



# The Quality in Careers Standard >>>>

QUALITY IN CAREERS WEBSITE ©

CEIAG Case Study:  
Hills Road Sixth Form College, Cambridge

## The College

Hills Road Sixth Form College enjoys a national reputation for excellence and, in its last two Ofsted inspections, was rated outstanding in all graded areas. The College seeks to provide a holistic sixth form education characterised by academic excellence, high quality learning experiences and extensive enrichment opportunities; an education that is designed to prepare students exceptionally well for the next stage of their lives. The breadth, depth and challenge of this curriculum are at the heart of the College's long-standing educational vision.

Hills Road is a member of the Cambridge Area 14-19 Partnership (CAP) which provides a common application procedure for post-16 courses and co-ordinates the information and guidance services for student transfer at 16+. The great majority of Hills Road students are recruited from CAP's 18 comprehensive schools.

Since its inception in 1974, the College has concentrated mainly on providing advanced level courses to students in the Cambridge area. Having responded to strong and sustained demand for places over a number of years, it now has over 2000 full-time 16-19 students following an advanced level programme; which comprises 3 or 4 A levels (chosen from 40+ subjects), the Extended Project Qualification, an extensive programme of enrichment and extra-curricular activities and responsive individual support and guidance.

In addition, there are typically around 3500 enrolments each year on the College's Adult Education programme which is delivered mainly during evenings and some weekends. The range of courses reflects the needs of a much wider community in Cambridge and the surrounding area. The College is also a study centre for the Open University.

## The Careers Department

The Careers Department, led by Director of Careers and HE Liaison, Paul Ingham, is a team of well qualified individuals who have specialised roles:

Role	Areas of Specific Responsibility
Director of Careers and HE Liaison	UCAS, HE Liaison, Oxbridge
Second in Careers Department	Work Experience, Mock Interviews

Careers, HE and Employability Adviser (professionally qualified)	Careers Interview Programme, Employment, Training, HE and general Careers
Personal Tutor and Careers Teacher	Medicine, Nursing, Vet and Dentistry and Gap year advice
Personal Tutor and Careers Teacher	Art and Design, Music, CUKAS, Law
Careers Administrator	Office management and administrative support
UCAS Administrator	Management of UCAS application process

There is the strongest support for the work of the Careers Department at every level of the College.

A link governor keeps the Corporation informed of Careers-related matters and the line management of the Director of Careers and HE Liaison is at senior management level.

### **The Careers Curriculum**

Students are introduced to the Careers staff and given a 'guided tour' of careers in January of Year 12 as part of the Tutorial Programme. Over the next seven weeks the students have sessions on HE, Employment and Training, Gap Year Opportunities and HE Finance. They log their own careers research, regularly update their online Employability Log with skills acquired within and outside College and create a CV.

### **Higher Education**

Students applying to HE benefit greatly from an extensive programme of talks by visiting speakers who provide advice on applying to university and HE finance. A few examples are given below:

- An admissions officer from UEA makes an annual visit to the College to give talks over three days to students and parents.
- Representatives of many English and Scottish universities (17 in 2014-15) attend at different times during the year for liaison visits; these typically involve a stall and 'drop in' session followed by a formal talk.
- Oxford and Cambridge liaison officers speak in January to those students considering an application; in June they explain what to look for on the Open Days, in September they give advice on writing personal statements and in November they give advice on interviews. 74 Hills Road students received Oxbridge offers in 2014-15.
- Leeds University gives an application strategy talk to all Year 12 students after their AS exams and Birmingham University speaks on personal statements to Year 13 students in September.
- Talks on HE Finance are given to students and parents over three days in February.
- All students applying to HE are expected to attend the UCAS Fair held at Anglia Ruskin University in the summer term.

### **Gap Year Support**

- A Gap Year evening is organised in early September for students who are considering taking a gap year before HE. This involves speakers from major gap year providers such as Project Trust and The Year in Industry-Engineering Development Trust. Travel advice is given and former Hills Road students speak about their own gap year experiences.

- All students making a post-results application to UCAS are invited back to College in September to receive advice from their tutor and Careers staff on the application process. The session is typically attended by around 250 students before they embark on their gap year programme of work and/or travel.

### **Employment and Training**

- All students are encouraged to attend the annual Cambridge Employment Fair.
- The College runs its own Employer Fair in June with a wide range of local and national employers attending.
- Training and apprenticeship opportunities are actively promoted - including those with local firms such as Marshall's Aerospace and Zeiss Lenses - as excellent alternatives to HE.
- Those students who decide not to apply to HE (a small minority) are signed up to the Employment Group for whom bespoke employment-related activities are prepared.

### **Employability**

- Every student is expected to keep an Employability Log to record all relevant experiences, skills and qualities that demonstrate the development of employability skills and which can be used to enhance CVs, personal statements and letters of application.
- Work experience, volunteering and paid employment are encouraged as effective ways to gain experience and life skills.
- All students undertake the Extended Project which is a key element within the College's employability programme: giving students the opportunity to conduct independent research linked to their intended course or develop skills that will enable them to succeed in job applications; some choose to undertake a group project, thereby also displaying team working skills; and all students conclude their project by giving a public presentation.
- Mock interviews are offered to all students whether they are applying for HE or employment. Organised by the Association of Parents and Friends, with over 50 guest interviewers drawn from the parent body as well as from local businesses and universities, the programme enables around 150 students to have a 30 minute interview with an unfamiliar adult who is an expert in their field of work or study. The interview is followed immediately by feedback from the interviewer.

### **Destinations**

Typically, around 95% of Hills Road students progress to HE, either in the year following the completion of A levels or following a gap year (this year the Careers Team has processed 1000 UCAS applications!). Around 5% of students progress directly into training and employment, with Accountancy typically being the most popular career route for this group.

### **Student Feedback**

In annual satisfaction surveys, students consistently demonstrate strong appreciation of the support and advice provided in relation to higher education and careers. In the last survey, comments were made about 'knowledgeable and professional' staff who are 'helpful, supportive and accessible' providing 'consistent and thorough advice'.

### **CEIAG Quality**

Hills Road gained the then-named 'Investing in Quality', the Cambridgeshire CEIAG Quality Award, in August 2014, and [was successfully reaccredited by the Cambridgeshire County Council team in their role as a Licensed Awarding Body for the national Quality in Careers Standard in 2017.](#)

This Award provides a framework for reviewing and improving practice and is indicative of a college's commitment to high quality CEIAG. Based upon best practice, the 'Investing in Quality' standards set out what should be in place to meet the CEIAG needs of students and contribute to their successful progression.

The Cambridgeshire assessor, referring to Hills Road's CEIAG provision, said:

*"The level of resourcing in terms of staff time and budget and facilities and research materials is exemplary. The professionalism of the programme and enthusiasm of the delivery team, leaders and managers is wonderful. Hills Road demonstrates outstanding careers education, information, advice and guidance."*

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***(p) May 2015 updated October 2017 Quality in Careers Consortium***