

HIGHER EDUCATION STRATEGY



2013-2016

Updated: April 2014

Updated: June 2014

Contents

- 1. Introduction to Ashton Sixth Form College**
- 2. The College's Vision, Mission and Core Values**
- 3. Higher Education Strategic Drivers and Aims**
- 4. Local, Regional and National Context**
- 5. The HE Curriculum**
- 6. University Partnership**
- 7. Student Experience and Student Voice**
- 8. Facilities and Resources**
- 9. Support Services**
- 10. Enhancement, Quality Assurance and Quality Improvement**
- 11. Staffing Structure, CPD and Scholarly Activity**
- 12. Adult Skills Courses for HE Students**
- 13. Safeguarding**
- 14. Future Plans 2013-2016**
- 15. Appendices**
 - Appendix 1 HE Programme Overview**
 - Appendix 2 Staffing Structure Chart**
 - Appendix 3 Student Enrolment Numbers**
 - Appendix 4 Timetable**

1. Introduction to Ashton Sixth Form College

Ashton Sixth Form College was established in 1980 following a re-organisation of secondary education in the borough of Tameside. The college, formerly a grammar school, is located on the outskirts of the town. It is one of two colleges in the borough, but is the only sixth form college. The other college in the borough is a General FE College, although there is increasing provision within local school sixth forms.

Ashton Sixth Form College has around 2000 full-time 16-18 year old students and a HE and Skills (18 plus) provision of around 900 students who mainly study on a part-time basis. The bulk of the college's provision is full-time level 3 programmes delivered to 16-18 year old students.

18+ students within HE and Skills study a range of courses, from level 1 (including basic literacy and numeracy and ESOL) to a variety of vocational programmes at levels 2 and 3. Higher Education provision is now well established, with around 200 students following a range of programmes at level 4 and above. HE programmes are either part time franchised, full time franchised or full time direct numbers.

The higher education programmes running in 2013/14 include:

Foundation degrees/HND:

- Education
- Early Childhood Studies
- Public Services
- Health and Social Care

BA (Hons) top up:

- Education
- Early Childhood Studies

Foundation Year:

- Health Studies

Postgraduate:

- PGCE /Certificate in Education

The student body is diverse. Level 3 students enter college with GCSE scores ranging from 3.0 -8.0, with the average GCSE score for AS students being 5.6. 47% of 16-18 students have disadvantage uplift. Amongst the post 18 HE and Skills population, the disadvantage figure is higher at 60%. Around 600 students age 16-19 are in receipt of the college bursary for which the income threshold is £24,000 per annum (includes all sources of income). In 16-18 provision, the proportion of males and females is more-or-less equal, but within HE and Skills the provision is

female-dominated (75% female). 84% of students are white. The largest BME group is Bangladeshi.

2. The College's Vision, Mission and Values

Vision

To be an outstanding college and pursue excellence

Mission

To inspire students, enrich lives and foster a love of learning

To inspire staff to lead fulfilling professional lives

To celebrate achievement and success

To promote wellbeing and nurture a collaborative, college-wide community

To make a positive contribution to the wider community

To play a key role in educational developments

Values

A focus upon learners

A determined and rigorous pursuit of excellence

Respect, diversity and inclusivity

Honesty and integrity

Collaborative, constructive teamwork and a sense of community

A caring, healthy and safe environment

3. Higher Education Strategic Drivers and Aims

Strategic drivers

- Tameside priorities and those for East Manchester and the region
- Opportunities for internal progression of students at 18
- Being demand led
- Responding to employers priorities and needs

Aims

1. Increase Higher Education provision at the college to reflect the needs of college students, the local community and employers. To develop and expand the college's profile as a local centre for higher education that meets the needs and interests of the local community, local organisations and employers whilst focussing on areas of expertise.
2. Develop the college's capacity and infrastructure for the delivery of Higher Education. To continue to develop a higher education infrastructure within the college and to build the college's capacity to offer a well-developed range of Higher Education options and a staffing infrastructure who are skilled and well supported in their professional development and delivery of higher level awards.

3. Develop and effectively manage partnerships in the development and delivery of Higher Education.
To work with key organisations, employers and Higher Education institutions to build an appropriate curriculum offer that offers learners choice, flexibility and support.
4. Maintain high standards of learning, teaching, student achievement and progression.
To maintain high standards of high quality learning and teaching within the Higher Education programmes, to develop responsive and Higher Education specific systems and to provide a range of support services to ensure student achievement and progression.
5. Widen participation in Higher Education
To engage with a broad range of potential learners through targeted marketing and recruitment activities to attract those who otherwise may not have access to or consider Higher Education.

4. Local, Regional and National Context

As can be seen from our mission the College is keen to play a key role in local and national educational developments. The national developments in college based higher education and university partnerships with colleges offer Ashton Sixth Form College the opportunity to respond to local skills needs and higher level learning for Tameside.

Tameside has a population of around 213,000 and consists of seven towns. The largest towns are Ashton-under-Lyne and Hyde.

Employment in the manufacturing sector is disproportionately high in Tameside. Nationally, employment is now 76% service sector based. Local economic indicators show that Tameside residents have some of the lowest rates of pay in the Greater Manchester sub-region. The proportion of residents qualified to degree level or higher is just 17.6% which is much lower than the national figure of 35% and lower than the Greater Manchester figure of 28%.

Unemployment in Tameside is 16.5% which is significantly higher than the national figure at 6.8% and slightly higher than Greater Manchester as a whole at 15.6%. The proportion of residents from ethnic minority groups is 11.14%, the national figure is 12.9%.

Tameside local priorities: Tameside Economic and Learning Partnership promote “the involvement of all communities in Tameside in the achievement of the ‘Prosperous Tameside’; and a ‘Learning Tameside’ and its aims of the Sustainable Community Strategy. The Partnership enables joint working across agencies and communities so that shared goals and outcomes for Economic Development and Lifelong Learning can be achieved”. The Partnership contributes to the delivery and monitoring of the four key objectives of the Tameside Economic Master plan to:

- Increase Skills
- Increase Employment
- Increase Enterprise and
- Attract Investment

The Partnership outlines the priorities in Tameside within detailed Action Plans and the work of sub-groups as follows:

- Enterprise – Tameside Enterprise Strategy and Action Plan
- Employment – Tameside Employment Action Plan
- Skills – Tameside Adult Learning and Skills Action Plan
- Investment – steered by spatial documents such as the Unitary Development Plan and forthcoming Local Development Framework. Investment marketing actions are steered by the action plans of the M60 Invest Steering group

The college is a full and active contributor to the Tameside agenda with members of college staff being members of relevant boards and committees and attending strategic partnership events. The Chief Executive of Tameside Council is a member of the College's governing body. Each member of the governing body has a designated part of the college's curriculum with whom they are a link. The Chief Executive of Tameside Council is the designated link to HE and Skills and as such supports the HE provision, development and events.

HE developments at the college are informed by key employment sectors within Greater Manchester. Key facts:

- **Business, Financial & Professional Services:** Outside of London, Greater Manchester is the UK's main centre for this sector, employing 265,000 people and generating £12.8 billion of GVA annually. Key companies include Co-op Banking Group, RBS and BNY Mellon.
- **Health & Social Care:** Employs 164,000 people generating annual GVA of £4.2 billion. Assets include The Christie and the UK Biobank.
- **Creative & Digital:** Greater Manchester has the UK's largest cultural & creative cluster outside London, employing 162,000 people and generating GVA of £5.4 billion each year. Key assets include MediaCityUK (home of the BBC & ITV) and The Sharp Project.
- **Education:** Employing 106,000 people, and creating annual GVA of £3.6 billion.
- **Advanced Manufacturing:** Manufacturing as a whole employs nearly one-in-ten residents in Greater Manchester. Around 50,000 people are working in advanced manufacturing, which generates £2.4 billion of GVA every year. Key companies include NXP, Siemens and Holroyd.
- **Sport:** Employing 17,000 people and generating annual GVA of £0.3 billion. As well big clubs like Manchester United and Manchester City, the area is home to major sporting companies such as Adidas and Umbro

(Source: http://neweconomymanchester.com/stories/1776-key_facts/)

The nine priority sectors for GM identified by the Greater Manchester Forecasting Model 2012 and communicated by Careers Solutions are:

- Financial & Professional Services
- Health and social care
- Retail
- Education
- Hospitality and tourism
- Construction Logistics

- Advanced manufacturing
- Digital and creative

(Greater Manchester Forecasting Model 2012 and Careers Solutions)

The college's current HE programme and planned developments up to 2016 reflect alignment to some of these key sectors, namely:

- Health and Social Care
- Education
- Digital and Creative
- Sport*
- Financial and Professional Services*

(* future developments)

Given the academic reputation already enjoyed by the College, we are well placed to contribute to increase the numbers of residents reaching level 4 and beyond and to contribute to raising skills levels and employment opportunities.

The College has an excellent reputation for its vocational provision and enjoys strong and effective relationships with those sectors. The College has built on these partnerships to respond to the demand for up-skilling within certain sectors (e.g. Early Years).

The higher education curriculum began with a Foundation Degree in Community Governance in 2003. Ten years on, we have several higher education programmes on offer and are continually seeking to enhance the provision and provide more choice.

5. The HE Curriculum

In response to the changes within school and further education sectors and the requirements around workforce development, the college has built a strong reputation in higher level programmes for these sectors. These include:

- BA (Hons) Education/Foundation degree Education (part time fast track)
- BA (Hons) Early Childhood Studies/Foundation degree Early Childhood Studies (part time)
- PGCE – Post Graduate Certificate in Education for those wishing to teach in post 14 education (full time)

The college is ambitious to further expand the offer to the education sector and to become a hub of training and development for schools and colleges locally and in the region. In part, this is to provide expanding opportunities for the A+ Trust which is led by the college and includes several local secondary schools. But also, to provide training and development opportunities to school and college staff beyond the borough. Pivotal within these plans is a bid to Schools Direct planned for 2014 and working with our main University partner to offer an MA Education programme at the college from January 2015, promoting this widely including across the Trust Schools.

Ashton Sixth Form College takes its commitment to the widening participation agenda seriously, and works closely with university partners to attract and support students who do not choose traditional full time undergraduate study at a university. Currently, 65% of the college's own full

time 16-18 students progress to higher education. Providing an increasing offer of higher level study at the college has provided students who do not choose progression to University with further options. In September 2012, the college introduced full time programmes, with its direct HEFCE numbers, secured as part of the national core and margin bidding process.

The following full time courses are offered and these mainly cater for 18 year old students:

- Foundation degree Public Services (not recruiting in 14/15)
- HND Health
- Foundation Year Health Studies

September 2014 will see the introduction of:

- HND Media (full time, in partnership with Salford University)

September 2015 will see the introduction of:

- Foundation Year Art and Design (full time, in partnership with Staffordshire University)

September 2015 and 2016 programmes being considered:

- Sport/Sport Management
- Psychology and Criminology
- Financial and Professional Services

The Foundation Year Art programme is a new collaboration with the college's main University partner with both level 3 and level 4 credits to be validated in autumn 2014. A number of the college's 18 year olds already choose a Foundation Year Art as a progression route as a stepping stone to their chosen BA (Hons) route. It is hoped that the introduction of a foundation year at the college will provide students with an additional progression option. In addition, the college is now licensed to offer programmes to international students and this programme may be offered to international students through links with the International Creative Art & Design Academy in Guangzhou, China.

It is a strategic decision amongst the Senior Leadership Team and Governors to maximise higher education developments around the college's areas of vocational excellence as well as seeking opportunities for higher level learning in broader subject areas.

6. University Partnerships

At the beginning of the college's move into higher education, the college worked with a number of University partners with some programmes being delivered at the college by those partners. Over recent years, and following recommendations stemming from the college's successful IQER in June 2010, the college has moved towards having direct ownership over the delivery of HE programmes and working with a key University partner – Staffordshire University. September 2014 will see the college taking on full responsibility for both of the current BA (Hons) top up programmes which have formerly been delivered partially or fully by the University.

In addition, the college became validated to run a level 4/5 Media programme with Salford University in 2012. This is due to commence in September 2014 and will initially be a HND under the University's license with Edexcel, although the college is in discussions with the University about developing this into a degree programme. The decision to work with the University rather than directly with Edexcel/Pearson on this programme is to ensure that students on the Media programme can enjoy the same level of access to University resources and facilities as those enjoyed by students on programmes with our other University partner. The agreement also ensures high quality standards by working within the University's quality assurance and enhancement framework, complemented with the college's own systems.

7. Student Experience, Student Voice, Student Engagement

Evidence from quality and enhancement measures such as student voice activities and student outcomes reflects the increased student satisfaction levels and success rates that have followed the decision to have full ownership over delivery of programmes and therefore greater management over student experience (since the IQER of June 2010).

In 2012/13, the NSS score for student satisfaction was 100%. This was reported in a BBC online news feed. Although the college was pleased to see this headline figure, we also acknowledge the range of data from that survey (based on a sample of 35 students) where we are seeking to improve, for example, around assessment. College based surveys in 2012/13 for adult and HE students combined also reflected high levels of student satisfaction with responses to statements scoring 94%-99% good or better.

From 2013/14, the college based surveys will be separated with a HE specific survey aligned to NSS questions to ensure a more focused approach to analysing and responding to higher education student opinion. In addition, in 2013/14 there will be two NSS scores to analyse. One stemming from the college's own HEFCE full time numbers graduating and the other from franchised provision.

	2014	2015	2016
Update June 2014			
Survey results (sample 136) Strongly agree/Agree			
Staff are good at explaining things	95%		
Staff have made the subject interesting	87%		
Staff are enthusiastic about what they are teaching	93%		
The course is intellectually stimulating	92%		
The criteria used in marking have been made clear in advance	92%		
Assessment arrangements and marking have been fair	96%		
Feedback on my work has been prompt (4 working weeks)	87%		
I have received detailed comments on my work	93%		
Feedback on my work has helped me to clarify things I did not understand	91%		
I have received sufficient advice and support with my studies	87%		
I have been able to contact staff when I needed to	95%		
Good advice was available when I needed to make study choices	89%		
The timetable works efficiently as far as my activities are concerned	90%		
Any changes in the course or teaching have been communicated effectively	92%		
The course is well organised and is running smoothly	88%		
The library resources and services are good enough for my needs	91%		
I have been able to access general IT resources and services when needed	92%		
I have been able to access specialised equipment, facilities or rooms when needed	83%		
The course has helped me to present myself with confidence	94%		
My communication skills have improved	89%		
As a result of the course (so far) I feel confident in tackling unfamiliar problems	87%		
Overall I am satisfied with the quality of my course	92%		

Focus group feedback May 2014 (sample 35):

What students like:

- Quality of initial advice and guidance; taster sessions
- Accessible tutors who offer good levels of support
- 1:1 tutorials which help to develop academic skills
- Detailed assignment feedback which helps them to improve

What students would like to see improved:

- Greater consistency in the amount of 'good' HE teaching
- Reliable access to the college Moodle VLE off-campus
- Enforcement of 'strict' HE rules and behaviour, commensurate with a 'real' university experience
- Changes to the network IT password arrangements to allow changes to be made off-site
- Increased access to library book stock to support early years and education courses
- More information on the expertise and vocational backgrounds of lecturers
- Improved catering facilities in the evenings, with shorter waiting times and hot food availability
- Additional PC access in the learning centre, particularly at peak time (e.g. 4pm)
- More dedicated HE spaces and learning areas, that reinforce a good 'HE experience'
- Greater consistency in assessment practice, with faster return of grades and typed feedback

- More reliable access to Staffordshire University Blackboard VLE
- Access to previous year's learning/modules/feedback on the university Blackboard VLE
- Increased library opening times, particularly in school holidays, including clearer information about library opening hours outside of term time

The survey results have been analysed and discussed by core HE staff and shared with the Lead Student Representative (Rep). Responses have been discussed, proposed and planned at the HE and Skills Quality Group (see minutes). The analysis and responses (actions) have been shared with the Lead Student Rep, HE staff, HE students, the Senior Leadership Team and the Quality and Planning governor committee. The analysis and responses have also taken account of the feedback from focus groups with a small sample of HE students during the year. The college communicates the results and responses of student feedback by circulating a document entitled "You Said / Our Response" (see copy). This has been shared with all parties mentioned above. It is also available online and is displayed on relevant notice board areas. The resulting actions will feed into the QIEP for HE for 2014/15. **The responses and actions fully take account of the survey results and focus group feedback and seek to address student needs and wishes.**

Enhancement and improvement of the HE student experience is a focus of ongoing developments and targeted actions. Each year, student representatives are appointed within HE classes and programmes. However, the role, remit and liaison with representatives is to be further developed and promoted. The college acknowledges that a high proportion of our HE students are mature students with jobs and family lives and they cite these factors as potentially being a barrier to wishing to increase their engagement. However, it is important that the college works hard to overcome barriers where possible and continue to offer lots of ways for HE students to be actively involved in informing and shaping HE at the college.

To this end, targeted **Student Engagement actions and opportunities in 2013/14** include (this is not a full and comprehensive list):

- The introduction of a HE Student Engagement Strategy
- HE student feedback and input to a revised HE specific welcome and induction guide (HE specific)
- Promotion of the role of the student representative (rep) in the above, written by a student representative.
- A package of training and support for HE Student Reps
- Student representative led focus groups
- HE student feedback and input to a new HE induction presentation (with key messages from HE students for new HE students).
- The introduction and trail of course level Staff: Student Committees (following the Salford University model)
- Ensuring greater awareness of and the opportunity for involvement in Quality Assurance and Improvement such as student representatives sharing External Examiner feedback, publication of dates for the Quality Group meetings with invitations for HE students or student representatives to attend and student involvement in developing the use of a "Talk Back" facility on the college's website.
- Introduction of "Student Meet", an event for all HE students to gather, network and socialise with each other and college staff.
- A place on the Governing Body allocated to a HE and Skills student. (For 2013/14, there is no HE and Skills student on the governing body as no student indicated a wish to undertake

this role. However, one of the college's BA (Hons) Education 2013 graduates is joining the governing body for the academic year 2013/14 in a parent governor role).

- HE student involvement of designs for a University and Adult Skills Centre
- Evening of "Academia" event for all HE students and staff

New for 2013/14 is the HE Student Engagement Strategy 2013-16 which aims to give the overarching outline of plans and aspirations for HE Student Engagement over the 3 year period. Specific and detailed targets and actions in relation to student engagement are documented within annual HE SED & Quality Improvement and Enhancement Plan documents, mid-year reviews and within PMR documentation (as applicable).

8. Facilities and Resources

Rooms

It is acknowledged that an important aspect of students' experiences is the facilities, services and the environment offered to HE students. Since the last IQER, there is now a dedicated classroom used for HE delivery. HE students also use other parts of college, particularly where specialised resources are required. HE programmes are delivered either outside of the 16-19 college timetable or are located where possible in the HE teaching room, if timetabled during the day.

The college has plans in place for a dedicated building for HE and Skills in the centre of the campus. This is currently the Art and Design building but is to be refurbished for 2016/17 and opened as a University and Adult Learning Centre. This is with the intention of offering HE students discrete resources tailored to their needs offering a student services desk, classrooms, independent study with IT access, tutorial and social space. HE students will be involved in the design of this space.

A dedicated HE space was referred to in the previous HE Strategy, however, delays with these plans have occurred due to delays with EFA funding (on grounds of demographic growth in 16-19) that is planned to fund the new art and design building, thus allowing re development of the current Art building into the new University and Adult Learning Centre.

Update June 2014:

Following student feedback activities, the college is designating an area within the LRC as a HE specific study space and key HE staff are relocating to offices in that area.

LRC

HE students have access to the college's Learning Resource Centre (LRC) as well as University partner learning centre resources (book loans, E books and journal access).

The LRC offers resources bespoke to the HE programmes, a HE link among the LRC team and the LRC is open for two extended evenings per week. LRC staff also deliver sessions to groups of students about how best to use LRC resources (college and University), research skills and referencing. HE students are also able to access the LRC over the college vacation periods.

LRC staff can also support students with accessing resources through reciprocal arrangements amongst Universities.

e-learning and ILT

The college utilises a number of e-learning platforms to offer access to e-resources and to support assessment including:

- Moodle (college VLE)
- Blackboard (University partners)
- Turnitin
- Access to partner university LRC and E resources via their websites

It is the aim of the HE team to achieve full equity and consistency of access to such resources for all HE students. Currently, in 2013, the efficiency of the college's VLE/Moodle system is under review. Whilst many HE students and staff have made effective and comprehensive use of this system, some HE students have reported difficulties with technical access (June 2014 update). For some HE students, the programme they are studying requires use of the University's Blackboard site. The college is working with Staffordshire University to achieve a consistent approach to Blackboard use across programmes. Turnitin is now being used for submission and marking of work across a growing number of HE programmes. The college is working with the University to agree use of Turnitin across the board in HE programmes.

The use of and access to online learning resources, in particular journal access, is an invaluable resource for the college's HE students and is something the HE department are keen to ensure continues with any new partnerships.

The college's ILT strategy takes account of all college student needs including HE students. In specific response to HE students, the dedicated classroom was equipped with a lap top trolley for sole HE student use in 2012 for example.

Update June 2014:

Student feedback about ICT is clearly an area for rapid improvement, highlighted by student feedback activities (survey/focus group). See response circulated.

Refreshments

Refreshment facilities are available to HE students with the coffee shop operating on two late evenings. At present, the refreshment facilities are under review following the outsourcing of catering. HE student feedback has indicated dissatisfaction with the service offered and a new offer is planned for September 2014 (June 2014 feedback).

The college will continually review student demands and needs in relation to these resources and facilities and managers of these resources are expected to consider the needs of HE students in their SAR and QIPs.

9. Support Services

HE students have access to all key support services within college including Careers, an Admissions service, Counselling, Chaplaincy and Additional Learning Support. In addition, within the HE department, students can access academic skills and pastoral support.

Students are informed of how they can access these support services as part of their induction and the details are located within the induction materials. They can also seek such information from their teachers and on the website.

The **careers** service is available 9-4, however, HE students can book appointments including in the evenings. Careers staff offer help with personal statements, UCAS, practice interviews, job search and career planning and also contribute to delivery of sessions within courses. The careers service is particularly well used by full time HE applicants/students. The careers service also contribute to HE staff development days.

June 2014 update: See new HE Employability and Careers Policy. Employability themes are to be more explicitly referenced and addressed within induction materials and within course delivery. In 13/14, some courses trialled work around the concept of the "Staffordshire Graduate". This is to be further built on going forward and to be articulated within the new HE Employability and Careers Policy. All Staffordshire Validated programmes are validated with the concept of the Staffordshire Graduate fully embedded.

HE students (potential and current) have access to a Senior **Admissions** Officer, qualified in Information, Advice and Guidance, who works specifically within the HE and Skills team. This role is often the first point of contact for HE students. This role provides advice on course entry and application, information about fees and finance and loan application, oversees student interview arrangements and offer letters, liaises with the University around admissions and finance, liaises with the Marketing Assistant around information for students, updates fees and finance information for HE students, works with the college's Business Manager on tracking of HE fees and payments and produces written guidance and information in print and online for HE students as well as seeing HE students one to one.

The **Additional Learning Support** team offer diagnostic assessment to HE students who are referred by their teacher or who self-refer around suspected or known learning difficulties or disabilities. They advise students on the support they can offer and produce a report for teaching staff to inform the teacher how best to meet that student's needs. The ALS team help students with DLS applications and provide support funded by DLS. They also contribute to staff development days and provide a wealth of printed material/guidance for both staff and students. The support and the impact of the support for HE students in receipt of ALS support funded by DLS is reported within the ALS SAR/QIP.

The **Chaplaincy** is open to those of all faiths and none. The college Chaplain is available to see HE students and the Chaplaincy can be accessed by all students at any time the college is open.

Counselling is available on an appointment basis to all students. This can be via self-referral or following a recommendation by a teacher. This is a confidential service. The counsellor is available fulltime at the college and can offer appointments beyond 4pm.

Academic Skills support is available in a number of ways to HE students – embedded into programmes as standard, one to one with subject teachers and/or appointments with LRC staff and a programme of distinct Academic Skills Sessions run at different times of the year. This is an area for further development as provision grows.

June 2014 update: The 14/15 programme of (distinct) Academic Skills Sessions has now been publicised. Students can be referred or choose to attend.

Tutorial and pastoral support – this is offered by HE teaching staff, currently, at subject level and is bespoke to learner needs. In the past year, the team have increased their use of Pro-Monitor as means of recording and communicating information about students of a pastoral nature. Full time students are given an additional hour on top of subject hours as a flexible means of tutorial and pastoral support (and to include some Academic Skills) in 2013/14. This is to be reviewed at the end of the year and is an area for development (see internal SED/QIEP 14/15). The 2014/15 QIEP will refer to a clearly defined tutorial and pastoral offer for HE students based upon the analysis of impact of the trial of activities in 13/14.

The college will continually review student demands and needs in relation to the above support services and relevant managers are expected to consider the needs of HE students in their SARs/SEDs and Quality Improvement (and Enhancement) Plans.

10. Enhancement, Quality Assurance and Quality Improvement

The college takes a varied range of “deliberate steps” to enhance and improve higher education and to ensure that we are:

- Maintaining academic standards
- Enhancing and assuring the quality of the students’ learning opportunities
- Providing high quality and accurate information about higher education provision
- Continually improving and enhancing HE students’ learning opportunities.

Core Quality Assurance and Improvement processes include:

Cross college (systems used across ALL college provision)	Additional, college based process/system for HE	Participation with University led systems
Annual Self-assessment report and Action Plan, presented to panel of senior leaders and external partners	Core of staff dedicated to HE roles	HE staff attend pre module introductions and post module standardisations
Monthly Quality group meeting	Monthly HE Quality sub group – HE focus	HE staff attend validation preparation and validation events
Observation of learning and teaching	HE only student surveys	Completion of Annual Monitoring Reports and Module Monitoring Report
Line management “keep in touch meetings” between AP HE and Skills and leaders of HE programmes	HE presentations and reports to governors	External Examiner
Use of Pro Monitor for tracking and monitoring HE student information	HE specific Policies and Procedures (including Review of Learning and Observation policy linked to UK Professional Standards for teachers of HE)	University led CPD

Monthly data checks	HE and Skills Admissions Officer and Marketing Assistant	University led observations of HE sessions
Additional sessions (outside of course specification) for HE students such as careers progression and guest speakers	HE CPD days for HE staff and promotion of scholarly activity	Module and assessment review, writing and development
Peer observations and Teach Meets	HE Student Reps	Link staff across all roles

This is not an exhaustive list.

Update June 2014:
The HE team are to write a specific “HE Enhancement Statement” to clearly reflect the view of enhancement and to differentiate from standard quality related procedures.

In addition, the HE and Skills team have identified the need to make much more explicit reference to the UK Professional Standards for teaching in HE within the Observation and Review of Learning processes going forward and within the PMR process. These should be reflected within the SED/QIEP process and follow through into related documentation.

The College Quality Cycle: key features of the college’s quality cycle include:

For Curriculum Areas

- Annual lesson observation training for all Heads of Department, members of Quality Group and curriculum focussed members of SLT.
- Lesson observations of all teachers (to become a ‘Review’ of learning in 2013/14) with intervention and support for improvement where necessary.
- Surveys (from all stakeholders – students, staff), focus groups and assessment audits throughout the year.
- Learner Experience Days (to become thematic Walkthrough observations in 2013/14).
- Support for teaching and learning through targeted CPD and intervention, teaching and learning sets and ongoing coaching and monitoring.
- Start-of- year outcomes meeting with Deputy Principal and SLT link.
- Production of a Self-Evaluation Document (SED) and Quality and Improvement and Enhancement Plan) QIEP which then is validated by a panel of external ‘critical friends’.
- Mid year review meeting with the Deputy Principal and SLT link.
- Monthly KIT meetings between Heads Of Departments and their Assistant Principal.
- Performance Management Review for all teachers, Head of Department and members of SLT, including a 360o appraisal for all managers. Mid year PMR for all staff.
- Regular Tracking and Monitoring ‘points’ to check learner progress.
- Management training for all Heads of Departments and other Curriculum Managers.
- Curriculum Review, where appropriate.

For Support Areas

- Production of an annual Self Assessment Report and QIP. Robust SAR validation.
- Mid year review meeting with SLT link.
- PMR for all individual members of support staff. Mid year PMR.
- Production of a Service Level Agreement which is monitored regularly.
- Regular KIT meetings between Support Staff Managers and their Assistant Principal.
- Management training for all Support Managers.
- Targeted CPD, both internal and external.

For SLT

- Production of a cross-college Self Assessment Report and Action Plan.
- Cross College SAR validation with external panel members.
- Annual PMR, inclusive of a 360o appraisal.
- Mid year PMR.
- Mid year review of SAR/QIP targets.
- Regular KIT meeting with Line Manager.
- Weekly SLT Meetings.
- Regular reporting of outcomes, progress, targets and future plans to full governing body and/or committees.
- CPD and targeted training/updates.
- External and internal audits.

The Self-Assessment Process (SED for HE)

Support area SAR training takes place in the Summer term and the SAR writing process begins immediately in readiness for validation in October.

Training for Curriculum Heads of Departments takes place in the Summer term, but the SAR/SED writing process does not begin until early September when all outcomes data is available. A datasheet is provided, by MIS, for each course, drilling down attendance, retention, achievement and success rate to class/teacher level. Using these datasheets and taking into account other evidence from surveys, lesson observation etc, each curriculum department produces their SARs (or in the case of HE – SED) during September in readiness for validation in October.

Curriculum SAR/SED Validation takes place over several days in October. The Validation Panel includes the Principal, Deputy Principal, external panel members as appropriate, members of the governing body and Heads of Department.

The cross-college SAR is written throughout October and November, and is validated late November/early December. All members of SLT attend the validation, and panel members include senior managers from other similar colleges.

The Cross-college SAR structure reflects the new Ofsted Inspection Framework and is validated by the Board of Corporation before being published on the Learner Gateway in December.

11. Staffing Structure, CPD and Scholarly Activity

The college's Senior Leadership Team was restructured in 2007 under a new Principal and has seen further restructure over the last few years. Currently, there are 8 members of the senior leadership team including five Assistant Principals, a Vice and Deputy Principal and the Principal. The AP HE, Skills and International reports to the senior leadership team and governors and also chairs Quality Group (HE and Skills) on a regular basis about progress and to make decisions about future plans. (See Appendix 2, staffing structure chart). This ensures strategic level representation of the college's Higher Education provision.

The HE and Skills team is a distinct area of college provision led by an Assistant Principal HE, Skills and International. This ensures a strong focus on Higher Education within the college's strategic planning and leadership. There is a Deputy Director for HE and Skills who deputises for the AP but also leads some HE provision directly including PGCE and from September 2014, Foundation Year Health. There is a Head of HE Programmes (Education/Early Years/Public Sector) and currently two staff in HE Course Development roles. These middle managers lead the current HE programmes and line manage HE teachers. As provision grows, another Head of HE Programmes is envisaged to lead a group of HE courses.

The majority of those teaching on the college's HE programmes are teaching on HE programmes only or it is the majority of their timetable. There is the opportunity for 16-19 teaching staff to contribute to HE programmes in areas of their expertise. Therefore, a small number of modules are delivered by staff who predominantly teach 16-19 students. Two 16-19 Media staff will be delivering the new HND Media from 2014. All staff teaching on HE programmes are included in HE specific activities such as development and scholarly activity days for HE staff. All college staff are invited to participate in all cross college professional development events such as Training and Planning Week and all staff can apply to attend courses or development opportunities. The college has a central CPD budget to manage this. This can be used to support staff who wish to pursue higher degrees for example.

The utilisation of largely specialist HE staff means the college can further tailor enhancement strategies. It is the aim of the college to continue to further refine and develop HE specific strategies where this is beneficial to HE students, staff and provision and to ensure the needs of HE students and staff are considered in any college wide strategies, policies or procedures. It is also important that the HE provision is integrated into college wide quality and enhancement processes.

The strong relationship with our key HE partner University has meant that college staff (not just those involved in HE) have benefited from access to a fully funded MA Education programme. The college will work in partnership with the University to open up this offer of an MA Education across the Trust Schools from 2015. In addition, two current HE staff are on an Education Doctorate programme also fully funded by our key partner university.

Details regarding fellowship with the HE Academy have been circulated to HE staff and our key university partner offers support with application for fellowship. Currently, no HE staff are fellows. It is therefore an area for development going forward.

Additional staff with focused roles in HE include a HE and Skills Senior Admissions Officer and HE and Skills Marketing Assistant who have roles focussed on post 18 students. Both participate in HE training events.

June 2014 update on scholarly activity:

The college supports the scholarly activity and opportunities of HE staff. Following staff and student feedback and in addition to the above provision (professional development and higher degrees) the HE and Skills team are to introduce a number of other elements to further raise the profile of and support of scholarly activity amongst the college's HE community including:

- Publishing HE staff profiles communicating staff research activity and interests
- The introduction of "HEar" – Higher Education Ashton Review – a biannual publication for the college's HE community in which HE staff and students share their research interests, reflections on the impact of scholarly activity, HE students sharing their research work and contributions from external colleagues.
- "Academia" event for all HE staff and students in the Autumn
- Capturing of scholarly activity within the Review of Learning record for HE staff (including reflection on impact) and within PMRs.
- Launching a HE specific staff handbook which, amongst other things, will refer to scholarly activity and the colleges support of this
- Highlighting fellowship (HEA), how to apply and the benefits, with staff through the new HE Staff handbook and at staff events
- Ring fencing some funding to offering financial support to staff wishing to conduct a small scale action research project that aims to have a positive impact on HE pedagogy/andragogy. Staff to apply outlining their proposal.
- Leading on a subject specific scholarly activity event for HE staff in the early childhood studies subject area on behalf of the Greater Manchester HE in FE network
- Offering staff the opportunities – formal and informal to meet with their peers from other colleges within the Greater Manchester HE in FE network

Scholarly activity plans and support will be more explicitly referenced within the 2014/15 QIEP(s) for HE.

12. Adult Skills courses for HE students.

The college's adult skills curriculum provides HE students with additional qualification opportunities that are important for their progression. These include GCSEs in English, Maths and Science and Functional Skills English and Maths. The college is also now validated to offer Access to HE and we have begun publicity with the aim of recruitment for 2015. Some of the existing vocational level 3 adult skills courses already offer routes to HE for those wishing to access the Education degrees. As the college manages cuts to the adult skills budget, there will be a focus on ensuring that the adult skills curriculum complements the HE curriculum and progression opportunities.

13. Safeguarding

The Assistant Principal: HE, Skills and International sits on the college safeguarding board and as such represents HE student interests and needs within that group. Core HE staff are trained in Safeguarding and the college's safeguarding policy addresses HE and Skills student needs.

14. Future Plans and student number targets 2013-2016

Future Plans:

- A bid for Schools Direct, delivering teacher training to those wishing to teach in secondary as well as further education
- Targeted subject specific teacher training recruitment (English/Maths/Science)
- MA Education (CPD) delivered by Staffordshire University here at the college
- HND Media
- Foundation Year Art
- Sport/Sport Management degree level programme
- Exploring options for a level 4 plus programme for Professional and Financial Services
- A HE programme targeted at Professional and Financial Services
- Increasing the provision for straight BA (Hons)
- Higher level Apprenticeships
- Foundation degree or BA (Hons) Psychology / Criminology
- Access to HE – English and Science routes
- Progression routes from Access routes once established e.g. Forensic Science, English with Education

See relevant QIEPs for greater detail.

Student number targets:

In 13/14, the total target and expected HE student population (all types) is 170.

Update June 2014:
176 current HE student number.

Target **new starts** are as follows.

	Target starts (new students)		
	Sept 13	Sept 14	Sept 15
Foundation degrees PT	35	37	38
BA part time	32	32	32
Foundation Yr FT	10	14	28
PGCE/Cert Ed full time FT	9	12	14
Foundation degrees/HND FT	0	20	25
	86	115	137