

# Strategic Plan

2025–2028

# Introduction



**Heather Akehurst OBE**  
Chief Executive

“I am delighted to introduce Open Awards Strategic Plan to 2028. Education and skills are at the forefront of growth, both individual, organisational and national – through this strategy and our values we will ensure our high-quality provision meets the needs and aspirations catalysing growth.

We will build on the success of our previous strategies, which have reinforced the need for innovative solutions in the ever-changing education and employment landscape. We celebrate our values led approach and commitment to work in collaboration with regulators and importantly our providers in developing qualifications and services that meet the current and future needs of our learners and apprentices, as well as employers and society.

In developing this strategy we have taken a highly consultative approach, involving workshops and conversations, questionnaires and feedback, harnessing extensive engagement from both within and outside Open Awards.”

“On behalf of the Board of Trustees I would like to thank Open Awards providers and partners who choose to work with us to deliver qualifications and assessment services for the benefit of learners and apprentices.

This Strategic Plan alongside our Mission, Vision and Values will act as a guiding framework for decision-making and resource allocation. During the life of this plan Open Awards will have provided qualifications for over 45 years and we look forward to continuing to do so.”



**Dr. Ir. Harm van Zalinge**  
Chair of Board of Trustees

# Our Mission, Vision and Values

## Our vision

To change lives through learning.

## Our mission statement

To support educational achievement for all learners.

## Our values

### Excellence

To exceed standards in all we do, inspire excellence in our staff, providers and learners, and deliver a personalised customer service that surpasses expectations.

### Respect

To foster a culture of respect and inclusiveness, being receptive to each other and customers, and acting with integrity.

### Innovation

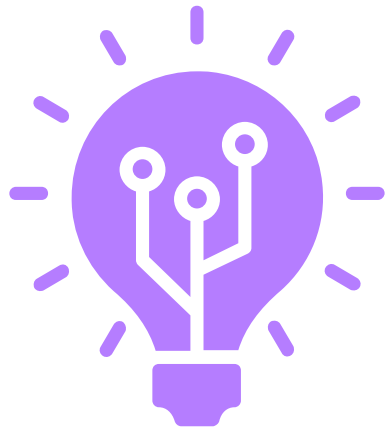
To listen, learn, discover and develop; to respond effectively to and invest in our staff, providers and learners.

### Aspiration

We strive to be visionary and influential.

# Qualifications and Micro-credentials

that change people's lives are at the heart of all we do.



Led by our history and passion we are responding to the challenges presented by Skills and Post-16 Education Act, integrating employability, personal and skill development, equality, sustainability and internationalisation with learner and apprentice led approaches. **Our commitment to the sector is to innovate as we continue to deliver against an evolving landscape**, equipping our learners and apprentices with the ability to demonstrate their skills, knowledge and experience working alongside our providers, both now and in the future. We will maintain our focus on social mobility and exploring ways to widen participation.



Working with regulators and providers we will ensure curriculum reform will **prepare learners and apprentices for employment and life opportunities** and progression towards those opportunities, enabling them to reach their potential. We will work with partners and stakeholders to ensure our approach is innovative and meets the challenges of a fast-paced world. We will establish and maintain an attractive qualification and accreditation offer including micro-credential offer that deliver value and positive outcomes to learners and apprentices. We will focus on impact and quality, refining our portfolio to respond to policy changes and stakeholder needs, and we will develop new qualifications, micro-credentials and services to meet new needs, whether they be at national, regional, employer, learner or apprentice level.



**We will continue to be at the forefront of reimagining the learner experience through our online offer and careful, but considered use of AI.** This will lead to the development of a variety of micro-credentials and opportunities for short, flexible learning to support professional development and lifelong learning. We will work with trusted partners to further develop our digital infrastructure and will look to develop our staff involved in learning, assessment and quality assurance.

# Assessment Services

are embedded within our qualifications and apprenticeship assessment offer.



We are clear about our target market, ensuring we understand employer, provider and stakeholder requirements to **deliver a high quality and impactful assessment services**. We have an experienced team of assessors, external quality assurers and business development consultants with extensive sector experience and continue to invest in their development.

During 2024 we established the **Assessment Knowledge Exchange** with three other Awarding Organisations to share best practice and build a professional network focused on DfE, Skills England, Ofqual and Qualifications Wales requirements. We look forward to continuing that work, leading the sector during the life of this plan. We will work with stakeholders across the sector, including awarding and assessment organisations, to standardise outcomes where appropriate.

We offer our assessment expertise to other organisations, particularly those involved in apprenticeships and will look to support employers and training providers with the changes to assessment requirements over the next three years.

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# Customer Service

**will continue to be provider and learner/apprentice centric, committed to excellence and treating people with respect.**

We will review the service we provide during the first year of this plan, **seeking to simplify processes and implement additional support opportunities**.

Quality and Compliance activities will continue to ensure that assessment and internal quality assurance activities are conducted in a consistent, safe and fair manner and that results awarded reflect the level of attainment demonstrated by each learner. assessment will be standardised between providers, assessors and over time.

We will improve the use of data to inform the validity of our qualifications and assessments.



# Aspirations

To continue to have learners, apprentices and providers at the heart of all we do.

To work with our regulators – The Charity Commission, Ofqual, QAA and Qualifications Wales to provide robust, valid and required qualifications and assessments.

To maintain our position within the Ofqual top 50 awarding and assessment organisations.

To work with QAA and other Access Validating Agencies to promote the Access to Higher Education Diploma and the future it can lead to.

To work with Qualifications Wales to develop, design and deliver their new National Qualifications and Vocational Skills offer.

To develop and use AI in a responsible, ethical and measured manner.

To ensure we deliver 'public benefit' by measuring and growing our impact so we can continue to live our Values.

To develop and empower our staff.

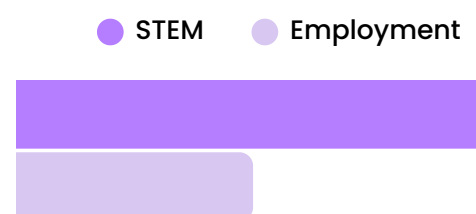
To consolidate our portfolio of products and services where appropriate to focus on quality and impact.

To improve the use of data analytics to monitor performance.

# Growth & Skills

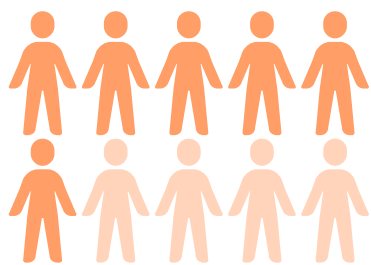
The UK is experiencing significant shifts in its employment landscape, particularly in sectors such as Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM), digital technologies, green skills, and health and social care. Understanding these trends is crucial for aligning educational and training programmes with market demands.

Employment in **STEM fields has grown by 22%** over the past decade, outpacing the overall employment growth of 11%. Open Awards will continue to support this area through our Functional Skills, Access to Higher Education diplomas and specialist vocational and occupational qualifications.



## 1,100,000

1.1 million people work within the digital sector



60% of healthcare professionals acknowledge digital skills gap within sector

The digital sector employs approximately **1.1 million individuals, accounting for nearly 6% of the UK workforce**. This sector has seen rapid growth, with employment increasing nearly three times the rate of other sectors between 2010 and 2023. Essential Digital Skills and our new Digital Technology Qualification for Wales will play a part in upskilling learners and apprentices. We will ensure we embed digital skills across our qualification and assessment portfolio in terms of both content and assessment approaches. Open Awards continues to provide a significant offering within healthcare skills, working closely with our providers to ensure we continue to provide a qualification and assessment framework around much needed provision in these areas. **In particular there is a recognised gap in digital skills among healthcare professionals, with 60% of organisations acknowledging this deficiency**. Enhancing digital literacy is essential for integrating advanced technologies into patient care and our digital skills offer will help address this.

However, this is the 'known' and if the last few years have taught us anything it is to prepare for the 'unknown'. **Open Awards will remain agile, innovative and responsive to the needs of our providers, regulators and wider society.**

We will do this by understanding what our regulators require and expect from us, as well as working alongside them in a constructive and collaborative manner. Importantly we will listen to our providers and wider stakeholders to understand their needs in terms of qualifications, micro-credentials and assessment as well as providing additional resources to enhance their experience.

**Importantly we will remain committed to our Mission, Vision and Values.**

We will set our actions and measure our achievements in our annual Operational Plan.