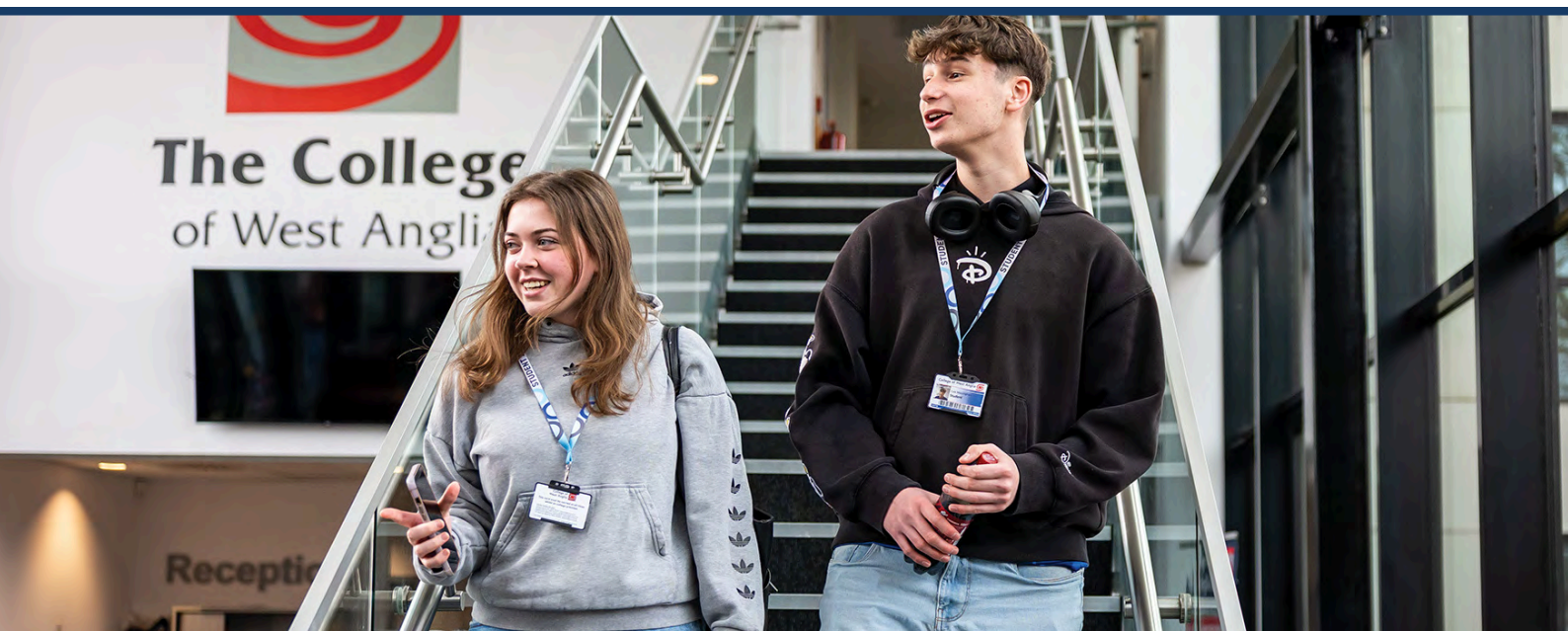
The postholder will participate fully in determining the strategic direction of the College, work with governors, senior leaders and other managers to develop executive strategies and champion efficient and effective service delivery. The role also carries responsibility as the College's most senior financial officer.



What success looks like

Success in this role will be seen through strong financial stewardship, effective operational leadership and clear contribution to the College's strategic ambitions. The postholder will be successful if they can demonstrate:

- A strong and sustainable financial position, with effective financial planning, control, forecasting and reporting.
- Delivery of the approved Medium-Term Financial Plan and budgeted profitability targets.
- Accurate, timely and useful management information for governors, senior leaders and budget holders.
- Strong governance support, including effective leadership of Finance and General Purposes Committee and Audit and Risk Committee.
- Robust compliance with financial regulations, procurement requirements, statutory obligations and funding body expectations.
- Effective oversight of internal and external audit activity.
- Safe, timely and well-controlled delivery of major capital and building projects.
- Progress on property, estates, digital and ICT priorities in line with strategic plans.
- A high-performance, inclusive and values-led culture across professional services.
- Strong support for workforce development, staff wellbeing and organisational resilience.
- Clear contribution to improved learner retention, achievement and progression through effective enabling services.



Key strategic priorities

The role is closely aligned to the College's Strategic Plan 2025 to 2028 and will be expected to deliver against the following priorities:

- Use resources to achieve maximum impact
- Strengthen financial health, cash and profitability
- Improve project management and delivery discipline
- Deliver the Property Strategy and support estates optimisation
- Improve ICT infrastructure and digital capability
- Embed a strong risk management culture
- Support net zero ambitions and environmental sustainability
- Strengthen workforce capability, staff engagement and wellbeing
- Ensure professional services are aligned to curriculum and learner needs
- Support the College's response to regional skills priorities and stakeholder expectations.

The role also supports the wider strategic ambitions to deliver outstanding learner success, improve social and economic prosperity and develop a culture of support, inclusivity, empowerment and high performance.

Key challenges

The postholder will need to lead in a complex and demanding environment. The main challenges include:

- Maintaining financial resilience while supporting investment in teaching, estates and technology.
- Ensuring the College continues to meet external financial, regulatory and audit expectations.
- Delivering major projects safely, on time and within budget.
- Strengthening operational consistency across professional services.
- Supporting a positive and ambitious culture across teams.
- Managing competing priorities, tight deadlines and multiple stakeholder expectations.
- Ensuring risk, compliance, health and safety and organisational resilience remain strong.
- Contributing to improved learner retention and completion, which Ofsted identified as an area for improvement.

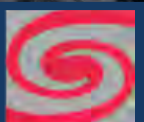


Ofsted judged the College to be Good overall and Good for leadership and management, but also noted that too many learners and apprentices leave their programmes early. This means the role will need to support the wider organisational response to retention and completion.

First-year priorities

In the first 12 months, the postholder will be expected to focus on the following:

- Establishing strong working relationships with the Principal/CEO, governors, senior leaders and functional heads.
- Reviewing financial performance, forecasts, controls and reporting arrangements.
- Ensuring the College is well prepared for audit, regulatory scrutiny and governance reporting.
- Supporting delivery of the annual budget and Medium-Term Financial Plan.
- Progressing key estates, property, ICT and capital priorities.
- Reviewing professional services performance and alignment to strategic priorities.
- Strengthening risk management, compliance and organisational resilience.
- Supporting workforce planning, staff engagement and wellbeing activity.
- Contributing to actions that improve learner retention, achievement and progression.
- Building confidence across the organisation through visible, values-led leadership.



Success indicators for the first 12 to 24 months

The following indicators will help define success in role:

- Delivery of budgeted financial performance and maintenance of a strong financial health rating.
- Improved quality and timeliness of financial and operational reporting.
- Successful delivery of major projects and strategic enabling workstreams.
- Strong audit outcomes and effective compliance assurance.
- Evidence of improved cross-college collaboration and professional service performance.
- Progress against staff engagement, development and wellbeing priorities.
- Contribution to improved learner retention, achievement and positive destinations.
- Clear evidence that the College's resources are being used effectively and efficiently to support strategic priorities.

What the College will expect from the postholder

The College will expect the Chief Operating Officer to be a visible, credible and resilient leader who can combine strategic thinking with disciplined operational delivery. The role requires someone who can work collaboratively with governors and senior leaders, lead change positively, manage complexity and maintain high standards across finance, operations and corporate services.

The successful candidate will be expected to bring strong financial leadership, sound judgement, excellent communication skills and the ability to build trust across the organisation and with external stakeholders.

Development and support

The role will work closely with the Principal/CEO and the Corporation and will have access to established governance structures, senior leadership colleagues and functional leaders across the College.

The postholder will also be expected to engage in continuous professional development and to promote a culture of development in others.

