



Oakswood College

Empowering Through Education



Business Plan

2026 - 2030

PROMOTING EXCELLENCE • ENSURING COMPLIANCE
SUPPORTING OUR COMMUNITY



GOVERNANCE



QUALITY



COMPLIANCE



EXCELLENCE



Oakwood College
Empowering Through Education



Oakwood College
Empowering Through Education

(Trading name of Oakwood Group Ltd)

Institutional Business Plan 2026-2030

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Message from the Chief Executive Officer

Oakwood College (Trading name of Oakwood Group Ltd) was established as a non-profit organisation with a clear educational purpose: to provide inclusive, high-quality higher education opportunities that enable learners from diverse backgrounds to progress into professional careers, further study, and meaningful participation in society.

Since its founding in 2016, Oakwood has developed from a community-focused educational provider into a growing higher education institution operating across the West Midlands and engaging with international partners. The institution was founded on the belief that education should be both academically rigorous and practically relevant. For many learners, particularly those balancing work, family responsibilities, or non-traditional educational journeys, flexible and supportive learning environments are essential to unlocking potential.

Our programmes are therefore designed to combine academic depth with employability, personal development, and wellbeing support. This integrated model reflects our belief that student success is shaped not only by curriculum design but also by the learning environment, pastoral support and institutional culture that surrounds each learner.

A defining feature of Oakwood College is its partnership-based model of higher education provision. Through collaboration with universities and awarding organisations, including Buckinghamshire New University and recognised awarding bodies such as ATHE, Oakwood provides accredited pathways that allow students to progress into recognised higher education qualifications and professional opportunities.

As Oakwood College enters the next phase of its development, the institution is committed to strengthening its governance arrangements, academic quality assurance processes and financial sustainability in alignment with the expectations of the UK higher education regulatory framework. This Business Plan outlines how the institution will continue to develop responsibly while ensuring that student interests remain central to institutional decision-making.

Our ambition is to establish Oakwood College as a trusted non-profit higher education partner recognised for teaching quality, inclusive learning environments, strong graduate outcomes and responsible institutional governance.

At Oakwood College, we aim not simply to deliver qualifications, but to create educational experiences that transform individuals, strengthen communities and contribute to a more inclusive and resilient society.

Executive Summary

This Business Plan sets out the strategic direction, operational framework and financial sustainability model for Oakwood College across the 2025–2030 planning period. The document provides assurance that the institution possesses the governance arrangements, academic oversight and operational capacity required to deliver higher education provision in the interests of students.

The plan has been developed with reference to the expectations of the UK higher education regulatory environment, including the governance and sustainability principles reflected within the regulatory framework of the Office for Students. Particular attention has been given to ensuring that the institution demonstrates appropriate arrangements for management, financial sustainability, student protection and institutional oversight.

Oakwood College is an established independent non-profit higher education provider operating primarily from the West Midlands. Since its establishment in 2016, the institution has delivered a range of vocational and higher education programmes across business, computing, health and social care, tourism and hospitality, and related fields. Through partnerships with awarding bodies and universities, Oakwood College has enabled students to progress into recognised higher education qualifications and professional careers.

The current academic portfolio includes:

- ✚ The **BSc (Hons) International Business Studies** programme delivered in partnership with Buckinghamshire New University.
- ✚ A portfolio of **ATHE Level 3 – 7 diplomas** across business, management, computing and health-related disciplines.
- ✚ Executive education programmes delivered through international collaborations.

The institution also maintains strong links with community organisations, employers and international partners through training programmes, research initiatives and professional development provision.

Looking ahead, the strategic focus of Oakwood College is centred on three interrelated priorities:

First, the institution will strengthen its academic portfolio through expansion of undergraduate and postgraduate programmes delivered through additional university partnerships. This will allow Oakwood to broaden subject coverage while ensuring academic standards are maintained through validated partnerships.

Second, the institution will continue to enhance the student experience through improvements to teaching practice, digital learning infrastructure, wellbeing support and employability integration across programmes.

Third, the institution will strengthen its governance structures, financial sustainability and risk management systems in order to support long-term institutional resilience and regulatory readiness.

The Business Plan adopts a phased development model. In the early phase, the institution will consolidate its current partnership arrangements and strengthen internal systems, including governance, quality assurance and financial oversight. In the subsequent phase, additional programmes will be introduced through new university partnerships, allowing the institution to diversify academic provision while maintaining appropriate delivery capacity. The later stage of the planning period will focus on consolidating institutional maturity through research activity, international partnerships and executive education development.

Throughout the planning period, the institution will maintain a strong focus on student outcomes, academic standards, financial sustainability and responsible governance. Decisions regarding recruitment, programme expansion and partnership development will be carefully aligned with delivery capacity and institutional resources to ensure that student interests remain protected.

Through this approach, Oakwood College aims to position itself as a credible and sustainable higher education provider that supports inclusive access to higher education while maintaining strong academic standards and meaningful graduate outcomes.

The plan outlines:

- ✚ Sustainable delivery of current programmes validated by current partner, and ATHE awarding body.
- ✚ Expansion into new undergraduate, postgraduate programmes and Executive Training Programmes with future UK and international partnerships.
- ✚ Development of a second university partnership to diversify academic provision and strengthen long-term stability.
- ✚ Strengthening of institutional research capability, focused on students' social, emotional, and learning development.
- ✚ Financial projections, risk management, and governance structures ensuring regulatory compliance.
- ✚ A commitment to student success, employability, wellbeing, and widening participation

Oakwood College is positioned for steady growth while maintaining full regulatory compliance, student success focus, and partnership integrity ensuring OfS conditions.

Institutional Position Statement

Oakwood College operates within the West Midlands, one of the United Kingdom's most economically diverse and dynamic regions. The region includes significant populations of young people, adult learners returning to education, and internationally connected communities. At the

same time, many individuals face barriers to higher education participation, including limited access to flexible study routes, financial constraints and gaps in prior attainment.

These conditions create demand for higher education providers that can deliver flexible, accessible and career-focused programmes while maintaining strong academic standards.

Oakwood College therefore positions itself as a provider that combines the academic credibility of university partnerships with the flexibility and personalised support often associated with smaller institutions.

The institution's approach is built around several distinctive features:

- ✚ Smaller class sizes that enable personalised academic support.
- ✚ Strong student welfare and wellbeing provision integrated into the learning environment.
- ✚ Flexible delivery modes including blended, part-time and online learning.
- ✚ Close engagement with employers and industry to support graduate employability.
- ✚ Research-informed teaching, particularly in areas relating to emotional literacy, leadership development and cross-cultural education.

This positioning allows Oakwood College to serve learners who value supportive learning environments and flexible study options while still seeking academically credible higher education qualifications.

At the same time, the institution recognises the competitive nature of the UK higher education environment. The Business Plan therefore emphasises controlled growth, diversification of partnerships, and the development of robust governance systems in order to maintain institutional sustainability and regulatory credibility.

Mission Statement

Oakwood College provides accessible, inclusive and career-focused higher education through strong university partnerships, innovative teaching practices and research-informed learning environments.

The institution supports student success by combining academic rigour, personalised support and employability development, enabling learners to progress into professional careers, further study and meaningful societal contribution.

Vision Statement

Oakwood College aspires to be recognised as a trusted higher education provider that collaborates with universities, employers and international partners to deliver inclusive, industry-relevant and future-focused education.

The institution seeks to build a reputation for teaching excellence, strong student outcomes, responsible governance and research-informed practice that benefits learners and communities both locally and internationally.

Core Values

The institutional values of Oakwood College guide strategic decisions, academic practice and student engagement across the organisation.

Access and Inclusion

Oakwood College is committed to widening participation in higher education by providing flexible entry routes, inclusive admissions practices and personalised academic support.

Student Success

Programmes are designed to support continuation, completion and progression into employment or further study. Student success is measured through academic outcomes, employability and personal development.

Academic Excellence

The institution maintains high academic standards through rigorous curriculum design, assessment moderation, external examination and partnership quality assurance processes.

Research-informed Practice

Teaching at Oakwood College is informed by research activity undertaken by academic staff, particularly in areas related to emotional literacy, leadership development and cross-cultural learning.

Integrity and Accountability

The institution operates with transparent governance, responsible financial management and clear accountability structures in alignment with regulatory expectations.

Strategic Priorities

The strategic priorities outlined below define the principal areas of institutional development for Oakwood College across the 2026–2030 planning period. These priorities have been informed by institutional experience, sector trends within UK higher education, and the evolving expectations of regulators, students, and academic partners.

Each priority connects institutional ambition with operational capability and student outcomes. Collectively, they provide a framework through which the Board of Governors and Academic Board can monitor institutional progress and ensure that expansion remains aligned with academic standards and student interests.

Strategic Priority 1: Sustainable growth through high-quality partnerships

Objective

To expand Oakwood College in a controlled and sustainable manner through carefully selected university partnerships and a diversified academic portfolio.

Key Actions

- ✚ Strengthen the existing partnership with Buckinghamshire New University and ensure that delivery of the BSc (Hons) International Business Studies programme continues to meet the academic standards required by the awarding body.
- ✚ Develop at least one additional university partnership and relaunch ATHE provision within the planning period, to broaden subject coverage and reduce reliance on a single academic partner.
- ✚ Introduce new programmes in disciplines where there is clear demand from students and employers, including health and social sciences, digital technologies, public health and postgraduate business programmes.
- ✚ Maintain strict quality assurance procedures for all collaborative provision, ensuring alignment with awarding body regulations and sector expectations.

Key Performance Indicators

- ✚ Successful maintenance of current franchised delivery partnership and validated provision and associated quality assurance processes.
- ✚ At least one additional university partnership secured within the first two years of the planning period.
- ✚ Progressive growth in student enrolment across HE programmes while maintaining strong continuation and completion rates.
- ✚ Positive feedback from awarding bodies during annual partnership reviews.

Oversight Body

Board of Governors and Academic Board

Strategic Priority 2: Teaching excellence, innovation and employability

Objective

To deliver high-quality teaching that promotes learning gain, innovation and strong graduate outcomes.

Key Actions

- ✚ Embed digitally enhanced and practice-based teaching approaches across programmes.
- ✚ Ensure assessment design aligns with awarding bodies expectations and supports meaningful learning outcomes.
- ✚ Strengthen integration of employability skills, work-based learning and employer engagement within curricula.
- ✚ Expand opportunities for students to engage with industry through guest lectures/speakers, projects and professional networking events.

Key Performance Indicators

- ✚ Continuation and completion rates consistent with sector benchmarks.
- ✚ Graduate employment or further study outcomes within six months of programme completion.
- ✚ Positive student satisfaction scores in internal surveys and national metrics where applicable.

- ✚ Participation of employers in curriculum advisory processes and student engagement activities.

Oversight Body

Academic Board and Quality and Standards Committee

Strategic Priority 3: Outstanding and inclusive student experience

Objective

To create a learning environment that enables students from diverse backgrounds to succeed academically and personally.

Key Actions

- ✚ Strengthen personal tutoring and academic advising systems to provide structured support throughout the student lifecycle.
- ✚ Enhance wellbeing services, including counselling, mental health support and inclusive learning initiatives.
- ✚ Develop mechanisms for meaningful student representation in institutional decision-making.
- ✚ Implement early intervention systems to support students at risk of disengagement.

Key Performance Indicators

- ✚ Student satisfaction levels exceeding 85% in internal feedback mechanisms.
- ✚ Improved continuation and completion rates across programmes.
- ✚ Positive student engagement through surveys, focus groups and student representation structures.

Oversight Body

Student Experience and Welfare Committee

Strategic Priority 4: Research, innovation and community impact

Objective

To develop research-informed teaching and applied research activities aligned with Oakwood College's educational mission.

Key Actions

- ✚ Support staff engagement in scholarly activity related to emotional literacy, leadership and cross-cultural learning.
- ✚ Integrate research outputs into curriculum design and teaching practice.
- ✚ Develop collaborative research projects with academic partners and international institutions.
- ✚ Disseminate research findings through publications, conferences and executive education programmes.

Key Performance Indicators

- ✚ Increase in staff participation in research activities.
- ✚ Integration of research findings into teaching materials and programme design.

- ✚ Evidence of community or organisational impact arising from research initiatives.

Oversight Body

Academic Board

Strategic Priority 5: Governance, quality assurance and regulatory compliance

Objective

To maintain robust governance and quality assurance arrangements aligned with regulatory expectations.

Key Actions

- ✚ Maintain governance structures that ensure clear separation between strategic oversight and executive management.
- ✚ Embed internal audit, compliance monitoring and policy review cycles.
- ✚ Ensure alignment with relevant regulatory frameworks including the expectations of the Office for Students.
- ✚ Develop institutional readiness for future regulatory developments and sector requirements.

Key Performance Indicators

- ✚ Successful internal and external quality assurance reviews.
- ✚ Maintenance of financial sustainability indicators.
- ✚ Evidence of effective risk management and governance oversight.

Oversight Body

Board of Governors and Audit and Risk Committee

Implementation Plan

The implementation of this Business Plan will be delivered through a structured and phased programme of institutional development across the 2026–2030 planning period. This staged approach has been designed to ensure that growth remains proportionate, financially sustainable, operationally controlled and aligned with the interests of students. It recognises that institutional maturity is achieved through the careful sequencing of priorities rather than rapid or unmanaged expansion.

The implementation methodology adopted by Oakwood College is based on four core principles:

Controlled Growth – student recruitment, programme expansion and partnership development will proceed only where sufficient academic staffing, student support capacity, infrastructure and financial resilience are demonstrably in place.

Quality First – all expansion activity will remain subordinate to the maintenance of academic standards, student outcomes and regulatory compliance expectations.

Partnership Sustainability – collaborative provision will be developed through robust due diligence, formal oversight arrangements and regular performance review with university and awarding body partners.

Student Interest Protection – decisions relating to programme launches, recruitment volumes, delivery locations or operational change will be tested against their impact on continuation, completion, student support and value for money.

Each phase of implementation will be subject to annual review by the Board of Governors, supported by the Academic Board and its sub-Committees, Finance and Resources Committee and Audit & Risk Committee. Progress will be monitored through defined milestones, key performance indicators, financial metrics and student outcome measures. Where external market or regulatory conditions change, implementation timelines may be adjusted to preserve institutional resilience.

Phase 1: Institutional Consolidation (2025–2026)

The first phase focuses on strengthening the internal operating model of the institution. Priority will be given to governance maturity, policy review cycles, management information systems, financial controls, student support frameworks and academic quality assurance. Existing provision will be consolidated to ensure that current students experience high-quality delivery and stable support services.

During this phase, the institution will also prepare for measured expansion through curriculum planning, market intelligence gathering, staffing pipeline development and early partnership engagement. The objective is to ensure that future growth is built upon a sound operational base rather than speculative expansion.

Phase 2: Academic Portfolio Expansion (2026–2027)

Having strengthened institutional foundations, the second phase will focus on the introduction of additional undergraduate and postgraduate provision through new or enhanced partnership arrangements. Programme development will prioritise subject areas with clear learner demand and labour market relevance, including business, digital technologies, health and social sciences.

Recruitment activity will broaden geographically while remaining selective and capacity led. New programme launches will be subject to business case approval, academic scrutiny, resource confirmation and readiness review prior to enrolment.

Phase 3: Institutional Scaling and Diversification (2027–2029)

The third phase represents a period of controlled scaling. By this stage, the institution aims to have a broader portfolio, multiple partnership relationships and more mature internal systems. Strategic emphasis will shift toward diversification of revenue streams, enhancement of brand recognition, research-informed activity and executive education development.

International collaborations may be explored where aligned to institutional capability and risk appetite. Growth during this phase will remain disciplined, with expansion contingent on satisfactory student outcomes, staffing sufficiency and continued financial resilience.

Phase 4: Institutional Maturity and Strategic Review (2029–2030)

The final phase will focus on evaluating institutional performance over the full planning cycle and determining the next stage of strategic development. This will include review of partnership effectiveness, student continuation and completion outcomes, graduate progression, financial sustainability, governance effectiveness and market position.

The institution will use this phase to determine whether future priorities should include further portfolio growth, enhanced research activity, greater digital delivery, new campuses, direct validation opportunities or other strategic developments consistent with long-term mission and student interests.

Implementation Plan Overview

| Phase | Period | Strategic Objective | Core Activities | Primary Oversight |
|---------|-----------|-------------------------------|--|--|
| Phase 1 | 2025–2026 | Institutional Consolidation | Governance strengthening, QA enhancement, financial controls, operational readiness, current provision stability | Board of Governors / Academic Board |
| Phase 2 | 2026–2027 | Academic Portfolio Expansion | New UG & PG programmes, partnership growth, market-led recruitment, staffing expansion | Academic Board / Finance and Resources Committee |
| Phase 3 | 2027–2029 | Scaling and Diversification | Portfolio growth, executive education, research activity, international opportunities, brand development | Senior Management Team / Board Committees |
| Phase 4 | 2029–2030 | Maturity and Strategic Review | Full performance review, strategic reset, next-cycle planning, long-term positioning | Board of Governors |

Implementation Control Measures

| Control Area | Institutional Safeguard |
|-----------------|---|
| Student Numbers | Recruitment linked to teaching and support capacity |
| New Programmes | Formal approval process and readiness review |

| Control Area | Institutional Safeguard |
|-----------------------|--|
| Staffing | Recruitment ahead of delivery growth |
| Financial Risk | Annual budgets, scenario planning, reserves |
| Quality Assurance | Annual monitoring and periodic review |
| Partnerships | Due diligence, contracts, performance review |
| Regulatory Compliance | Scheduled policy review and governance assurance |

Academic Offer and Delivery Model

Oakwood College will develop a comprehensive and strategically aligned academic portfolio designed to respond directly to the demographic profile, labour market demand and widening participation needs identified within the institution's market insights analysis. The intended academic offer to 2030 has therefore been structured not simply as a collection of programmes, but as an integrated progression ecosystem that supports learners at multiple stages of life, education and career development.

The regional evidence base indicates sustained demand for flexible higher education routes, professional reskilling opportunities, employer-responsive provision and accessible pathways for learners from underrepresented communities. In response, the academic model of Oakwood College will combine preparatory programmes, undergraduate degrees, postgraduate study, professional diplomas and executive education within a coherent institutional framework.

This diversified portfolio is intended to serve five principal student groups:

- ✚ school and college leavers seeking local progression routes into higher education
- ✚ mature learners returning to education after employment or caring responsibilities
- ✚ working professionals seeking part-time advancement or career change
- ✚ learners progressing from diploma and access routes into degree study
- ✚ international and transnational learners seeking UK-recognised progression opportunities

Oakwood College currently delivers the BSc (Hons) International Business Studies programme through partnership with Buckinghamshire New University, alongside a portfolio of ATHE diplomas across business, management, computing and health-related disciplines.

Future programme development will focus on expanding provision across several key subject areas, including:

- ✚ Health and Social Science at undergraduate
- ✚ Digital Marketing at undergraduate and postgraduate

- ✚ Computer Science and Artificial Intelligence/Cyber Security at undergraduate and postgraduate
- ✚ Business/Accounting & Finance at undergraduate
- ✚ International Business/Project Management at undergraduate

The institution's target position by 2030 is to be recognised as a specialist provider of career-focused, flexible and inclusive education, particularly within disciplines linked to economic growth sectors and public service demand.



| QUALIFICATION | AWARDING BODY | LEVEL | START |
|---|---------------|-------|-------|
| BSc International Business Studies with Foundation | BNU | 6 | 25/26 |
| BSc International Business Studies Top Up | BNU | 6 | 26/27 |
| | | | |
| BSc Accounting & Finance | TBC | 6 | 27/28 |
| | | | |
| MSc Project Management | TBC | 7 | 28/29 |
| MSc International Business | TBC | 7 | 28/29 |
| | | | |
| BSc Health & Social Care Management with Foundation | TBC | 6 | 27/28 |
| BSc Health & Social Care Management Top Up | TBC | 6 | 27/28 |
| | | | |
| BSc Computing with Foundation | TBC | 6 | 27/28 |
| BSc Cyber Security | TBC | 6 | 27/28 |
| BSc Digital Marketing | TBC | 6 | 27/28 |
| | | | |
| MSc Data Analytics | TBC | 7 | 28/29 |
| MSc Digital Marketing | TBC | 7 | 28/29 |
| | | | |
| ESOL Reading & Writing | | | 26/27 |
| ESOL Speaking & Listening | | | 26/27 |

Delivery Model

The delivery model to 2030 will be deliberately flexible, allowing participation from learners balancing employment, family commitments or other barriers to traditional full-time study.

Modes of Delivery

| Mode | Purpose | Target Learners |
|--------------------------|---|------------------------------------|
| On-campus | Face-to-face teaching and student community | Traditional and local learners |
| Blended | Mix of taught sessions and online study | Working adults / commuters |
| Evening & Weekend | Flexible scheduling | Employed learners |
| Fully Online | Remote access and scale | UK-wide and international learners |
| Intensive Block Delivery | Short concentrated modules | Professionals and CPD markets |

Progression Architecture

The institution will emphasise stackable progression routes so learners can advance through stages rather than rely on a single point of entry.

| Entry Point | Progression Route |
|--------------------------|----------------------------------|
| ESOL / Functional Skills | Access / Diploma / Foundation |
| Level 3 Diploma | Undergraduate Year 1 |
| Level 4/5 Diploma | Advanced entry to degree |
| Bachelor Degree | Postgraduate study |
| Professional Experience | RPL entry routes where permitted |

Why This Portfolio Meets Market Need

The target 2030 offer is specifically designed to address the findings of the demographic and market insights review:

| Identified Need | Oakwood Response |
|---------------------------------------|--|
| Skills shortages in digital sectors | Cyber, AI, Data, Computing Programmes |
| Demand for business leadership skills | Business, MBA, Finance, Project Management |

| Identified Need | Oakwood Response |
|--|---|
| Growth in health and care workforce demand | Health & Social Care, Public Health |
| Low HE participation groups | Access, Foundation, flexible entry routes |
| Mature and working learners | Evening, blended, weekend study |
| Need for local affordable progression | Local campus plus pathway model |
| Employer upskilling demand | Executive and CPD provision |

Target Institutional Outcome by 2030

By 2030, Oakwood College intends to operate a balanced academic portfolio in which no single programme or partnership creates material dependency. The institution aims to be recognised for employability-led provision, inclusive access routes, strong student support and programmes closely aligned to economic demand.





This model supports sustainable recruitment growth while remaining consistent with the expectations of the Office for Students regarding quality, student outcomes, value for money and long-term viability.

Market Position and Sector Context

The UK higher education sector has become increasingly competitive, with growing expectations around teaching quality, student outcomes and financial sustainability.

Demand for flexible, career-focused higher education programmes has increased significantly in areas such as business, health and digital technologies.

Oakwood College's strategic position within this environment is based on several distinctive characteristics:

-  Smaller class sizes enabling personalised support
-  Flexible delivery modes including blended and part-time study
-  Strong student wellbeing provision
-  Partnerships with recognised universities and awarding organisations

These features allow Oakwood to serve learners who require supportive learning environments while still seeking academically credible qualifications.

In addition, Oakwood College has carried out a substantive market insights report, which established the gaps in skills and educational need for the demographic, the key recommendations from which are noted below:

Digital & Business Technology

- L3–5: Digital/Computing competencies
- Undergraduate market for Digital Marketing, Cyber Security/AI, Data Analytics
- Short courses: Excel for Business, Data for Managers, Cyber-Awareness, IT User Skills, Digital Support, Digital Marketing, Data Foundations.

Business, Legal & Professional Services

- Short Courses: Business Administration, Customer Service, HR Support
- Undergraduate market for Business and Accounting & Finance
- Continuing Professional Development (CPD): Supervisory skills, project management, compliance

Health, Care & Wellbeing

- Health & Social Care, Adult Care Worker, Mental Health Support.
- Access to HE: Nursing & Allied Health.
- Undergraduate market for Health & Social Care
- Specialist short courses: Dementia care, Autism awareness, End-of-life care.

ESOL, English, Maths & Employability

- ESOL, plus progression to vocational programmes.
- Functional Skills English & Maths at E2–L2.
- Employability and “soft skills” programmes linked to sector tasters.

The full Demographic Report is available as an addendum.

Strategic Partnerships and Collaborations

Partnerships are central to the Oakwood institutional model.

Current collaborations include Buckinghamshire New University and ATHE.

Future partnership development will prioritise institutions with strong academic reputations in relevant disciplines and complementary programme portfolios. Potential forms of collaboration include:

- ✚ validation partnerships
- ✚ franchise delivery agreements
- ✚ articulation and progression arrangements

All partnership activity will be subject to due diligence and quality assurance review. In the first instance Oakwood College has revisited the partnerships landscape and developed a Higher Education Partnership Strategy, an extract of which can be seen below:

The report provided a strategic assessment of Higher Education (HE) opportunities available to Oakwood College in support of its planned registration with the Office for Students (OfS). The analysis draws on demographic data, labour market demand, higher education sector

partnership behaviour, and the operating models used by private higher education providers in England.

The central strategic question addressed is:

How can Oakwood develop a sustainable HE provision model through university partnerships while positioning itself for long-term institutional independence?

The analysis concludes that Oakwood should pursue a phased strategy built around:

- ✚ A focused portfolio of employment-aligned undergraduate and postgraduate programmes.
- ✚ Initial franchise partnerships with universities experienced in collaborative provision.
- ✚ Gradual transition toward validation partnerships as institutional capability develops.

The recommended subject clusters for HE provision are:

- ✚ Business and professional services
- ✚ Digital and computing
- ✚ Health and social care
- ✚ Construction and the built environment (optional expansion area)

These areas align strongly with regional economic demand and are commonly franchised by UK universities, making them viable entry points for new providers.

The recommended initial university partnership targets include:

- ✚ University of Wales Trinity Saint David
- ✚ University of Cumbria
- ✚ University of Plymouth
- ✚ University of Wolverhampton
- ✚ Wrexham University

These institutions have well-developed collaborative provision frameworks and experience partnering with independent HE providers.

The report also examines the competitive landscape of private HE colleges delivering franchised degrees, including organisations such as London School of Science & Technology, Regent College London, and the UK College of Business and Computing.

The strategic conclusion is that Oakwood should adopt a phased HE development strategy, beginning with a small portfolio of franchised programmes and expanding toward validated provision and long-term institutional autonomy.

Higher Education Market Environment

The UK higher education sector has experienced significant growth in collaborative provision over the past decade. Many universities now deliver degree programmes through partner colleges and independent providers.

This model allows universities to expand access while enabling new providers to enter the HE market without immediately securing degree awarding powers.

However, recent regulatory developments have increased scrutiny of franchise arrangements, particularly those involving private providers. Universities are therefore becoming more selective in approving new partnerships.

For Oakwood, this means partnership strategy must be:

- ✚ carefully targeted
- ✚ supported by strong governance
- ✚ aligned with labour-market demand

Regional Skills Demand

The Birmingham and West Midlands labour market demonstrates persistent skills shortages in several sectors, particularly:

- ✚ digital and technology
- ✚ business and professional services
- ✚ health and social care
- ✚ construction and retrofit

These sectors represent the strongest opportunity for new HE provision linked directly to employment outcomes.

Target Student Market

Oakwood's HE strategy should prioritise learners who are currently underserved by traditional universities.

Primary Target Groups

Mature learners: Students aged 21 and over seeking career advancement or reskilling.

Working professionals: Individuals combining employment with part-time study.

Widening participation learners: Students from communities with historically low HE participation.

International pathway learners: Students progressing from foundation programmes.

The majority of successful private HE providers focus on these learner segments.

Student Numbers and Recruitment Strategy

The Oakwood College recruitment strategy is designed to attract students who benefit from flexible and supportive learning environments while maintaining academic standards consistent with university partner expectations.

The marketing strategy is built around a single primary target, home students:

Home Student Recruitment

Domestic recruitment will focus primarily on learners within the West Midlands and surrounding regions. These include:

- ✚ adult learners returning to study
- ✚ students seeking flexible study routes
- ✚ learners progressing from diploma-level qualifications
- ✚ individuals seeking career change or professional advancement

Recruitment activity will include partnerships with community organisations, digital outreach campaigns and engagement with employers.

Recruitment messaging will emphasise:

- ✚ recognised university partnerships
- ✚ supportive learning environments
- ✚ career-focused programmes
- ✚ opportunities for professional progression

Proposed Student Number Tables

| Pipeline for delivery | | |
|-----------------------|--------------|----------|
| Academic year | Own delivery | |
| Level | R&W | S&L |
| Programme | ESOL | ESOL |
| Duration | 6 months | 6 months |
| Year 1 26/27 | | |
| Year 2 27/28 | | 20 |
| Year 3 28/29 | | 30 |
| Year 4 29/30 | | 40 |
| Year 5 30/31 | | 50 |

| | Franchise | Franchise | Franchise | Franchise | Franchise | Franchise | Franchise | Franchise | Franchise | Franchise | Franchise |
|------------------|------------------------------------|------------------------------------|------------------------------------|------------------------------------|------------------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|------------------------|----------------------------|----------------------------|
| HE Qualification | UG Degree Yr 0 | UG Degree Yr 1 | UG Degree | UG Degree | Top Up | UG Degree Yr 1 | UG Degree Yr 2 | UG Degree Yr 3 | PG | PG | PG |
| Qualification | BSc International Business Studies | BSc International Business Studies | BSc International Business Studies | BSc International Business Studies | BSc International Business Studies | BSc Accounting & Finance | BSc Accounting & Finance | BSc Accounting & Finance | MSc Project Management | MSc International Business | MSc International Business |
| Duration | | 12 months | 12 months | 12 months | 12 months | 12 months | 12 months | 12 months | 12 months | 12 months | 12 months |
| Year 1 26/27 | | 25 | 72 | | | | | | | | |
| Year 2 27/28 | | 30 | 23 | 65 | | 10 | 20 | | | | |
| Year 3 28/29 | | 36 | 27 | 21 | 59 | 12 | 22 | 18 | | 10 | 10 |
| Year 4 29/30 | | 43 | 33 | 25 | 19 | 15 | 25 | 20 | 16 | 12 | 12 |
| Year 5 30/31 | | 52 | 39 | 30 | 23 | 18 | 28 | 22 | 18 | 15 | 15 |

| | Franchise | Franchise | Franchise | Franchise | Franchise | Franchise | Franchise | Franchise | Franchise | Franchise | Franchise | Franchise | Franchise | Franchise | Franchise |
|---------------|--------------------|--------------------|--------------------|--------------------|---------------|-------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------|--------------------|----------------------------|----------------------------|----------------------------|-----------------------|--------------------|-----------------------|
| HE | UG Degree | UG Degree | UG Degree | UG Degree | Top Up | UG Degree | UG Degree | UG Degree | Top Up | UG Degree | UG Degree | UG Degree | Top Up | PG | PG |
| Qualification | BSc Computing Yr 0 | BSc Computing Yr 1 | BSc Computing Yr 2 | BSc Computing Yr 3 | BSc Computing | BSc Cyber Security Yr 1 | BSc Cyber Security Yr 2 | BSc Cyber Security Yr 3 | BSc Cyber Security | BSc Digital Marketing Yr 1 | BSc Digital Marketing Yr 2 | BSc Digital Marketing Yr 3 | BSc Digital Marketing | MSc Data Analytics | MSc Digital Marketing |
| Duration | 12 months | 12 months | 12 months | 12 months | 12 months | 12 months | 12 months | 12 months | 12 months | 12 months | 12 months | 12 months | 12 months | 12 months | 12 months |
| Year 1 26/27 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Year 2 27/28 | 10 | 20 | | | | 10 | 20 | | | 10 | 20 | | | | 10 |
| Year 3 28/29 | 12 | 22 | | 18 | | 12 | 22 | | 18 | 12 | 22 | | 18 | | 12 |
| Year 4 29/30 | 15 | 25 | | 20 | | 16 | 25 | | 20 | 15 | 25 | | 20 | | 16 |
| Year 5 30/31 | 18 | 28 | | 22 | | 18 | 28 | | 22 | 18 | 28 | | 22 | | 18 |

| | Franchise | Franchise | Franchise | Franchise | Franchise |
|----------------------|--|--|--|--|-------------------------------------|
| HE Qualification | UG Degree | UG Degree | UG Degree | UG Degree | Top up level 6 |
| Qualification | BSc Health & Social Care Management Year 0 | BSc Health & Social Care Management Year 1 | BSc Health & Social Care Management Year 2 | BSc Health & Social Care Management Year 3 | BSc Health & Social Care Management |
| Duration | 12 months | 12 months | 12 months | 12 months | 12 months |
| Year 1 26/27 | | | | | |
| Year 2 27/28 | 10 | 20 | | | 10 |
| Year 3 28/29 | 12 | 22 | 18 | | 12 |
| Year 4 29/30 | 15 | 25 | 20 | 16 | 15 |
| Year 5 30/31 | 18 | 28 | 22 | 18 | 18 |

| Awarding Organisation | Qualification Title | Level | 26/27 | 27/28 | 28/29 | 29/30 | 30/31 |
|-----------------------|--------------------------------------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|
| ATHE | Business & Management | 3 | 10 | 15 | 16 | 12 | 12 |
| ATHE | Business & Management | 4 | 15 | 15 | 16 | 11 | 11 |
| ATHE | Business & Management | 5 | 15 | 15 | 10 | 12 | 12 |
| ATHE | Management | 6 | 10 | 10 | 10 | 10 | 12 |
| ATHE | Strategic Management | 7 | 15 | 15 | 12 | 12 | 10 |
| ATHE | Information and Digital Technologies | 3 | 5 | 5 | 5 | 6 | 8 |
| ATHE | Computing | 4 | 5 | 5 | 5 | 6 | 8 |
| ATHE | Computing | 5 | 5 | 5 | 8 | 7 | 7 |
| ATHE | Health & Social Care | 3 | 10 | 10 | 12 | 12 | 12 |
| ATHE | Health & Social Care | 4 | 10 | 10 | 11 | 11 | 10 |
| ATHE | Health & Social Care | 5 | 10 | 10 | 12 | 12 | 10 |
| ATHE | Health & Social Care | 6 | 5 | 5 | 5 | 5 | 5 |
| ATHE | Health & Social Care | 7 | 10 | 10 | 11 | 11 | 12 |

Admissions Strategy

Admissions policies at Oakwood College will remain fair, transparent and inclusive.

The institution recognises that many of its learners may follow non-traditional educational pathways. Admissions decisions therefore combine evidence of academic readiness with consideration of individual potential.

Where appropriate, students may begin their studies through diploma or preparatory programmes before progressing to undergraduate qualifications.

Admissions decisions will be guided by the following principles:

- ✚ academic integrity
- ✚ equality of opportunity
- ✚ transparent selection criteria
- ✚ alignment with programme entry requirements

Market Segmentation and Student Profile

Oakwood College serves a diverse student population drawn from both domestic and international markets.

Typical student profiles include:

- ✚ working professionals seeking career advancement
- ✚ recent school or college graduates seeking higher education pathways
- ✚ mature learners returning to education
- ✚ Hard to reach communities with disadvantaged backgrounds

This diversity requires teaching approaches that combine academic rigour with personalised student support.

Consideration of Student Interests

Oakwood College places student interests at the centre of its mission, governance framework and operational decision-making. The College recognises that the expectations of the Office for Students require providers not only to deliver high-quality academic provision, but also to demonstrate that institutional strategy, financial planning and governance arrangements are consistently shaped by the needs, protections and success of students. For Oakwood College, consideration of student interests is therefore not a discrete regulatory exercise, but a core institutional principle that informs all significant decisions.

The College understands that students invest considerable time, commitment and financial resource in higher education and are entitled to clear information, fair treatment, reliable delivery and meaningful opportunities for success. As such, all major institutional decisions, including programme development, recruitment growth, partnership activity, fee setting, delivery model changes and resource allocation, will be considered through an explicit student interest lens. Where proposals carry potential risk to students, the College will identify mitigating actions, implementation safeguards and communication plans before any change is approved.

Student interests are closely linked to academic quality and positive outcomes. Oakwood College is committed to ensuring that programmes are well-designed, effectively taught and appropriately resourced, with students supported by qualified academic staff, accessible learning materials and responsive academic guidance. The College will monitor continuation, completion, attainment and progression outcomes carefully, recognising that these indicators are central to evidencing whether students are genuinely benefiting from their studies. Where performance trends indicate emerging concern, prompt intervention measures will be introduced through academic and executive governance channels.

The College also recognises that many of its learners may come from non-traditional, mature, commuter or widening participation backgrounds. For these students, success may depend not only on curriculum quality but on the wider support environment surrounding them. Oakwood College will therefore maintain a student support model that includes structured induction, academic skills development, personal tutoring, wellbeing support, reasonable adjustments for students with disabilities or additional needs, and flexible approaches to study where appropriate. This reflects the institution's belief that equality of opportunity is achieved through active support rather than passive access alone.

Transparency is another essential component of protecting student interests. Applicants and enrolled students will receive clear, accurate and timely information regarding programme content, delivery arrangements, fees, assessment methods, awarding arrangements and available support services. Marketing activity and recruitment practices will be conducted ethically and responsibly, ensuring that students are able to make informed choices. Recruitment targets will never override admissions integrity or the need to enrol students with a realistic prospect of success on their chosen programme.

As a partnership-based provider, Oakwood College acknowledges that collaborative delivery arrangements can create complexity if not carefully managed. The College will therefore ensure that students clearly understand the respective roles of Oakwood College and any validating or awarding partner, including responsibilities for teaching, academic standards, assessment and certification. Students should experience partnership provision as seamless, coherent and professionally managed, rather than fragmented or confusing.

The College further recognises that protecting student interests requires robust contingency planning. In the event of programme closure, partnership change, financial pressure or other operational disruption, students must be able to continue and complete their studies with minimal detriment. Oakwood College will maintain and regularly review student protection arrangements, including teach-out planning, transfer support where appropriate, continuity of teaching through blended or digital delivery models, and prioritisation of academic delivery in periods of financial constraint. These safeguards are intended to ensure that institutional risk does not translate into avoidable student harm.

Meaningful student engagement is also central to the College’s approach. Students will be provided with structured opportunities to influence their educational experience and institutional development through representation systems, surveys, forums and committee participation where appropriate. Feedback will be reviewed seriously and translated into action through clear reporting cycles, enabling students to see how their views have informed change. Oakwood College considers student voice to be an essential source of institutional intelligence and continuous improvement.

The Board of Governors will receive regular assurance regarding student interests through management information and performance reporting. This will include academic outcomes, student satisfaction, complaints themes, retention data, wellbeing indicators and risks to continuity of study. Through this governance framework, the Board will be able to test whether the institution continues to operate in a manner consistent with student welfare, academic quality and long-term sustainability.

Student Interest Assurance Framework

| Area of Student Interest | Institutional Commitment |
|---------------------------------|---|
| Academic Quality | High standards, qualified staff, effective learning resources |
| Continuity of Study | Teach-out, transfer support, contingency planning |
| Fair Access | Transparent admissions and inclusive recruitment |
| Student Success | Monitoring continuation, completion and progression |
| Support & Wellbeing | Personal tutoring, welfare and additional support |

| Area of Student Interest | Institutional Commitment |
|--------------------------|--|
| Student Voice | Representation, surveys and action planning |
| Value for Money | Resources and services aligned to tuition fee expectations |

In summary, Oakwood College considers the interests of students to be inseparable from institutional success. Sustainable growth, sound governance and regulatory compliance are only meaningful where they translate into positive experiences and outcomes for learners. Through this student-centred approach, the College intends to demonstrate the culture, maturity and accountability expected by the Office for Students and by the students it serves.

Delivery Capacity, Cohort Planning and Institutional Controls

Institutional growth at Oakwood College will be governed through explicit delivery capacity safeguards. These safeguards ensure that expansion in student numbers or programme provision occurs only when teaching capacity, academic support services, and infrastructure are demonstrably sufficient.

These controls protect student experience and prevent growth beyond institutional capability.

| Delivery Area | Planning Ceiling | Trigger for Expansion | Oversight |
|---------------------------------|---|--|---|
| Undergraduate programmes | 25–30 students per teaching group | Additional academic staff recruited and approved through Academic Board scrutiny | Academic Board (Budgets approved by Board of Governors) |
| Postgraduate programmes | 15 - 20 students per teaching group | Additional academic staff recruited and approved through Academic Board scrutiny | Academic Board (Budgets approved by Board of Governors) |
| Diploma programmes | 15–20 students per group | Confirmation of tutor availability and student support capacity | Academic Board (Budgets approved by Board of Governors) |
| Student support caseload | Maximum 40 students per academic advisor | Recruitment of additional support staff | Student Experience & Welfare Committee |
| Digital learning infrastructure | VLE access sufficient for all enrolled students | Investment in server capacity and digital resources | Operations & Digital Transformation Committee |
| Physical teaching space | Classroom availability aligned to timetable utilisation | Expansion of estate or blended delivery | Board of Governors |

These ceilings are planning safeguards rather than growth targets. The institution will not expand recruitment where doing so would compromise teaching quality, student support or academic oversight.

Teaching, Learning and Student Outcomes Strategy

Teaching at Oakwood College will combine academic rigour with inclusive learning practices designed to support students from diverse educational backgrounds.

The College's learning model includes:

- ✚ face-to-face teaching
- ✚ guided independent study
- ✚ digital learning resources
- ✚ formative assessments and feedback
- ✚ tailored personal tutoring and academic mentoring

Digital learning platforms will support course delivery, assessment submission and communication between staff and students.

Student outcomes will be monitored through indicators such as:

- ✚ attendance and engagement
- ✚ continuation rates
- ✚ completion rates
- ✚ progression into employment or further study

Infrastructure and Resources

Oakwood College recognises that high-quality infrastructure and appropriate institutional resources are fundamental to the delivery of a credible, sustainable and student-centred higher education experience. The College understands that physical facilities, digital capability, learning resources and operational systems are not peripheral matters, but core enablers of academic quality, student outcomes and institutional resilience. In this context, infrastructure planning has been developed to support both current provision and the controlled expansion of the academic portfolio to 2030.

The College's infrastructure strategy is based on the principle that investment must be proportionate to student need, educational purpose and delivery scale. Expansion in student numbers or programme volume will therefore be matched by corresponding growth in teaching space, technology capacity, staffing support and learning resources. This approach is intended to avoid over-extension, protect the student experience and demonstrate prudent institutional management consistent with the expectations of the Office for Students.

Building upon the recent substantial financial investments of the college in the physical estate will provide modern, professional and accessible teaching environments that support effective learning and student engagement. Teaching rooms will be designed to accommodate a range of pedagogic approaches, including lectures, seminars, workshops and collaborative group activity. The College will continue to maintain safe, compliant and welcoming facilities, with particular attention to accessibility, health and safety, learner wellbeing and efficient timetable utilisation. Estate decisions will be informed by student demand, programme mix and operational efficiency rather than speculative capacity expansion.

Alongside physical facilities, digital infrastructure will form a central pillar of the institutional model. Oakswood College intends to operate as a modern blended-learning provider in which students can access teaching materials, assessments, communications and support services through secure and reliable online systems. The Virtual Learning Environment will act as the primary academic platform for module resources, recorded content where appropriate, assessment submission, feedback workflows and student engagement monitoring. Digital systems will be selected and maintained to ensure reliability, usability, cyber security and scalability as the institution grows.

The College also recognises that students increasingly judge institutional quality by the ease and professionalism of administrative systems. Accordingly, investment will be made in student records systems, admissions systems, attendance monitoring, data reporting tools and learner communication platforms. These systems will support efficient student journeys from enquiry through to graduation, while also enabling accurate management information for regulatory reporting, retention interventions and strategic planning.

Learning resources will remain a priority area of investment. Students will be provided with access to appropriate academic texts, e-books, journals, databases and subject-specific digital resources aligned to programme requirements. As the academic portfolio expands into business, computing, cyber security, health and postgraduate provision, resource planning will ensure that each subject area is adequately supported. Library provision may combine physical holdings with a digitally led model that reflects flexible and commuter student needs.

Student support infrastructure is equally important. The College will maintain appropriate space and systems for personal tutoring, welfare conversations, careers guidance and student services. Quiet study areas, informal collaboration spaces and accessible support points will contribute to a learning environment that supports both academic achievement and personal wellbeing.

Operational resilience will be embedded through business continuity planning, disaster recovery arrangements and cyber security controls. The College recognises that infrastructure failure can directly affect student interests through cancelled teaching, delayed assessments or loss of access to learning materials. It will therefore maintain backup arrangements, system support contracts, secure data management processes and recovery protocols designed to minimise disruption.

Future infrastructure investment will be phased and evidence led. Decisions regarding additional teaching space, enhanced IT capacity, specialist software, expanded digital platforms or new

delivery locations will be subject to business case approval, affordability testing and assessment of student benefit. This ensures that capital and operational expenditure remains aligned with sustainable growth principles.

Infrastructure and Resource Priorities to 2030

| Resource Area | Strategic Commitment |
|----------------------------|--|
| Teaching Estate | Modern, accessible classrooms and efficient utilisation of space |
| Digital Learning | Robust Virtual Learning Environment and online student access |
| Student Systems | Admissions, records, casework, attendance and reporting capability |
| Learning Resources | E-books, journals, databases and subject-specific materials |
| Student Support Facilities | Space and systems for welfare, tutoring and careers guidance |
| Cyber & Resilience | Secure systems, backups and continuity planning |
| Growth Capacity | Phased expansion linked to confirmed demand |

Oakwood College views infrastructure and resources as strategic assets that directly influence teaching quality, student satisfaction, continuation and long-term sustainability. Through measured investment in estate, technology, learning resources and support systems, the College intends to provide an environment that is fit for purpose, scalable and responsive to the evolving needs of students and regulators.

Human Resources and Staffing Strategy

Staffing development is central to maintaining teaching quality and institutional credibility.

Leadership Structure

Executive leadership will be provided by the Chief Executive Officer supported by senior management responsible for academic affairs, accounting and finance, Governance, Quality, Compliance and Information Systems, Student Services, Operation and HR, and Admissions and Registry.

Academic Staff

Academic staff will include programme leaders, lecturers and visiting specialists. Recruitment will prioritise individuals with both academic qualifications and relevant professional experience.

Professional Services Staff

Professional staff will support admissions, quality assurance, student services, IT systems and finance operations.

Staff Development

Staff development will include:

- ✚ continuous professional development
- ✚ peer observation of teaching
- ✚ participation in research and scholarly activity
- ✚ leadership development opportunities

Financial Sustainability

Financial sustainability is fundamental to the long-term credibility, resilience and regulatory readiness of Oakwood College. The institution recognises that sustainable finances are not solely a commercial matter, but a core student protection issue. A financially secure provider is better able to maintain academic quality, invest in staff and infrastructure, honour commitments to students, and withstand changes in recruitment, partnership arrangements or wider market conditions.

Accordingly, the financial strategy of Oakwood College has been designed to align with the expectations of the Office for Students in relation to viability, sustainability, effective management and protection of student interests. The institution's approach is based on prudent planning, controlled growth, diversified income streams, disciplined cost management and strong governance oversight.

Strategic Financial Principles

The College will manage its finances in accordance with the following principles:

Prudence – budgets will be based on realistic recruitment assumptions, evidenced market demand and conservative growth trajectories rather than speculative expansion.

Liquidity – sufficient cash reserves and working capital will be maintained to ensure continuity of operations, payroll, lease commitments, academic delivery and student support.

Diversification – income dependency on any single programme, partner, market or funding source will be actively reduced over time.

Scalability – fixed cost commitments will be proportionate to confirmed income, with staffing and infrastructure growth phased to actual demand.

Transparency – timely management accounts, board reporting and external financial statements will support informed oversight.

Student Protection – financial decisions will be tested against their impact on continuing students, delivery quality and institutional obligations.

Income Model and Revenue Diversification

Oakwood College’s financial model is intentionally diversified to reduce concentration risk and create multiple sustainable income streams. By 2030, revenue is expected to derive from the following principal sources:

| Income Stream | Strategic Purpose | Risk Mitigation Value |
|---|--|-----------------------------------|
| Tuition fees from validated / franchised undergraduate programmes | Core recurring income | Stable multi-year cohorts |
| Tuition fees from postgraduate provision | Margin enhancement and portfolio depth | Broadens learner base |
| Diploma and pathway programmes | Pipeline into HE provisions | Supports progression recruitment |
| Executive education and CPD | Flexible commercial income | Less dependent on academic cycles |
| International collaborative activity | Selective growth opportunities | Geographic diversification |
| Short courses / professional training | Responsive market-led income | Rapid deployment capability |

The College’s strategy is that no single revenue source should become disproportionately dominant. This reduces vulnerability to partnership change, programme closure or sector volatility.

Student Number Growth and Capacity Alignment

Financial planning is directly linked to controlled recruitment growth. Student number expansion will not be pursued where it would compromise academic quality, student support or financial stability.

Growth assumptions are therefore tied to:

- ✚ available teaching capacity
- ✚ validated programme approvals
- ✚ staffing readiness
- ✚ physical and digital infrastructure sufficiency
- ✚ student continuation and satisfaction performance
- ✚ working capital capacity

This approach ensures that enrolment growth converts into sustainable contribution rather than unmanaged operational strain.

Cost Control and Operating Discipline

Oakwood College recognises that sustainable growth depends as much on cost discipline as revenue generation. We will therefore maintain a lean but scalable operating model.

Core Cost Controls

| Cost Area | Financial Discipline Approach |
|-----------------------|---|
| Staffing | Phased recruitment linked to enrolment milestones |
| Estates | Efficient utilisation of teaching space; hybrid delivery reduces footprint pressure |
| Technology | Targeted investment with shared platforms and cloud efficiency |
| Marketing | ROI-led campaigns with measurable conversion metrics |
| Partnerships | Clear commercial agreements and annual value review |
| Professional Services | Automation and process efficiency where appropriate |

Where recruitment falls below forecast, expenditure controls will be enacted promptly, including deferral of discretionary spend, slower recruitment and reprioritisation of projects.

Cash Flow, Liquidity and Reserves

Oakwood College acknowledges that profitable accounts alone do not guarantee sustainability; cash management is critical. Accordingly, the College will operate rolling cash flow forecasts and liquidity monitoring.

The institution intends to maintain:

- ✚ minimum operating cash reserves sufficient for core payroll and overhead commitments
- ✚ monthly cash flow forecasting with 12-month forward visibility
- ✚ prompt fee collection and debtor management processes
- ✚ staged investment decisions linked to cash availability
- ✚ contingency planning for delayed receipts or enrolment variance

Cash reserves will be treated as a strategic safeguard for students, ensuring continuity of delivery during periods of volatility.

Scenario Planning and Stress Testing

The Board recognises the importance of downside planning. Financial forecasts will therefore be supported by scenario modelling and sensitivity analysis.

Core Downside Scenarios

| Scenario | Example Risk | Planned Response |
|----------------------------|-----------------------------|---|
| Lower enrolment intake | Recruitment shortfall | Cost controls, revised intake planning |
| Higher student withdrawals | Retention pressure | Student success interventions, rebasing forecasts |
| Partnership disruption | Validation/franchise change | Diversified partners, teach-out contingency |
| Inflationary cost pressure | Payroll/utilities increases | Pricing review, efficiency measures |
| Regulatory change | Additional compliance cost | Reserve planning, phased implementation |

This ensures the College can identify stress points early and take corrective action before risks become material.

Governance and Financial Oversight

Financial stewardship will be subject to robust governance arrangements.

Board-Level Oversight

The Board of Governors will retain ultimate responsibility for financial sustainability, solvency and long-term strategic viability. It will receive regular reporting on:

- ✚ management accounts
- ✚ cash position
- ✚ recruitment versus forecast
- ✚ covenant / liability exposure (where relevant)
- ✚ budget variance analysis
- ✚ scenario modelling
- ✚ strategic investment proposals

Committee Structure

| Body | Primary Financial Responsibility |
|---------------------------------|--|
| Board of Governors | Strategic solvency and sustainability |
| Finance and Resources Committee | Budgets, forecasts, controls, performance |
| Audit & Risk Committee | Internal control, risk assurance, compliance |

| Body | Primary Financial Responsibility |
|---|--|
| Operations & Digital Transformation Committee | Oversight of operational efficiency and investment in systems and infrastructure |
| Academic Board | Oversight of academic deliver, quality and standards, and student experience and outcomes, in line with OfS B Conditions |
| Quality and Standards Committee | Monitoring academic performance and continuation, impacting financial sustainability |
| Student Experience and Welfare Committee | Monitoring of student outcomes, retention, and support, influencing income stability |
| Senior Management Team | Day-to-day delivery of approved plans |

The separation of senior management and governing oversight supports independent challenge and accountability.

Investment Priorities

Surpluses generated by the institution will be reinvested in areas that strengthen student outcomes and institutional resilience, including:

- ✚ academic staffing and faculty development
- ✚ digital learning platforms
- ✚ student wellbeing and support services
- ✚ library and learning resources
- ✚ compliance systems and governance capability
- ✚ market development and partnership diversification

This reflects the institution's educational purpose and long-term sustainability model. Financial sustainability is a central component of institutional credibility. Revenue streams include tuition fees from validated programmes, diploma provision, executive education and international partnerships. The financial model assumes moderate enrolment growth and the introduction of additional programmes through new university partnerships. Financial planning includes annual budgets, quarterly financial monitoring and contingency planning.

Fraud Prevention & Control

Oakwood College recognises that the contemporary regulatory environment for higher education providers has evolved materially, with increased sector-wide scrutiny relating to fraud prevention, financial crime controls, student recruitment integrity, misuse of public funds, data accuracy, agent oversight, conflicts of interest, and the robustness of governance decision-making.

In developing this Business Plan and associated governance framework, the College has therefore taken explicit account of the heightened expectations of the Office for Students and

other relevant regulators regarding institutional probity, transparency, and control effectiveness. Oakwood's proposed governance model has been designed to embed clear lines of accountability, segregation of duties, fit and proper oversight, independent challenge, and timely escalation of risk. The Board will maintain formal committees with responsibility for audit, risk, finance, and academic assurance, supported by internal control frameworks covering admissions, attendance monitoring, student finance compliance, procurement, delegated authorities, related-party transactions, data returns, and whistleblowing.

The College also intends to implement a proactive 'fraud prevention section' to the institutional risk register, regular policy review cycle, mandatory SMT/BOG training in fraud awareness and ethical conduct, and periodic independent assurance reviews. Collectively, these measures demonstrate that Oakwood College has not treated fraud prevention and regulatory compliance as ancillary matters, but as core design principles underpinning institutional sustainability, student protection, and public confidence.

Governance and Oversight

Governance arrangements ensure clear accountability and effective institutional oversight.

The Board of Governors provides strategic oversight of institutional direction, financial sustainability and regulatory compliance.

Supporting committees include:

- ✚ Academic Board
- ✚ Finance and Resources Committee (Board of Governors sub-Committee)
- ✚ Audit and Risk Committee (Board of Governors sub-Committee)
- ✚ Operations and Digital Transformation committee (Board of Governors sub-Committee)
- ✚ Quality and Standards Committee (Academic Board sub-Committee)
- ✚ Student Experience and Welfare Committee (Academic Board sub-Committee)

These structures ensure that academic quality, student outcomes and financial sustainability are monitored effectively. Specific remits, accountabilities and reporting arrangements are set out in the College's document 'Governance - Terms of Reference and Scheme of Delegation'.

The Board of Governors will be guided by the Independent Higher Education (IHE) Code of Governance. The application of this code is influenced by the core values of higher education governance and the Office for Students Regulatory Framework, Notices, and Advice.

Guiding Principles:

Oakwood College has adopted guiding principles in accordance with the eleven primary elements outlined in the HE Code of Governance. These are supported by the College's governance framework, including the Governance - Terms of Reference and Scheme of Delegation, Management and Governance Policy, Ethics and Values Policy, Conflicts of Interest Policy, Risk Management Policy and related oversight procedures, which collectively support

clear decision-making, effective oversight, and accountability across the Board and its committees. These principles are as follows:

1. **Clarity:** Every provider must establish an appropriate governance framework through which decisions about the organisation's short-, medium- and long-term needs and objectives are made, with a clear primary decision-making or governing body (the board), and clear division of responsibility between governance and management.
2. **Collective Responsibility:** The board should be an effective, primary decision-making body with collective responsibility for the long-term success of the provider and for determining the organisational objectives, values, culture and strategy necessary to deliver that long-term success.
3. **Academic Governance:** There should be an appropriate framework in place for academic governance and the management of academic risk which ensures that academic standards are maintained, and quality is enhanced.
4. **Financial Governance:** The Directors of the company and the Board of Governors have a responsibility to maintain financial prudence and to ensure the long-term financial stability of the company to ensure students have uninterrupted education experience at the college.
5. **Risk Management:** The board should have oversight of key policies and procedures and should have overall responsibility for risk management and internal control.
6. **Size and Skill:** The board should be of an appropriate size and composition and have the requisite skills to discharge its responsibilities under this Code.
7. **Effectiveness:** The board and any committees should discharge their duties in an effective and efficient way.
8. **Integrity:** Board members should discharge their duties to a high standard of professionalism, act with integrity, and conduct themselves openly and transparently, with appropriate regard to confidentiality.
9. **Remuneration:** Remuneration of board members and senior staff at the provider should be appropriate and designed to support the strategy and long-term sustainable success of the provider.
10. **Fair Reporting:** External reporting should be fair and balanced, and minutes of board meetings (and key committees) should be published unless they relate to confidential matters.
11. **External and Student Engagement:** There should be an appropriate level of dialogue between the board and the provider's shareholders and other stakeholders, and appropriate engagement with students.

Oakwood College has applied to register as a higher education provider with the Office for Students (OfS) and submits to being in full compliance with the [OfS public interest principles](#):

1. **Academic freedom:** Academic staff at an English higher education provider have freedom within the law:
 - To question and test received wisdom.
 - To put forward new ideas and controversial or unpopular opinions without placing themselves in jeopardy of losing their jobs or privileges they may have at the provider.
2. **Accountability:** The provider operates openly, honestly, accountably and with integrity and demonstrates the values appropriate to be recognised as an English higher education provider.
3. **Student engagement:** The governing body ensures that all students have opportunities to engage with the governance of the provider, and that this allows for a range of perspectives to have influence.
4. **Academic governance:** The governing body receives and tests assurance that academic governance is adequate and effective through explicit protocols with the senate/academic board (or equivalent).
5. **Risk management:** The provider operates comprehensive corporate risk management and control arrangements (including academic risk) to ensure the sustainability of the provider's operations and its ability to continue to comply with all its registration conditions.
6. **Value for money:** The governing body ensures that there are adequate and effective arrangements in place to provide transparency about value for money for all students and (where a provider has access to the student support system or to grant funding) for taxpayers.
7. **Freedom of speech:** The governing body takes such steps as are reasonably practicable to ensure that freedom of speech within the law is secured within the provider.
8. **Fit and proper:** Members of the governing body, those with senior management responsibilities, and individuals exercising control or significant influence over the provider are fit and proper persons.

These principles are supported by a suite of new and recently revised institutional policies that provide clear expectations and accountabilities along with appropriate practical management protocols and procedures.

Compliance Governance Structure

Institutional compliance will be coordinated through a structured governance framework.

| Governance Body | Body Responsibility |
|---|--|
| Board of Governors | Strategic oversight |
| Academic Board | Academic quality, standards, and outcomes |
| Audit & Risk Committee | Risk management and compliance |
| Finance and Resources Committee | Financial sustainability |
| Operations and Digital Transformation committee | Operational KPIs and Performance Management |
| Student Experience & Welfare Committee | Monitoring of student engagement, retention, and support |
| Quality & Standards Committee | Monitoring of academic performance, continuation, and outcomes |

This framework ensures alignment with sector expectations for governance and accountability.

Monitoring and Evaluation

The implementation of this Business Plan will be monitored through governance review, milestone tracking and performance indicators.

Performance monitoring will include:

- ✚ academic performance indicators
- ✚ financial performance metrics
- ✚ student satisfaction measures
- ✚ governance and compliance reviews

The Business Plan will be reviewed annually to ensure that institutional strategy remains aligned with sector developments and regulatory expectations.