

A photograph of the Queen Elizabeth Sixth Form College building, featuring a prominent clock tower with a clock face. The building is surrounded by trees and has a purple tint. A white diagonal banner is overlaid on the top right corner.

QUEEN ELIZABETH
Sixth Form College

QE's Curriculum

September 2024

QE's curriculum is informed by the College's vision:

To provide a transformational learning experience that equips students with the knowledge, confidence and skills to flourish in their lives, careers and communities

The College's curriculum intent is very strong. Leaders and managers have high aspirations for all students and this is strengthened by a relentless focus on the process of learning and the development of skills for current and future success.

The College's curriculum intent is clear and well understood by all staff, promoting and supporting excellent student learning and progression, including to HE. Leaders and managers have ensured that an ambitious curriculum is very effectively planned to enable all students to gain the qualifications, skills, knowledge, behaviours and cultural capital required to progress successfully to appropriate and meaningful sustained destinations, and to succeed in life.

As such, the intent, design, coverage and appropriateness of the Curriculum are crucial in achieving the College's Vision.

Study Programmes

The College's curriculum meets the provision of 16-19 study programmes.

The curriculum is a broad mix of all the experiences gained by our students through the College's planned programme of activities and opportunities.

QE's comprehensive Study Programmes for students provide a rich and empowering curriculum offer so that individuals leave College as confident and highly skilled students and citizens, ready to contribute fully to the wider community.

Study Programmes for students include:

- Academic courses
- Enrichment provision including Supplementary Programme
- Progress Tutorials
- Guided Independent Learning
- Personal Development education and support
- Health and well-being support

- Trips and visits
- Visiting Speakers
- Employability and work related learning activities
- Links with employers and apprenticeship providers
- Work experience
- Links with Higher Education Institutions

By participating in a programme of employability and work-related learning activities, all students are suitably prepared for their next steps including those who wish to progress to an apprenticeship or employment.

Curriculum Design

With the vast majority of students' courses being achieved at Level 3, curriculum design is always influenced by providing students with qualifications and outcomes which are highly valued by Higher Education Institutions, employers and Higher Level Apprenticeship providers.

This is enhanced by the opportunity for students to follow a mixed programme of Applied and A Level study, including the Extended Project Qualification.

The College's post A level Art Foundation course has a very strong history of achievement and this provision also enables students to be successful in progressing to university.

QE also has an excellent track record of success for students who need to re-sit their GCSEs in Maths or English whilst they study for their Level 3 qualifications. Leaders have successfully increased the teaching time afforded to all subjects to five hours per block for both level 2 and level 3 courses, and have implemented a comprehensive system of tutorials and guided independent learning.

Therefore, the College's curriculum offer supports the vision of providing a "transformational learning experience" increasing social mobility and maximising the progress of all students regardless of starting point and background.

Highly effective Programmes of Learning are produced by subject departments and shared with students. The precise planning and sequencing of the curriculum ensures that content is taught in a logical progression and where students can build on previous teaching and learning. Building retrieval topics and activities alongside independent tasks for students into the programme on a weekly basis enables students to see explicitly and understand the links between different areas of knowledge and skills, and to recognise that some knowledge and skills are transferable. The Programmes of Learning are also very successful in providing clarity to students about what each subject's curriculum is preparing them for, and what they will need to know and do at the end of their course. The ongoing retrieval activities effectively enable students to embed key knowledge into their long-term memory.

Regular and appropriate Guided Independent Learning tasks prepare students for their next stage in education, training or employment by developing their abilities to manage their workload, work independently and to research and problem solve. Students have been surveyed regarding their study skills and habits on several occasions throughout the year and it is evident that students have adapted their learning strategies incorporating more active learning activities such as Cornell note-taking, flashcard creation and mind mapping. Students are explicitly taught about the study cycle in their lessons and tutorials. This is a stepped approach following the metacognitive principles of planning, monitoring and evaluating. The study cycle is designed to support students in becoming more independent learners. The 'QE PRIME yourself to achieve' student revision campaign enabled students to benefit from a structured approach to their revision. PRIME engaged the support of parents and carers, who developed their own understanding of pedagogical principles during an evening event.

The curriculum is always under review, and its design and planning is informed by the College's well-established and fruitful links with schools, universities and employers and by its excellent use of labour market information.

A Curriculum Board, comprising representatives from local businesses and industry, has been established by the College: this innovative and consultative body acts as a highly effective channel of communication between employers and QE, ensuring that our curriculum offer and

skills development are informed by the needs of the local, regional and national economy and by the Local Skills Improvement Plan (LSIP).

The College is responding to the challenges identified in the LSIP by promoting awareness of priority sectors (Construction, Green Energy and Net Zero, Health and Social Care and Business and Professional Services); by enabling students to progress to professional roles within these sectors and by developing those skills which cut across all sectors such as digital, communication and confidence. The College's curriculum is planned in a highly effective way to enable students to develop the skills the LSIP has identified to benefit the current and potential workforce including communication, confidence, generic and sector-specific digital use, professional behaviours, problem solving, fact finding and research. These skills are developed extremely well in students' academic courses, tutorial programme, and through our extensive Enrichment programme. Students reflect upon and evidence their development of key employability skills through the Skills Builder programme, for which the College has been accredited with a Gold Award.

The College's curriculum design is also informed by consideration of the Tees Valley Strategic Economic Plan 2016-2026. Of the proposed creation of 25,000 jobs in the Tees Valley Combined Authority, 67% will be at Level 3 or above and 49% will be at Level 4 or above. By sending close to 700 students to university each year, the College's Curriculum is very effective in enabling students to access these higher level qualifications and to secure successful career outcomes. The breadth of the Curriculum also enables students to pursue their interests, achieve their future aspirations and to progress to the key sectors for job growth identified in the Economic Plan including Low Carbon/Process, chemical and energy; Advanced Manufacturing; Construction; Professional, business services; Logistics; Digital; Higher Education; Health and Social Care; Services and Culture and Leisure.

College initiatives such as the Job Ready Scheme, the work of the Job Coach and holding of Higher Education and Employment and Gap Year Conventions support the Curriculum and help students to be aware of a range of careers available to them. The College's Enrichment offer further enhances students' skills for the future, boosts their cultural capital and supports their development as active citizens. For example, QE Explore students plan and carry out expeditions and development projects in different countries while members of the Student Association

develop key leadership skills and learn how to translate British Values into practical action, such as the highly successful QE Culture Day.

Curriculum Implementation

QE's curriculum intent is effectively translated into practice through the design and delivery of ambitious and challenging programmes which develop the skills and knowledge needed by students to progress to university or into the world of work, and to be successful in wider life.

Teaching and Learning is outstanding. The College's robust quality assurance procedures, rigorous staff development and sharing of best practice all contribute to a vibrant culture of pedagogical improvement.

Teachers demonstrate expertise in their subject and an ability to identify and address gaps in their students' knowledge. The quality of academic discussion generated by teachers and learners is excellent, with enquiry and critical analysis promoted across the curriculum. There is very strong evidence of best practice in correcting learners' mistakes and checking that their learning is embedded. Teachers and students are very aware of the importance of retaining knowledge in long-term memory and firmly grasping new concepts in order to work towards mastery of the subject. A wide range of pedagogical techniques are employed by teachers to ensure that this happens consistently.

Lessons are very well sequenced and students are able to apply what they have learnt in previous sessions to new topics. Students can articulate their learning to date and explain how current learning will build towards the achievement of future goals. Both students and teachers show understanding of the fundamental significance of memory in learning. Homeworks and organised college-wide assessments add structure to encourage deep learning and retention of key curriculum knowledge. Extension work is used to facilitate deeper understanding and encourage wider awareness of the subject.

A carefully planned programme of pedagogy training ensures that all staff are confident and skilled in understanding and utilising key concepts such as 'Dual Coding', 'Academic Literacy' and 'Assessment for Learning'. Students' tutorial sessions also improve their understanding of metacognition and key pedagogical strategies. This is an excellent way of promoting student engagement in their own learning process and generating a collaborative learning ethic amongst

staff and students. Collaborative technology is used highly effectively to facilitate independent online learning and to develop digital skills for future employment, such as their engagement with Google Classrooms in subject areas.

Assessment at QE is excellent. Leaders and managers have continued to ensure that assessments are a key focus for the College to help students embed and utilise knowledge and to underpin curriculum planning. This includes Initial Assessments being conducted within the first few weeks and this data being used to inform teaching and learning strategies. On-course assessment is robust with regular and timely monitoring of student progress to ensure that senior leaders, subject staff and students all have a good overview of performance and plan actions for improvement at regular intervals. For example, excellent use is made of DIRT (Directed improvement and reflection time) and assessment wrappers to enable students to act upon feedback and repair mistakes or misunderstandings.

Assessment for learning and preparation for external assessments are instrumental in improving student progress. Planning of learning builds on the outcomes of ongoing assessment to further challenge and support students. For example, after each formal assessment students set SMART targets to reflect on and repair gaps in learning. Individual interventions are put in place where needed. The progress of targeted students is improved through personal tutor support, coursework clinics, revision classes and additional tuition for small groups or individuals.

Students leave the College with a commitment to lifelong learning and personal development, equipped to make a productive contribution to the local, national and global economy and ready to play a positive role in their communities as adult citizens. Throughout study programmes, therefore, students work to develop skills for learning, skills for work and skills for life. Skills for work are the skills that students need to be successful in future employment, able to secure rewarding careers and to meet local skills needs. Students' skills are effectively developed through both the academic curriculum and the tutorial programme. Skills Builder Universal Framework activities require students to reflect upon the skills they develop during their time at the College and to produce portfolios of evidence demonstrating progress.

Students enjoy their learning and can connect their studies with their future career goals in a sophisticated way. Students progress to a range of positive destinations with 96% of students who hold a university place achieving their first choice. Their views of teaching, learning and

assessment are extremely positive as reported through quality processes and student views surveys.

Support for SEND and Disadvantaged students

The curriculum is planned to enable all students including disadvantaged and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities or high needs to succeed in life. Regular Staff Development on Quality First Teaching ensures high quality, inclusive pedagogy for all students, particularly SEND and high needs students. Additionally, students with Educational Health Care Plans or those with special educational needs are issued with a 'Support Passport', which outlines how individuals can best be supported by their teachers, and includes all necessary adjustments that need to be made for the student. Moreover, such students are allocated a Key Worker who liaises with the student, parent/carer and teaching staff to ensure their needs are met. Furthermore, weekly Study Support lessons are provided, which allows them to gain further skills to assist with their learning.

Supporting disadvantaged students in the classroom has been the focus of staff pedagogy sessions. Subject areas have implemented Disadvantaged First approaches, including 1:1 support; explicitly teaching metacognition; increased communication with home and pedagogy trials.

A college-wide Disadvantaged Strategy Group is implementing an extensive range of support interventions to maximise the outcomes for the College's disadvantaged students

Curriculum Impact

Student achievement is excellent. Students leave the College having developed the skills they will need to thrive in higher education, to gain rewarding and meaningful careers and to contribute as citizens to the society in which they live. For example in tutorials, students follow a programme that supports comprehensive progression planning, including a 'Job Ready' scheme for those who intend to enter work or training on leaving College.

A broad and varied enrichment programme of over 60 activities ensures that students are able to gain knowledge and skills beyond subject learning. For example, the College's large Combined Cadet Force provides training in leadership skills, preparing students for a range of future careers. The College's Student Association, which includes representatives from across the student body, ensures that students' views are heard on a range of issues and the 'You Said, We

Did' feedback scheme provides a response from senior management to student concerns. Student engagement in the community is outstanding. A large number of highly active campaigning and volunteering groups such as the College's national award-winning Interact Group make a positive impact on local and wider communities. Other groups promote issues about which students feel strongly, including diversity, environmental concerns and LGBTQ+ issues. A highly successful 'Culture Day' takes place in February, celebrating students' heritages and promoting tolerance and inclusivity.

The implementation of a College-wide programme of pedagogical development, coupled with 'Guided independent Learning' (GIL) and retrieval activities in Programmes of Learning, has enhanced students' understanding and implementation of strategies for learning. As such, students develop thorough knowledge and a broad range of skills, which enable them to perform at high levels in national examinations and assessments, as can be seen in both A Level and Level 3 Applied qualifications.

As part of our curriculum design, leaders and managers have ensured that considerable resources are given to the delivery of GCSE English and Maths. These essential qualifications are fundamental to students' ability to progress into both work and further study. Student outcomes are outstanding in these qualifications,

Progression rates are excellent. Leaders and managers at all levels in the College have created an aspirational culture, which is central to the successful progression of our students. The majority of QE students come from backgrounds with no parental experience of HE. Despite this, in 2023, 622 students progressed to 93 different universities including nearly 200 to Russell Group universities. Over 98% of students applying to university in 2022-23 gained at least one offer, while the proportion of students progressing to their 'Firm' choice university was 96% of those placed, reflecting the high quality guidance that is given in support of applications.

Government destinations data demonstrates that our students are significantly more likely to progress to higher education and to sustain both higher education and employment than the average locally or nationally. Of students leaving in 2019, 75% progressed to degrees, higher apprenticeships for at least 6 consecutive months in the 2 years after taking Level 3 qualifications at the College. This compares to 68% locally and 66% nationally. Of students leaving in 2020, the proportion who stayed in education or went into employment from October to March the following year, or stayed in an apprenticeship for at least 6 months was 90%. This

compares to 83% locally and 79% nationally. These figures indicate how important QE's contribution is to the ambitions of Tees Valley employers. For example, the Tees Valley Trailblazer Local Skills Improvement Plan indicates that only 33.2% of residents are qualified to Level 4/degree, compared to 43.1% nationally. As such, the current skills of Tees Valley residents, *"Can present a challenge in meeting labour demands"*. The College's contribution to meeting local and national skills needs is therefore significant.

HESA data, relating to QE students' achievement at degree level, shows that students, including those from the areas with the lowest Higher Education participation rate, and those whose parents/carers do not have higher education qualifications, went on to achieve degree classifications that outperformed both sixth form colleges and the state sector in general. This data also reveals that the College's students are more likely to be retained in higher education than their peers in the Sixth Form College and state sectors. This demonstrates the transformative impact of the study programmes undertaken by QE students and the skills and pedagogical knowledge developed during their QE experience. For example, whilst at QE students acquire the most recent evidence-based approaches to learning through explicit teaching, which underpins their future success both at university and in employment. It also reflects the high quality of information, advice and guidance provided, how well prepared students are for their next steps and how well aligned QE's strategy is to meeting the stated needs of the local labour market as presented in the Tees Valley.

Therefore, QE's ambitious and rich curriculum results in students:

- Achieving highly in national qualifications
- Acquiring knowledge and a broad range of skills which will equip them for future success and enable them to make positive contributions to their communities as active citizens
- Being prepared for their next stage of education, training or employment
- Progressing to sustained, appropriate and high-quality destinations
- Outperforming students from other sixth form colleges and the state sector in their achievement at degree level in Higher Education

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