

Glasgow Kelvin College

Academic Board Committee - 01 May 2026

Rail Engineering Development – Progress Update

Report by Assistant Principal, Curriculum, Skills and Apprenticeships

1. Introduction

This paper provides an update to the Academic Board on progress made in relation to the development of rail engineering provision at Glasgow Kelvin College. It outlines activity undertaken to date, including industry engagement, partnership development, employer-led events, progress in securing apprenticeship funding and pathways, and the planned introduction of a Rail Engineering pre-apprenticeship programme.

This work aligns with the College's Curriculum Review, reinforcing the College's role as a strategic provider of employer-aligned skills provision and clear progression pathways into priority sectors.

2. Strategic Context

Rail has been identified as a priority growth area within the College's Engineering and Apprenticeships portfolio. Employer engagement activity, labour market intelligence and regional skills discussions consistently highlight workforce capacity, replacement demand and the need for accessible entry routes into rail-related careers.

The reintroduction of rail training at Glasgow Kelvin College also aligns with institutional strengths and community heritage at Springburn, providing an opportunity to support inclusive economic growth and deliver high-value pathways into skilled, well-paid employment.

3. Industry Engagement and Partnership Activity

Significant progress has been made in establishing and strengthening relationships with rail industry partners, with a clear focus on co-design, employer relevance and workforce pipelines.

3.1 Rail Industry Engagement Event – February 2026

In February 2026, the College hosted a Rail Industry Engagement Event at the Springburn Campus, bringing together rail employers, contractors and sector stakeholders.

The event provided:

- Tours of Engineering facilities at Springburn
- Direct engagement between employers, College staff and current apprentices
- Structured discussions on current and future rail skills needs

- Employer input into curriculum direction, facilities and programme design

Feedback from employers reinforced the demand for technical skills at entry and technician levels and strongly supported the development of clear pre-apprenticeship and apprenticeship pathways into rail.

3.2 Tier 1 and Employer Engagement

Engagement has continued through targeted meetings with Tier 1 contractors and regional employers, including discussions focused on:

- Workforce demand and skills gaps
- Apprenticeship models and accelerated routes
- The potential for employer-supported delivery and industry input into learning

This engagement has established strong interest from partners including Gibson's Engineering, SWGR, SPL, Volker Rail and Network Rail in supporting both apprenticeship and pre-apprenticeship activity.

4. Apprenticeships and Skills Pathways

Rail activity is being developed as part of the wider Engineering and Apprenticeships growth programme.

4.1 Securing Engineering MA Pathways

During 2025/26, the College secured approval and funding to deliver Engineering Modern Apprenticeships, creating a critical enabling pathway for rail-related training.

This includes:

- SDS approval for Engineering MA frameworks
- Retrospective funding for learners progressing from NC/HNC Engineering routes
- Confirmed funded capacity for new Engineering MA starts from August 2026

These developments provide a firm foundation for rail apprenticeships, allowing rail employers to access funded, college-led apprenticeship delivery aligned to sector needs.

4.2 Rail as a Priority Apprenticeship Growth Area

Rail Engineering sits within the College's identified priority growth sectors alongside Engineering, Building Services and net-zero aligned provision. The Apprenticeships and Skills portfolio is now positioned to support future rail apprenticeship growth subject to national framework development and funding alignment.

5. Rail Engineering Pre-Apprenticeship Course Development

Building on employer engagement and apprenticeship pathway development, the College is planning to introduce a Rail Engineering programme at SCQF Level 5 from August 2026, based at Springburn Campus.

5.1 Programme Overview

The proposed programme will be delivered as:

- Rail Engineering (NQ Mechanical and Electrical Engineering) – SCQF Level 5
- Full-time delivery over one academic year (36 weeks)
- 2.5 days per week on campus
- Two semesters of 18 weeks

The course has been designed to support two learner groups:

Group 1 – Full-time learners (pre-employment)

Learners will complete the full NQ Rail Engineering programme, gaining mechanical and electrical engineering skills aligned to rail employment requirements.

Group 2 – Apprentices (day-release)

Apprentices will complete the NC Engineering Practice component through a day-release model over two years, aligned to Engineering MA delivery.

5.2 Employer Ready Pathways

The programme has been designed to maximise employability and progression:

- Learners will be prepared for the workplace through industry-relevant content
- Subject to age and rail safety requirements (e.g. PTS), learners may access paid rail employment alongside study from mid-year
- Successful completion of the NC component provides a completed academic element of an Engineering MA
- Employers may offer accelerated two-year apprenticeships to learners who have already completed the academic phase, significantly reducing employer training burden

5.3 Industry Input and Co-Delivery

The next phase of development will focus on embedding industry-specific content, with opportunities for:

- Employer-led input into specialist units
- Guest delivery, site visits and practical industry insight
- Exploration of funded models to support structured employer contribution

6. Impact on Students

The development of rail provision will:

- Create clear, accessible pathways into rail careers
- Support learners from local communities into high-value employment
- Provide accelerated progression routes into apprenticeships
- Strengthen alignment between learning, industry standards and employment outcomes

7. Resource, Estates and Staffing Implications

Initial development activity has been progressed within existing curriculum planning, apprenticeship growth activity and employer engagement structures.

Delivery growth in Engineering and Rail is being supported through a coordinated programme of estates reconfiguration and targeted staffing investment. This includes planned workshop development at Springburn Campus and additional engineering lecturer capacity, supported by a fixed-term engineering growth curriculum project manager role.

These measures are designed to create sustainable capacity, protect delivery quality and support future skills growth, and will be progressed through established estates and workforce governance processes.

8. Equalities

The College remains committed to widening participation and promoting equality of access across all apprenticeship pathways. Targeted work is ongoing to encourage greater diversity in traditionally male-dominated sectors like construction and engineering. Marketing, outreach, and employer engagement activities will continue to promote apprenticeship opportunities to underrepresented groups, including women, care-experienced young people, and those from diverse ethnic backgrounds.

9. Risk and Assurance

Key risks relate to:

- National funding and framework alignment for rail apprenticeships
- The need to sustain employer engagement and co-delivery
- Ensuring capacity and infrastructure align with delivery growth

These risks are being actively managed through phased development, early employer engagement and alignment to wider curriculum growth planning as outlined in the Curriculum Review.

10. Data Protection

There are no data protection implications arising directly from this report.

11. Recommendations

Members are asked to:

- i. Note the contents of the report.

12. Further Information

Members can obtain additional information on the contents of this report from Peter Brown, Assistant Principal: Curriculum, Skills and Apprenticeships.

Glasgow Kelvin College
PB
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