



The School

Durham Sixth Form Centre is the largest post-16 school in the North East of England with over 1,500 students on roll.

The Centre was opened in 1913. Formerly a Girls' Grammar School, it was converted to Sixth Form accommodation in 1983. In addition to the original building, the Centre now comprises a Science Block; a 210 seat Theatre; the Learning Resource Centre and Learning Hub; a Visual Arts Centre, Freemans Quay Leisure Centre, and the Dennis Southall Media Building - a state-of-the-art facility which opened in 2019.

Students enrol at Durham Sixth Form Centre from over 50 different secondary schools from across County Durham, Sunderland, Gateshead and Northumberland.

Durham Sixth Form Centre students make good progress, with percentage pass rates consistently well above the National Average, ranking them within the top 5th of schools and colleges nationally for A-level results. In August 2019, the Centre, again, celebrated a 100% A-level pass rate, with well over half of awarded at grades A*-B. 95% of vocational entries awarded Distinction/Distinction*, with Distinction* being the average grade. The Centre operates according to School Values, created in collaboration with all staff, which underpin and determine the culture, ethos and atmosphere of the school.

Durham Sixth Form Centre's Values:

- high quality, inspirational teaching and learning;
- excellent support, care and guidance;
- personal and professional integrity;
- ambition and progress for our students, our communities and ourselves.

Career Education, Information, Advice and Guidance (CEIAG)

Durham Sixth Form Centre has excellent Careers, Progression and Aspirations provision, led by a member of the Senior Leadership Team, (who is also the designated qualified Careers Leader) and is embedded by their highly professional team. This was evident throughout their Quality in Careers Standard assessment in 2018 (see "Quality" section below).

Durham Sixth Form Centre's Careers, Progression and Aspirations Team (CPAT) is highly effective in supporting their students into higher education, as well as preparing them for the competitive routes of Degree / Higher Level Apprenticeships, employment or alternative future pathways.

Within the Careers, Progression and Aspiration Team, Durham Sixth Form Centre employs two Qualified Careers Guidance and Development Advisors (one qualified at Level 6 and the other Level 4 Qualified, currently undertaking Level 6). Each has distinct roles in providing impartial information, advice and guidance for students; one to those intending to progress to higher education, and the other, working with students who have their sights set on employment or training as their next step.

Two additional members of the team support the qualified advisors, allowing the team to work flexibly, ensure students have an in-depth and effective experience, and are able to access one-to-one qualified information, advice and guidance whenever they have important progression decisions to make.

Career-related continued professional development is a priority for all staff working with students, and all members of the Careers, Progression and Aspiration Team. As an institutional member of the Careers Development Institute (CDI), their staff are familiar with the CDI Code of Ethics; the Careers Leader is working with the CDI to devise a “student-friendly” version too. CPD priorities for all staff are identified through the school appraisal system and wider school skills audits.

The Careers, Progression and Aspirations Team is actively involved in supporting students (and their parents) at every step of their career journey, prior to enrolling at Durham Sixth Form Centre and continuing after they leave. This includes Open Evenings, Taster Days, Recruitment Interviews for Yr11 applicants, delivering the Tutor Support Programme, and all aspects of UCAS applications, apprenticeship applications, work-related visits, employer engagement, placements, mock interviews and more.

The importance of making informed career decisions underpins Yr11 recruitment interviews, which include a focused careers interaction, actively encouraging each student to explore their interests, strengths and aspirations, to help them make an informed decision regarding their level 3 subject choices; introduced in September 2019, this approach ensures that every year 12 student commencing study at Durham Sixth Form has already received impartial, accurate information, advice and guidance regardless of the career provision experienced at their secondary school.

From the outset, every student attends the Tutor Support Programme (TSP) which is delivered by subject specialists, and equips students with essential careers research and decision making skills, alongside very useful resources and research tools, including “Unifrog”.

At the end of Yr12, the TSP programme is differentiated to meet students progression intentions and to promote aspirations. With the support of the Careers, Progression and Aspiration Team, students opt onto one of six bespoke pathways, each tailored to the intentions of the student, and delivered by colleagues with specialist knowledge in that area. The pathways are General Higher Education, “Aspire” (including Oxbridge, Medicine, Dentistry and Veterinary Medicine), NHS & Social Work Careers, Primary Education, Degree /

High-Level Apprenticeships & School Leaver Programmes and Level 3 Apprenticeships. Students with special educational needs have access to bespoke, additional support.

The Careers Leader regularly audits curriculum-based careers learning across the Centre; there is strong dialogue between the Careers, Progression and Aspirations Team and curriculum staff. Teaching Staff Progression responsibilities are clear, underpinned by the CDI Code of Ethics, linked to the Gatsby Benchmarks and included in the whole school staff handbook.

Students have access to quality resources via “Unifrog” and other software / online links, a Google Site, as well as in-house and externally published impartial information around the Centre. Each student can access as many Careers Interviews as they need, following which they are issued with an action plan outlining their agreed next steps. They can self-refer or may be identified and referred via teaching or pastoral colleagues.

In August of Yr13, Durham Sixth Form Centre offers students individual support on Results Day and beyond, via a specially trained cohort of staff, to ensure students are equipped to navigate the UCAS clearing and adjustment process.

Evaluation & Students' Views

Evaluation is a strong point for the Centre; they carry out ongoing evaluations of individual elements of the Careers, Progression and Aspirations Programme to inform continuous development. This includes staff, parent, student and other stakeholder surveys. Digital surveys are used to evaluate events and providers/exhibitors also provide feedback.

The Assistant Headteacher for Progression / Careers Leader evaluates the school's provision against the School Improvement Plan and the Gatsby Benchmarks on a regular basis. As a member of the North East Sixth Form and Colleges Careers Hub, provision is also evaluated against the NE Local Enterprise Partnership Improvement Plan. In response to the digital focus within their development plan, the Centre has created an Interview Room, which is fully equipped with industry-standard recruitment technology, to ensure students can develop and refine their skills before experiencing actual remote interviews. As well as accommodating face to face, 1:2:1 and panel interview, the room is equipped with “Shine” (industry digital video interview system), “Skype” for boardroom and 1:2:1 live interviews as well as facilities to conduct telephone interviews.

The Centre’s Careers, Progression and Aspiration offer is really appreciated by their students. The students believe that they receive an excellent service *‘which has opened our minds and really made us think about the future’*. Each year, the majority of students progress to higher education, with more each year making aspirational choices, and applying to Russell Group universities, other competitive courses and Oxbridge. Other students progress to Degree Apprenticeships and School Leaver Programmes, and some directly into employment or level

3 Apprenticeships. Many Art & Design Students choose to remain and study the Level 4 Foundation Art Diploma in Year 14, before progressing to higher education in the Arts.

Engaging Employers?

Strong links have been developed and maintained with employers, higher education establishments, the voluntary sector and training providers. Excellent and innovative practice was demonstrated, particularly regarding work through the “Next Generation... NHS” and “Next Generation...Engineering” programmes, which were put in place to ensure students are able to gain information about, and access to, specialist industry areas, which were not linked to a specific curriculum area within the Centre.

The Centre employs a designated Employer Engagement and Work Placement Manager within the team who oversees and develops employer engagement, including maintaining up-to-date knowledge of developments in apprenticeships and vocational learning. Student work experiences and placements are monitored and managed through pipeline software, and quality assured through the Centre’s Work Placement and Employer Engagement framework. With the introduction of the T-Levels in Sept 2020, Durham Sixth Form Centre will be working closely with large digital employers in the area to provide placements for the students, including Arriva, Durham University and Sunderland MediaHUB.

CEIAG Quality

Durham Sixth Form Centre first achieved the then-named Investor in Careers CEIAG Quality Award in June 2011 and maintained the award in reassessment in April 2015. This was replaced by the national Quality in Careers Standard, which the Centre achieved in June 2018, through CSW Group-Investor in Careers, which is now a Licensed Awarding Body for Quality in Careers.

The CSW Group Assessor commented, in the 2018 re-assessment:

“This was an excellent submission which demonstrated how Durham Sixth Form Centre has not only maintained the very high standards achieved at the previous assessment but has significantly built upon them.”

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