

Skills

A Guide for Staff

1. Why Skills Matter

Our vision for our students is that they 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.

To do so they need qualifications, but these alone will not ensure success. For even the very best qualified students it is the skills they possess which will determine their ability to fulfil their potential.

At QE, we think of these skills as:

- Skills for Learning
- Skills for Work
- Skills for Life

This guide establishes our commitment to those skills and sets out the range of strategies we deploy to develop them in our students. Its focus is on 'Skills for Work' as we recognise the particular challenges we face in preparing our students for the world of work and in meeting the skills needs of employers.

2. The Skills Agenda

Important and recent developments at a national and local level make it vital that we are, as a college, responding to the country's Skills Agenda by helping students to prepare for work. These developments include:

[The Skills and Post-16 Education Act](#)

New statutory obligations requiring colleges to work with employers to ensure that young people acquire the skills that will help them contribute to economic productivity.

Skills Inspection

Under the current framework OFSTED will evaluate the extent to which colleges “contribute effectively towards meeting the skills needs of employers and other relevant stakeholders and the local, regional and national economy”. The inspection outcome will incorporate a sub-judgement on our skills provision that “will feed into the quality of education and leadership and management key judgements”. All aspects of our work, including teaching and learning, tutorial support and careers guidance, will be scrutinised to ensure that they support students to develop skills for work.

LSIP

As part of this national skills agenda Local Skills Improvement Plan (LSIPs) are being produced, led in our region by the North East Chamber of Commerce and driven by local business. These plans give employers the opportunity to identify skills needs and shortages and set priorities for colleges to respond to. The Tees Valley LSIP is due for publication in the coming weeks and will inform our planning of future skills development work, as well as influencing our curriculum offer.

3. ‘The 250’

While progression patterns may vary a little over time, each year a significant minority of our students, around 250, progress to destinations other than higher education. For some this is temporary: around 50-60 will apply to university following a Gap Year. A similar number progress into training including higher or degree level apprenticeships. Others will progress directly into employment.

We want to ensure that every student who chooses not to go to university aspires to a career in which they build on the qualifications they have gained with us and in which they have the opportunity to develop personally and professionally. We also want that all students are aware of the range of opportunities which exist for them locally and nationally and that they receive the advice and guidance they need to make the very best start to their working lives.

Supporting these students is perhaps our biggest challenge. The stakes, for them, are higher, in terms of missed opportunities and yet some are reluctant to engage with the support that we offer. All of us, teachers, tutors and those delivering progression guidance need to see these students as our biggest priority.

4. What do we mean by 'Skills'?



We promote 3 sets of skills to students:

Skills for Learning

These are the skills which students need if they are to succeed in higher education, in training and professional development and as lifelong learners. They include a range of subject specific skills which they acquire in the course of their subject learning. But they are also higher level skills, applicable to all learning, including:

- Time Management
- Perseverance
- Reflection
- Evaluative Thinking
- Initiative
- Self-Regulation
- Strategic Thinking
- Communication

These skills are developed through subject learning and in Guided Independent Learning (GIL) sessions.

Skills for Work

These are the skills which students need to be successful in the world of work, able to secure rewarding employment and to contribute productively to the economy. Using the Skills Builder Universal Framework we identify these skills as:

- Listening
- Speaking
- Problem Solving

- Creativity
- Staying Positive
- Aiming High
- Leadership
- Teamwork

These skills are developed in the tutorial programme through Skills Builder activities; in subject learning through course alignment with the Skills Framework and in engagement with employers through work-related learning activities.

Skills for Life

These are the skills which help prepare students for life in Modern Britain. These skills enable students to:

- develop their character, becoming confident, resilient and independent
- know how to keep physically and mentally healthy
- conduct healthy relationships, based on mutual respect and consent
- become active citizens with an understanding and acceptance of fundamental British values
- become committed to equality and diversity and aware of protected characteristics

5. How does our Curriculum promote skills?

Our students are offered an exciting and broad curriculum which equips them with the qualifications and skills which they will need to succeed in higher education, in life and in work. Each student follows a study programme which incorporates qualification courses, progress tutorials, enrichment activities, Guided Independent Learning sessions and work-related learning. Our qualifications are almost entirely at Level 3, comprising a wide range of A levels and Applied General qualifications, and are all highly valued by higher education institutions, employers and apprenticeship providers. Our curriculum offer is designed to meet the needs of local employers and is informed by the Tees Valley Strategic Economic Plan 2016-26 and by the Local Skills Improvement Plan (March 2022).

Teachers PLAN for skills development, ensuring that schemes of work and learning materials reference and reinforce the Skills Builder Framework. Course leaders MAP curriculum content against this framework and this mapping is shared with students to support their skills

journey. All staff use TALK about skills, using a common vocabulary, so that students understand the skills that they need and how we support them. Finally, teachers ENGAGE with employers and other external agencies to ensure that students are exposed to a wide range of opportunities beyond the classroom such as visiting workplaces and universities, taking part in enrichment activities, or attending sessions offered by visiting speakers.



6. Skills Builder

Skills Builder is a widely-used framework of skills which includes a number of tools to help students' skills development. These tools include 'Skills Builder Benchmark' which will provide students with a starting-point for skills development. A benchmarking exercise conducted during tutorials in students' first term sets priorities for development. In future tutorials, students target priority skills and develop them through:

- Skills Builder Launchpad activities
- progression activities
- work-related learning
- the supplementary programme
- subject learning

Evidence of development is collected in an online portfolio and progress demonstrated through re-benchmarking exercise towards the end of students' study programme.

Subject staff support the Skills Builder Programme by mapping opportunities for development against each skill. Skills Builder Maps for each subject are shared with students and Progress Tutors in a document which uses a shared format and approach.



7. The 'Job Ready' Programme

Job Ready is a programme of employability development offered in part to all students but in its full version to the 250 students who do not progress to higher education. It consists of three elements:

A programme of work-related learning delivered through the **tutorial programme**. The first element is followed by all students during Progression Fortnight, the second by those students who do not apply to university, during Year 2 term 1.

A **work experience** programme followed by all students on Applied General courses. planned by course leaders and delivered with the support of the Employability Engagement Coordinator. Work experience opportunities are also available to all students and are promoted actively.

An intensive **job coaching** programme followed by all students with no HE place following January application deadline. Programme includes apprenticeship and job application support, interview practice and careers guidance.

From January, each element of the Job Ready programme will be led and promoted by a Job Coach, working alongside Progress Tutors, Careers Advisers and the Employer Engagement Coordinator.

8. Work Related Learning

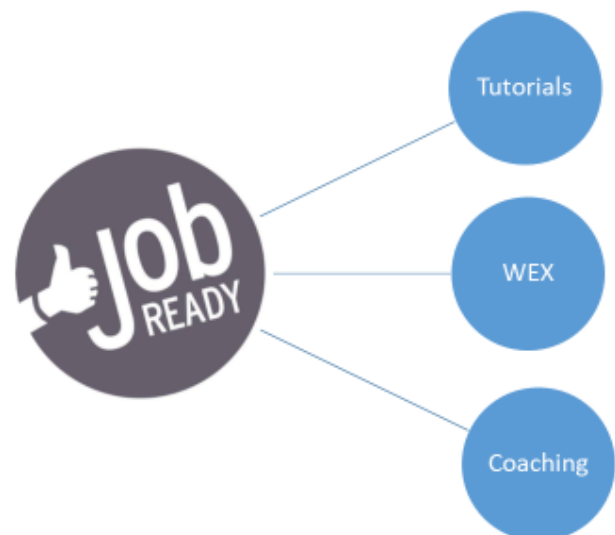
We understand that work experience is acquired in several ways: through traditional work placements but also through contact with employers at college and through curriculum-led activities in the workplace. Our goal is to ensure that all students receive a rich diet of such experience and that those students who are closest to work benefit the most. The following students are identified as being 'closest to work':

- those on predominantly vocational courses
- those not intending to progress to university
- those aiming at vocational degree courses.

Work related learning at QE includes:

- work placements, open to all students and compulsory for some
- volunteering opportunities
- work related activities in college and in the workplace
- the development of 'Skills for Work'

The provision of work related learning is led by the Employer Engagement Coordinator but is supported by Progress Tutors, Course Leaders (particularly of Applied General and vocational courses), the Job Coach, Careers Advisers and teachers.



9. Engaging with Employers

To develop students' skills for work, the college ensures that it maintains close relationships with local and regional employers in business and industry. These relationships are supported by the **Employer Engagement Coordinator** who:

- provides students with appropriate work experience and promotes work experience opportunities to students throughout the College
- develops potential support from employers for students in improving their skills for work
- liaises with course leaders to enhance work placement opportunities
- works with the Job Coach to help prepare students for the world of work

In addition, course leaders and teachers engage with employers through the **Employer Champions** scheme which matches each course with a representative from local business. Employer Champions, who employ, recruit or train young people, act as role models for students and offer advice on the development of skills for work.