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# Candidate Brief

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## Chief Operating Officer

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May 2024



D O D D P A R T N E R S

— BOARD & EXECUTIVE SEARCH —

[www.doddpartners.com](http://www.doddpartners.com)

# Welcome to Weston College

Weston College Group is one of the leading organisations for the provision of Further and Higher Education in the United Kingdom. Our mission statement is 'Creating Brighter Futures' alongside the focus of 'Delivering Careers not Courses.' Our ethos is one where everyone, staff and learners alike, can flourish in an entrepreneurial and supportive environment and with investment in excess of £100million in recent years and leadership of the West of England Institute of Technology and University Centre Weston, we remain passionate about skills delivery across the Southwest of England.

The college is at a pivotal stage in its evolution, as we now seek to appoint our next Chief Operating Officer to take the college on to the next stage of its journey. The new leader will inherit a committed and agile team of professionals who deliver responsive and sustainable finance, estates and wider resources function that underpins our service proposition and drives the innovation needed to build upon our success to date. The college now needs to further develop this work, ensuring development of partnerships in learning with the business communities we serve, always ensuring excellence in quality.

The successful candidate will take strategic and operational oversight across Finance, MIS, IT, Examinations, Estates and the wider resourcing functions to ensure the group maintains its 'outstanding financial health, whilst delivering the resources and infrastructure that enhance the groups student experience. The ideal candidate must be resilient, empowering and a natural leader who can lead change and bring the ambitions of our students, employers and the wider communities we serve to fruition.

From the Board perspective, we are obviously focused on the ongoing development of the College with our new Principal Chief Executive and the need to further expand and diversify our core business. The world of Further and Higher Education is ever evolving and the successful candidate will join us as we re-align our resource base and strategic plans for growth. We look forward to welcoming your application and exploring together the opportunities that exist for Weston College.

With best wishes,

Andrew Leighton-Price  
**Chair of Governors**



# Weston College

We are a highly progressive institution in Weston-super-Mare and are proud to be regarded as one of the top FE colleges in the UK.

Our mission is to 'create brighter futures' for all and we offer a diverse range of qualifications: GCSEs, A Levels, Vocational, innovative T Levels, and over 50 diverse apprenticeships. Through University Centre Weston, we extend into higher education with degrees and degree apprenticeships, plus we deliver education services to Southwest prisons, and we are the lead college for the West of England Institute of Technology.

Aside from sector leading academic success for our learners, the College, its staff, and its courses have won a number of prestigious awards, accolades, and accreditations in recent years. Together this shows that quality and excellence run through everything we do and means that you can be confident Weston College is the best choice for our learners.

**7th**  
largest college group  
in the country

**£18m**  
invested in new  
training facilities over the  
last 12 months

**£73m**  
turnover /budget  
responsibility

**c.1,000**  
staff members

**30,000**  
enrolments

**2,500**  
business partners  
across the country

**146**  
full-time courses

**70**  
apprenticeship  
standards

**150+**  
part-time courses

**5**  
campuses

**97%**  
apprentice employer  
satisfaction rate

**96%**  
A Level pass rate

Plus achieving:





# Weston College Group



Weston College is a general college of further and higher education in Weston-super-Mare, delivering education and vocational training to students aged 14 and above. It is regarded as one of the top further education colleges in the UK and is the only college in the West of England rated 'Outstanding' by Ofsted. The College provides education to approximately 30,000 learners across the UK.



University Centre Weston (UCW) offers over 40 courses across a number of vocational and academic subject areas. UCW delivers the courses in partnership with Bath Spa University and the University of the West of England, Bristol. UCW is rated 'Gold' in the Teaching Excellence Framework, meaning the learning, teaching and outcomes it provides for students are of the highest quality in Britain.



## Prison Education & Business Growth

Weston College's Offender Learning Services is a top performing provider of offender and detainee learning. The service is recognised for its excellent teaching, learning and assessment; the positive outcomes it achieves for learners; and its partnership approach to business planning, which ensures that the curriculum meets learners' and employers' needs.

Our Business Growth team have won many regional and national contracts and have a substantial focus on meeting skills needs across the United Kingdom.



Forward Futures Limited is the college group's in-house recruitment agency. It provides high calibre associates to the Weston College Group and its key services, such as offender learning. Forward Futures is often the first step for applicants interested in beginning a career with the College, either on a cover/supply or longer assignment basis.



## Inspirational Events & Investments

Inspirational Events and Investments Limited is a subsidiary company of the Weston College Group. It includes the Winter Gardens Pavilion, Lasseter's Restaurant, the Florentine Bistro and the Lauriston Hotel. The company was incorporated in March 2017 and has already made a significant contribution to the regeneration of Weston-super-Mare.

# Mission, Values & Aims

## Our Mission

'Creating brighter futures' is the underpinning mission and purpose of the Weston College Group. It is driven to achieve this for all its learners and staff through the development of a learning and working culture that is inclusive, aspirational and focused on assuring success and progression.

## Our Values

- We will put the learner first.
- We will be entrepreneurial in approach and innovative in our thinking.
- We will be ambitious and aspirational.
- We will value diversity and celebrate success.
- We will enable collaboration and work in partnership.
- We will be responsive to the needs of individuals, business and the community.
- We will provide a safe and sustainable place to study and work.
- We will be leaders in our field and have a reputation for excellence.

## Our Aims

- Provide a safe, supportive and inclusive learning culture where learners can thrive.
- Meet the needs of employers, the local economy and regional skills shortages through a curriculum offer that puts employability at its centre.
- Develop partnerships, collaborations and models of learning that increase opportunity for different groups of learners within their immediate locality.
- Enable learners to succeed, progress and meet future challenges by providing high quality teaching, learning and assessment.
- Harness and use technology to support innovation in learning and smarter, more efficient working practices.
- Remain a financially robust, sustainable and resilient organisation that can continue to develop and invest in its facilities, infrastructure and workforce.

For more information about Weston College, please visit [www.weston.ac.uk](http://www.weston.ac.uk)



# Job Specification

**Job Title:** Chief Operating Officer  
**Accountable To:** Principal Chief Executive

## 1. Job Purpose

The role is to ensure that Weston College Groups assets, finances and financial systems that support the business of the college group are effectively and efficiently managed to the highest standards of probity and meets all regulatory standards.

As a member of the college's Executive Leadership Team, take corporate responsibility for policy formulation, developmental planning, oversight and implementation of corporate strategy. The Postholder will work closely with the College Principal & Chief Executive and provide effective leadership to the strategic leadership team (SLT) in relation to all finance, estates, IT, MIS, examinations and elements of the people function.

## 2. Key Responsibilities

- Lead the group's budgeting and forecasting systems and ensure that timely and accurate financial information is available, as required, in order to drive strategic planning, business performance and to ensure KPIs are met.
- Ensure that annual budgets are set which enable the work of the group to be appropriately resourced in line with income expectation, and subject to in-year monitoring, reporting and adjustment, as required.
- Ensure the finance function complies with the terms of the group's financial regulations and procedures, and that services provided meet the needs of service users.
- Ensure cash-flow, funds, treasury management, management of debt and lending arrangements (including bank covenants) are well managed and controlled, including internal and external auditors, ESFA, banks, legal advisers, Transaction Unit and insurers.
- Lead the group's financial governance and risk management obligations, through the development of robust systems to deliver the statutory and regulatory imperatives set by funding agencies and other bodies to which the Group is accountable.
- Lead the management of strategic and operational risks across the group through the design and development of processes, systems and working practices that enable the identification of risks and provide effective risk management.
- Assist the Principal Chief Executive and the Board to develop internal audit programmes in line with the group risk register and liaise with internal auditors and college management with respect to reporting and recommendation monitoring.
- Oversee the production of the group's annual statutory accounts, ensuring compliance with accounting and other reporting standards.
- To liaise with external auditors to agree external audit planning including statutory accounts and ESFA reporting requirements.
- Ensure that all financial and taxation matters are completed on time and conform to all requirements.
- Lead the group's strategic financial planning, procurement, accounting and financial stability, ensuring a robust framework of financial management and contract compliance.
- Ensure that the group's procurement practices are rigorous and appropriate, adopting best practice and value for money.
- Develop the group's financial strategy and provide advice and information to the Governing Board on issues relating to finance.
- Develop comprehensive and fully financed Estates and IT strategies to develop services and ensure the college provides world-class training resources.



- Ensure, at all times, the adequate maintenance and development of the estates.
- Provide strategic oversight of the IT and MIS resources and infrastructure, ensuring services and standards are maintained.
- Lead on environmental sustainability matters relating to the estate and ensure the group meets appropriately agreed targets on CO2 reduction.
- Report using accurate and meaningful information to the Corporation Board, the Executive and wider stakeholders both within and outside the college group, providing robust and clear analysis to underpin a culture of continuous improvement.
- Provide proper and effective control and operation of all financial matters throughout the group.
- Ensure that effective information systems are in place throughout the group to provide robust data to support the management and day-to-day business of the college group.
- Ensure that effective systems are in place to manage, protect and control all the group's data and inform decision making whilst being fully compliant with statutory requirements.
- Ensure that there is an effective risk management and compliance system in place.

### **3. Budget Responsibility**

- The post holder is required to ensure that the areas under their responsibility achieve budget on a monthly/ annual basis. The post holder will be required to observe and comply with the financial regulations of the Group at all times.

### **4. Continuing Professional Development**

- The post holder will proactively take part in the Group Appraisal process and will appraise any staff they are responsible for.
- The post holder must undertake all training deemed mandatory by the Group (e.g. Safeguarding, Equality and Diversity and Health and Safety) and will be expected to attend all other relevant training and continuous professional development events. They are responsible for their own professional updating.

### **5. Health and Safety**

- To take reasonable care to safeguard their own safety and that of others with whom they work.
- To cooperate with designated officers named by the Governors and/or the Principal Chief Executive and any other designated Group manager to enable the Group to comply with its obligations under Health and Safety legislation.
- Not to interfere with or to misuse anything provided in the interests of health and safety or welfare.
- To report immediately any defects in plant, equipment or the environment.

### **6. Equality and Diversity**

- The Group is committed to the provision of equal opportunities and strives to ensure that unfair discrimination does not occur. All employees have a duty to ensure unfair discrimination does not occur and to support the implementation of the Groups' Equality policy as appropriate.

### **7. Safeguarding Children and Vulnerable Adults**

- The Group recognises that it has a statutory and moral duty towards safeguarding the welfare of children, young people and, if appropriate, vulnerable adults who participate in any Institute group activities and expects all staff to share this commitment. All safeguarding mandatory training and updating must be undertaken (see 5.2).

### **8. Group Policies and Procedures**

- All staff are required to be aware of and comply with all Group Policies and Procedures which are accessed via the Virtual Learning Environment.

# Person Specification

## Qualifications

You will be degree qualified with a relevant accountancy qualification (ACA, ACCA, CIMA CIPFA) with demonstrable evidence of continuous professional development.

## Essential Experience

- A proven track record of success in a strategic financial leadership role within a highly customer centric organisation of scale and complexity (ideally within a FE context).
- Prior responsibility for organisation-wide financial control, risk, reporting and systems development, to include the consolidation of accounts and board reporting to deliver excellent financial outcomes.
- Proven track record and success of working with multiple revenue sources and previous experience of delivering innovative solutions and continuous improvement across finance and wider operational activities.
- Strong exposure to the development and analysis of key business metrics to manage risk, inform decision making and assess commercial opportunities to ensure effective and efficient use of group resources.
- Proven track record of integrating curriculum and business support areas to create sector leading learning resources and experiences.
- Experience of overseeing estate management from a strategic and capital investment perspective with a strong appreciation of the fundamentals of IT, MIS and the wider digital agenda.
- Experience of leading teams with a clear capacity to ensure business partnering is truly embedded across an organisational structure.
- Experience of capital investment and treasury functions with accountability for regulatory compliance and audit management.
- A strong track record of building productive partnerships that deliver sustainable revenue streams.
- Successful managing audit and risk processes

## Desirable Experience

- Knowledge of FE funding systems and requirements.
- Exposure to working with or leading a people services function.

## Skills and Competencies

- Able to provide direction and leadership in a way that inspires confidence and commitment from others.
- The ability to think entrepreneurially to develop business opportunities for the College and maximise income opportunities.
- The ability to use complex funding mechanisms and other income streams to maximise revenue streams and to ensure cost-effectiveness in the delivery of the Group's learning programmes.
- The ability to set and achieve demanding performance targets and to effectively manage any identified underperformance.
- Excellent communication and interpersonal skills, with an ability to be clear, to engage people and achieve buy-in.
- The ability to motivate, inspire and influence a large and diverse workforce to perform at their best by example and persuasion.
- Ability to lead major change and development as demonstrated by performance in previous positions.
- A demonstrable commitment to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children.





# Terms

## Remuneration

The salary for this post will be Circa £120,000.

## Annual Holidays

The holiday entitlement is 35 days per annum, plus recognised public holidays.

## Relocation

The Group will pay an allowance aligned to HMRC guidelines.

## Pension Scheme

The holder of this post will have access to the LGPS Pension Fund.

## Checks

All appointments are subject to satisfactory pre-employment references and DBS clearance.

# Timeline

The following timeline is indicative and should only be used as a guide. It may be subject to change.

Process	Date
Close for Applications	Monday 13 <sup>th</sup> May 2024
Final Interviews	Monday 20 <sup>th</sup> May 2024

# How to Apply

The recruitment process is being undertaken by Dodd Partners on behalf of Weston College. If you wish to apply for this position, please supply the following information:

- A covering letter (maximum two sides) highlighting your suitability and how you meet the criteria in the Person Specification, together with details of your current remuneration.
- A comprehensive CV setting out your career history, with responsibilities and achievements.
- All applications should be emailed to Dodd Partners at [contactus@doddpartners.com](mailto:contactus@doddpartners.com) at your earliest convenience, referencing assignment DP3100.

## Further Information

Should you wish to have an informal discussion about the role, please contact John Dodd on 07545 431848. Alternatively, email: [johndodd@doddpartners.com](mailto: johndodd@doddpartners.com)

