

ASPIRE
INVEST
RESPECT



Solihull
Sixth Form
College
SUMMIT LEARNING TRUST

CAREER IMPACT Guide

Bright Prospects, Bright Futures



From Higher Education to Apprenticeships... From Careers Support to Curriculum-specific Enrichments...

**This is how we positively impact our
students' career prospects!**

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Message from the Principal

At Solihull Sixth Form College, we believe that education is about more than just grades. We pride ourselves on the fantastic teaching and learning we provide and we're proud of the academic achievements that our students attain. However, we also aim to ensure that we have a real impact on the future career paths that our students choose.

Whether students elect to go to university, or start an apprenticeship or other training, or go directly into employment, we believe we have a responsibility to prepare them the best we can. We believe we do that very effectively and we'd like to explain how. This guide details the many ways the College supports student progression and boosts their career prospects to give our young people an advantage when it comes to progressing onto their next step after sixth form.

We work with many external partners from universities and employers to organisations like the Solihull Careers Hub and the Birmingham & Solihull Chamber of Commerce. We are proud to have achieved the Career Mark Gold Award, which is the national Quality in Careers standard and all our guidance works towards the nationally recognised framework known as the 8 Gatsby Benchmarks.

I hope this guide demonstrates the support the College gives to students and the exciting opportunities that are available. However, these opportunities only benefit students who make the most of them. It is the students' responsibility to seize the chances presented to them to set them on course for a bright future.



Dr Martin Sullivan (Principal)

Destinations

Despite the cost of progressing onto Higher Education, the majority of students see university as an investment in their future. Approximately 77% of our students chose to go to university in 2020 and many succeeded in getting places on some of the most competitive courses in the country at prestigious universities.

Solihull Sixth Form College enjoys great success in supporting students into Higher Education, with a success significantly above the national average. When it comes to supporting students who apply to Oxford and Cambridge, the College has a success rate of almost 20% over the last seven years.

As well as Oxbridge, a large number of students at the College also progress to prestigious Russell Group universities and to study highly competitive courses including Medicine, Veterinary Science and Dentistry. These students must apply earlier than other students and the College does its best to identify those students who can challenge themselves like this towards the end of Year 12. The Stretch & Challenge programme supports these students.

Between 2015 and 2020, 4,799 students entered Higher Education from this College. Almost 21% went to Russell Group universities.

Among the Russell Group universities, the most popular destination remains the University of Birmingham, with Liverpool and Warwick also high on the list.

55 students got places at Oxford and Cambridge or on highly competitive Medicine courses in the last five years.



Student Case Studies

University is a popular choice for many of our students. Here are two examples of students whose hard work and determination were rewarded with excellent grades, and who earned places at top universities.



Alicia Cox is one of 23 students who have secured Oxbridge places in the last five years. She is studying Natural Sciences at Homerton College at the University of Cambridge, after achieving all A* grades in her A levels.

"I received great support from my teachers, including help with my personal statement, preparation for my Cambridge interview and a mock interview. For anyone thinking about making an Oxbridge application, my advice is to start preparing early and do loads of practice for any tests you have to take."

Cameron Esien opted to head for London. He is at University College London studying Law. He achieved all A and A* grades in his four A levels and he is grateful for the support he got at College when he was pursuing this progression options:

"The support I received from all my teachers through my courses was great, but especially in regards to the application process, where I was given all the guidance I needed and then some.."



Student Case Studies

University is not the only choice open to students after College. For some students another path may be more desirable and more appropriate to their career ambitions. There are lots of options open to young people, including jobs, apprenticeships, sponsored degree programmes or even study abroad.



Farah Faqir is one of the students who opted to pursue a higher apprenticeship. After getting the top grade of Triple Distinction* on her BTEC IT course, she got a place on the Collins Aerospace Technical Solutions Degree Apprenticeship.

"Being able to focus on one subject that I was passionate about and excel within it was great. I developed my skills while learning from teachers who had experience within this area. Their support and understanding of what I wanted to achieve helped me achieve my goal."

Dan Pym also pursued a sponsored degree programme, but he studied A levels at College. He got a place on the PwC Flying Start Programme, which sponsored his place on an Accountancy degree at the University of Nottingham after he achieved all A and A* grades at A level.

"The College helped me to explore the many different options open to me and really supported me to get onto my chosen course. I enjoyed gaining my independence at College."



Student Case Studies

Whether studying A level or BTEC, progression onto positive destinations is excellent at Solihull Sixth Form College, The Higher Education acceptance rate (91.1% in 2020) is consistently higher than UCAS national figures for all applicants. Approximately 79% of A level students opt for HE, while 74% of BTEC/CACHE students do the same.

Jijo Mohamed is currently studying for an English Literature & Spanish degree at the University of Birmingham. She achieved grades of A, B and C at A level and points to the style of learning at College for helping her achieve her grades.

"I enjoyed the autonomy I had at College. You're pushed to take accountability for your own learning, which has helped prepare me for university. I found the intervention slots that my teachers held useful to consolidate the knowledge I had picked up in class."



Rosie Kirsch was one of our most successful BTEC students in 2020. She achieved triple distinction* on her BTEC Sport course and together with her considerable skill at squash, she got a place at the University of Birmingham to study Sport, Exercise & Coaching Science, with a Squash scholarship.

"I enjoyed the independent learning aspect of study at College. I was well supported by my teachers, who provided constant constructive feedback and supported my squash ambitions."

Volunteering

Volunteering can significantly boost applications to university, training and employment, as these two students have discovered...

...Whether it's a Gap Year or a shorter volunteer project, it all looks good on your CV!

Emily Cremins finished her A levels at the College with all A and A* grades and elected to take a Gap year after her studies. Emily travelled to China to teach children English with the TEFL Academy, before returning to the UK to read English at university.

"The best thing about being at this College was the independence I got, as well as meeting new people. The support and incredible teaching I received helped me to achieve the results I got."



Becky Johnston is another student who volunteered abroad. She was part of the College's Team Gambia project and volunteered at a school outside Banjul. She has since progressed to the University of Exeter to study Politics after achieving all A grades at A level.



"Team Gambia was the highlight of my time at College, as it provided me with a once in a lifetime opportunity and I made some excellent friends through this unique and insightful experience."

Trips, Visits & College Events

Students benefit from many exciting opportunities to get out of the classroom and develop their learning through more interactive means, such as field trips and other events. Although the pandemic has limited outside trips, we have taken advantage of many online events and will continue to do so until in person events can resume.



Team Gambia is our boldest overseas trip. This is a volunteer project, which sees students raising money for an impoverished school in The Gambia, which they then visit in the autumn. The College has raised more than £60,000 for the school since 2013 and more than 120 College students have visited to teach nursery school

children for a week at a time. Although the pandemic stopped the most recent visits from going ahead, students have still been fundraising for the school and we hope to resume trips soon.

In curriculum areas, Art offer students an annual overseas excursion to a major European city. Geography students have also completed fieldwork abroad including in France and the Atlas Mountains in Morocco. Modern Foreign Language students take part in exchanges in Germany and France, not to mention overseas work experience.

Meanwhile, closer to home, visits also include Law trips to local magistrates and crown courts, Drama and Music trips to productions at theatres across the country, Visual Arts trips to galleries and Humanities trips to museums.

Many subjects also take advantage of links with Higher Education to visit universities for masterclasses, lectures and open days. Links with industry, such as Criminology's work with the justice system and Sport's link up with the NCS, have also taken place. These links often involve reciprocal visits into College, with HE providers and business representatives offering guest lectures and seminars for the students to stretch their learning.

Careers Guidance

The College provides excellent information, advice and guidance to young people, as they explore their post-16 study options and beyond.

There is a comprehensive careers and employability programme, which is evaluated in a variety of ways including feedback from students and parents/carers, assuring that quality careers education, information and guidance is available to our students.

We boast a dedicated careers and employability team, with a qualified and experienced careers adviser and employability adviser who deliver individual advice and guidance to students via 1-1 sessions, specialist workshops, CV support, university applications support and maintaining and developing links with employers and higher education institutions. A member of the teaching staff leads on careers and employability related curriculum initiatives. Every BTEC student will follow a work experience programme and support is available to A level students in finding placements through links with employers and voluntary organisations.

The College's intranet Moodle has information and advice for students to complement the individual advice. In addition, the College has well established links with universities and employers that are able to offer a range of opportunities from work experience, on site visits, taster sessions and 1-1s.

Careers and employability are also embedded into the Academic Coaching programme which all students follow, and through curriculum areas through a varied programme of delivered sessions, subject themes and incorporating trips and visits and enrichment events. All curriculum areas report on the progress they are making to develop careers and employability opportunities.

We are proud to be holders of the Quality in Careers award known as the Career Mark, a qualification we have held since 2015. The award is revalidated every two years and we currently hold the Gold Award.

Careers Events & Opportunities

Students can take advantage of a wealth of opportunities and resources in the Careers library and book appointments with Careers staff for one-to-one advice. However, the highlight of the Careers calendar each year is the Careers & Higher Education Fair. Held in June, the event is one of the largest such events in the country, giving students the chance to learn about many different universities, Gap Year organisations and employers.

The Careers & HE Fair is a bustling event! More than 70 organisations attend, including many of the most prestigious universities in the country such as Birmingham, Manchester, Nottingham, Sheffield and Oxford Universities. For those young people looking to take a Gap Year, organisations like Project Trust are on hand to provide information about volunteering. We also host a number of local and national Employers who advise students on higher and degree apprenticeship opportunities.



As well as stands set up in the Sports Hall and Dance Studio, a variety of visiting speakers deliver career-specific seminars at the Fair. These cover a wide range of career paths from Medicine and Nursing to Engineering and Architecture, plus much more in between!

Careers Events & Opportunities

All students are encouraged to explore the full range of post-18 options. For those students pursuing the apprenticeship route, we provide specific specialist support such as practice interviews with employers, mentoring, CV and application support, as well as information about the full range of virtual and other work experience opportunities.

These opportunities are communicated to students via the Careers & Employability Bulletin and via social media, not to mention the Careers area within the Library and Learning Resource Centre.

However, perhaps the single biggest way we support young people who want to go straight into employment or an apprenticeship is via our Employer Networking Event. This is an early evening event, which brings together a variety of local employers with students and parents. Supported by Solihull Chamber of Commerce and LADDER for Greater Birmingham, this event involves presentations and a “World Cafe” style roundtable of discussions.



Specialist Academies

Enrichment is an important part of College life. As the name suggests, it enriches a student's time at College and develops skills that will put them at a distinct advantage when applying for university or jobs. Our Specialist Academies are the enrichment options that can most significantly boost a student's prospects.

With links to Higher Education, these Specialist Academies are designed to support students with particular career ambitions. If a student is thinking about a career as a doctor, for example, joining the appropriate academy will help reinforce whether this is the right career for them and impress universities and employers when applications are made in the future.

One example of a Specialist Academy is the **Pre-Medical School**, which supports students who are looking to pursue medical careers. Links with Leicester and Keele Universities mean they participate in HE taster days, talks, hospital trips, museum visits and support in setting up work placements and applying to university.



Meanwhile, designed specifically for A level English students who are looking to continue their English studies at university, the **English Academy** gives students the opportunity to attend HE workshops and theatre visits and guides them in completing an Extended Project.

Other Specialist Academies include the **Psychology Research School**, the **Social Sciences Academy**, the **Teaching Academy** and the **Visual Arts Academy**. An Extended Project can be completed within many of the Specialist Academies. It involves a piece of private research and students may present their findings in a variety of ways, leading to a qualification that earns them additional UCAS points.

Enrichment Options

A student does not have to join one of the highly competitive Specialist Academies to boost their progression chances; there are many other enrichment options that universities, apprenticeship providers and employers value.

If a student wants to pursue an academic enrichment, options like **Core Maths** and **Beginners' Spanish** are open to students, while the **Extended Project Qualification** is open to any student, regardless of whether they are part of a Specialist Academy. The **Sports Leadership Award** is also a popular option.

Some enrichments are more creative than academic, but these develop skills that are highly sought after, including team work, leadership and communication skills. Our **Sports** teams in Basketball, Cricket, Football, Netball and Rugby certainly develop such skills, while away from the playing fields options include **Music**, **Drama** and **Creative Writing**.

We encourage students to get involved in a variety of activities outside of their lessons. Some choose to join the **Student Council** or form their own **Student Societies**. Others undertake fundraising activities or put together healthy living awareness campaigns as part of the **Student Health Ambassadors** initiative.

We ask students to choose an enrichment option when they enrol.



Support

Students get progression support from the College, but so do parents and carers.

The College delivers Higher Education Finance talks each year to give parents all the information they need ahead of their son or daughter heading to university. Aston University deliver these talks and they are geared towards parents of Year 13 students.

Year 12 parents are also catered for with Next Step talks in the Summer term, which detail the support the College offers to their son or daughter, particularly the help given with UCAS applications and guiding students in writing their Personal Statements.

Parents and Carers are encouraged to attend a webinar by ASK Apprenticeships in the summer term of Year 12. We also encourage students and parents/carers to conduct their own independent research and attending open days is a particularly good way of doing this. The following websites may also prove useful:

Parent Adviser - parentadviser.co.uk

National Careers Service
nationalcareersservice.direct.gov.uk/Pages/Home.aspx

UCAS - ucas.com

The Uni Guide - theuniguide.co.uk

Amazing Apprenticeships - amazingapprenticeships.com

Notgoingtouni - notgoingtouni.co.uk

Youth Card - available to download via the App Store or Google Play
This app has been created by Speakers for Schools, alongside youth charities UK Youth, Young Enterprise, Young Scot and the European Youth Card Association. By using the app, young people aged 16-25 can access perks that will support their personal development and career progression, such as free work experience and volunteering and discounts to save them money.

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