



NEWCASTLE  
AND STAFFORD  
COLLEGES GROUP

Teaching, Learning and  
Enhancement Strategy  
for  
Higher Education Students

2014/15 - 2016/17

*NB: Amended in September 2016 to reflect merger with Stafford College*

## Introduction:

The Strategy for Teaching, Learning and Enhancement for our Higher Education provision supports the strategic aim of both colleges, to be the 'College of first choice' and aligns with:

- Newcastle-under-Lyme College's Higher Education Strategy – *currently under development - a joint strategy for both colleges.*
- Teaching, Learning and Assessment Strategy
- Quality Strategy
- A Guide to Student Involvement for Higher Education Students

The strategy applies to all students and staff who deliver on our Higher Education programmes in both colleges. The Strategy will be overseen by the Higher Education Strategy Group.

The definition used for enhancement at both Newcastle-under-Lyme College and Stafford College, as agreed by the student body is '**taking deliberate steps at provider level to improve the quality of learning opportunities.**' This definition means that enhancement is more than a collection of examples of good practice that might be found across the College group. It is about our awareness of our responsibility to improve the quality of learning opportunities and providing policies, structures and procedures to ensure that these opportunities are realised. The willingness to consider enhancement at Newcastle-under-Lyme College and more recently Stafford College, stems from a high-level awareness of the need for improvement which is embedded throughout our provision at NULC and is currently an evolving process at Stafford College.

## Key Aims of the Strategy:

- To strengthen and enhance the quality of students' experiences on Higher Education study programmes within the Colleges wherever necessary, appropriate and practical.
- To encourage everyone involved in teaching and supporting learning to be involved in enhancing and ensuring quality.
- To sustain an environment where excellence in teaching, learning and assessment is celebrated and curriculum innovation supported and fostered.

**Newcastle-under-Lyme College Strategic Objectives, 2013 – 2016 – which have been adopted by Stafford College for the remainder of this academic year 2016/17**

## Our Ambition

**We will** develop students who are enterprising and **achieve** great things. They will be supported by a staff team which delivers **excellence** in teaching, learning and assessment and provides a broad College experience where students **enjoy** learning.

NULC and Stafford College will be recognised as high performing Colleges, whose students have the **confidence** and skills to make a positive **contribution** to the cultural and economic prosperity of North and South Staffordshire and beyond.

## Our Strategic Aims

**We will –**

1. Deliver excellence in teaching, learning and assessment which ensures highly successful outcomes for students.

2. Provide a broad, inclusive and sustainable curriculum offer which meets the needs and aspirations of learners, employers and partners.
3. Maximise the talent, expertise and performance of our staff.
4. Maintain strong financial health to ensure we can continue the financial investment required to sustain a high performing College.
5. Exploit opportunities and develop new partnerships for the mutual benefit of learners and the community we serve.

## **1.0 The Student Voice**

### Our Current Position:

The structure of the College, the delivery and design of the programmes and the participatory curriculum ensures direct engagement between staff and students at every level on a regular basis as an integral part of the programmes of study. The College has a culture of listening and responding to the student voice at every level of activity through Internal Student Surveys, National Student Survey (NSS), Student Feedback Meetings or Focus Groups, the Annual Learner Conference, Learning Walks, Teaching, Learning and Assessment Reviews and through a range of informal communications via the personal tutor system, lectures and group discussions.

Stafford College also has a track record of positive reviews from the NSS and a variety of methods of gaining student feedback via an Annual Learner Conference, group discussions and via the personal tutor system.

### Where Do We Want To Be?

The College is keen to further develop and enhance the student experience in line with the College's ambition to ensure students are fully prepared to make a positive contribution to the cultural and economic prosperity of North and South Staffordshire and beyond. We also recognise that it is extremely difficult to encourage our part time learners, many of whom are in employment, to attend training for student representatives and/or to become involved in wider student voice activities. To facilitate the Student Submission for the QAA review the Senior Management Team has agreed to provide financial support to ensure that all students on higher level programmes contribute to the submission.

### Measurable:

- Lead student representative to be appointed each year.
- Develop online training package for course representatives to meet the needs of part time students in employment who find it difficult take time off work to access training.
- Higher Education student representation on the new Student Committee chaired by a member of the Corporation.
- Continue to raise awareness of the NSS with all students.

### What measurable outcomes do we need to put in place at Stafford?

- All of the above measurable outcomes
- Introduce Learning Walks carried out by cross college, Senior and Middle Managers
- Introduce a themed Teaching, Learning and Assessment Review of HE at Stafford College

## 2.0 Technology Enhanced Learning

Our Current Position:

Technology enhanced learning plays an important role in the creation of independent students and helps to secure a high quality learner experience. NULC provides staff and students with access to a wide range of specialist equipment and software dependent of the area of specialism to include 3D laser printers, SMART boards, notebooks etc. In addition, our HE students have access to the Universities' Blackboard but currently few students choose to use this resource and, instead, rely heavily on the College VLE – Moodle - to enhance and enrich their learning experience. The use of social media as a means of communication is encouraged and effectively utilised in some areas.

At Stafford College there is adequate specialist equipment and resources for students to use, however, there are fewer SMART Boards and there are some problems with network connectivity which need to be addressed.

Where Do We Want To Be?

We will continue to respond creatively to a range of learning needs and challenge our HE students constructively through innovative practice. We will continue to foster and promote a culture of greater experimentation in teaching and learning to widen the range of learning experiences. We recognise and acknowledge the changing patterns of technology usage and the need to consider the diversity of students' experience of technology when designing learning activities. We also accept that the use of technology must be pedagogically appropriate and that we may need new approaches to staff and student support. We also aim to further increase student feedback and conversation using social media.

Measurable:

- Set up a College Facebook account for all higher level learners.
- Incorporate Social Networking within the learning experience wherever appropriate following examples of good practice e.g. twitter.
- Increase usage of the HE Portal.

What measurable outcomes do we need to put in place at Stafford?

- Explore the options available to improve connectivity across the Stafford Site
- Invest in SMART Boards to align with resources available at NULC
- Create bespoke sections of the College VLE that are specifically tailored to Staff (Staff Portal) and students (Student Portal) that contain key data sets for the individualised user in line with NULC systems.

## 3.0 Induction

Our Current Position:

The student voice is heard through learner feedback groups with class representatives in attendance to review and evaluate induction and information regarding support services and resources available to HE students. New students are introduced to a variety of support services such as the LRC and Student Services to ensure that they are fully prepared for their experience of higher level study. Information and study skills support, VLE (*virtual learning environments – I-Site/Blackboard*), learning support and access to specialist counselling and mental health advisory services are available. Students are given information about the

Students' Union and receive Freshers' information from our partner universities. All students receive an induction talk from the relevant Programme Advisors at the partner university and have an opportunity to visit the university. All higher level students are informed of the mechanisms for learner feedback.

Stafford College operate a very similar approach to induction for HE Students.

Where Do We Want To Be?

Induction should be continuously reviewed and enhanced. The needs of differing cohorts of students will be taken into consideration when planning induction, with good practice from across all areas to be shared through the HE Curriculum and Operations Group. The College is keen to ensure that students enrolled through partner universities are clear about the support entitlement at the university and the support entitlement at the College.

Measureable:

- Develop a virtual induction process for students who start late with input from key support areas.
- Develop a standard 'checklist for induction' encompassing good practice from across all higher level provision.
- Ensure consistency of information in relation to support available to students.

What measureable outcomes do we need to put in place at Stafford?

- All of the above measurable outcomes

#### **4.0 Internal and external review of the student experience**

Our Current Position

NULC College has a robust system of annual self-assessment with curriculum areas encompassing a review of the whole of their provision to include full time and part time 16 – 18 and 19+ from Foundation Level through to Higher Education. For provision involving Higher Education partner institutions there are set processes adhered to involving the completion of Annual Monitoring Reports, External Verifier Reports followed by Quality Review Boards. The College is also successful in encouraging higher level students to complete the National Student Survey (NSS). There is also an internal student survey which is completed each semester. Results are collated and prompt feedback and action taken in-year.

Stafford College adheres to the set process required by Staffordshire University as the key partner institution. Internal procedures are evident but there is scope for improvement in relation to annual self-assessment. Stafford College is also successful in engaging students to complete the National Student Survey (NSS).

Where Do We Want To Be?

The continuous development and improvements to our current internal and external evaluation will be vital in the preparation for our QQA Review and any future inspections. The College has, in the past, used external representation to review annual self-assessment reports as part of a network of colleges but this has not been an active group for the past 3 years. Reintroducing this process would give additional moderation of the quality and rigor to the self-assessment process. The appointment of a Lead Student Representative will ensure greater student representation and feedback to annual course review in relation to the student experience. New Higher National Certificates and Diplomas that may be introduced in the

future will mirror the same level of rigor and process in terms of quality monitoring and control and involvement of student feedback.

Measurable:

- External review of College annual self-assessment through Peer Assessment Group.
- Quality assurance processes for any approved HNC/HND courses clarified and documented.

What measurable outcomes do we need to put in place at Stafford?

- All of the above measurable outcomes
- Ensure a separate HE Self-Assessment Report and Action Plan is produced
- Ensure students have access to External Verifier reports
- Introduce an internal College Survey
- Introduce a themed Learning Walk for HE

## 5.0 Student Retention

Our Current Position:

Student retention is driven through a whole College approach which has seen a trend of improving retention rates across all provision at all levels. NULC is currently fourth in the country out of all Further Education and Tertiary College providers regarding retention even though it is one of the only Colleges to have maintained two year courses in a market which has seen an introduction of one year only courses. Student Services use the intranet and VLE to provide information on a wide range of services and resources available to students including financial support, counselling and mental health, support for disabled students, careers advice and guidance, learning support and study support. Course resources allow students with short term absences to access course information.

We ensure a co-ordinated approach to retention and strive to ensure a systematic approach to monitoring and tracking student attendance to mirror the excellent practice demonstrated with the full time 16 – 18 cohort of learners in the College. However, we operate in accordance with the partner university's procedures regarding retention and attendance which are more lenient than those adhered to by the College for the wider student population.

Where Do We Want To Be?

During induction we need to ensure that all learners are aware of support mechanisms and how to access them within the College and through partner universities (*if appropriate*).

Measurable:

- Evaluate the Student Retention and Achievement Strategy on an annual basis.
- Ensure all students have an introductory session during induction to inform them of available support and resources and to reinforce the importance of attendance and retention.

What measurable outcomes do we need to put in place at Stafford?

- Ensure all students have an introductory session during induction to inform them of available support and resources and to reinforce the importance of attendance and retention.
- Ensure that internal data re retention for HE courses is collated and presented annually
- Adopt a bolder stance in relation to addressing issues with attendance

## 6.0 Quality Enhancement for students

Our Current Position:

Quality Enhancement is embedded across all aspects of teaching and learning at NULC and enriches the student experience in a variety of ways. At NULC we recognise that there are some key drivers which will enhance the student experience and support progression into employment and/or further training and development. The College has a track record of making a difference to the student experience by working with employers for successful apprenticeship provision and partner activity and providing many opportunities for full and part time students to experience work based and practice learning to meet their needs. The College also seeks to develop new collaborative opportunities to extend the breadth of provision and opportunity for our students. The College was commended in the IQER review for allocating a purpose built centre to its higher level provision, allowing a more adult learning environment for students on a range of higher programmes. The College also recognises the need to encourage students to actively learn and engage in scholarship and critical evaluation. Students are expected to demonstrate an understanding of, and ability to reflect upon, the ways in which their skills and knowledge are developing through critical analysis of their own work, reflection on their achievements, setting achievable targets for a task and reviewing progress.

Stafford College offers a broader HE portfolio of courses and is currently delivering a Level 6 course in Football Coaching. The College has a previous history of high performing HE provision with good student numbers. The College has the opportunity to expand its collaborative opportunities and to capitalise on the new STEM Centre of Excellence to be opened at the College in September 2017.

Where Do We Want To Be?

We want to continue to review and evaluate our Higher Education portfolio ensuring that current students and employers engage in and influence the direction and continuous improvement of our courses through Partnership Board's opportunities, student focus groups and online surveys. We would like to develop higher level apprenticeships with our HEPs and employers to provide a successful 'earn while you learn' model of Higher Education and training.

Measurable:

- Annual review of curriculum (*new and deleted courses*).
- Number of higher apprenticeships developed and positions recruited.

What measurable outcomes do we need to put in place at Stafford?

- Following the merger, review the curriculum to ensure a joint portfolio of provision across North and South Staffordshire, reducing duplication where necessary to ensure viable courses.
- To work closely with local universities to develop new curriculum to meet student demand.
- To recruit appropriate staff to deliver high level curriculum in the new STEM Centre of Excellence.

## **7.0 A Responsive and Flexible Curriculum**

Our Current Position:

Working closely with our Higher Education partners' curriculum areas and academic schools at both preliminary and final Validation Panels we consider approaches and models/modes of delivery to suit the target market for each course seeking approval. A small number of courses have (PDP) Professional Development Planning embedded into their course but this is not consistent throughout all of the HE provision

Where Do We Want To Be?

The College is committed to sharing good practice in relation to the development of PDPs to support the development of students' employability and graduate attributes. Our approach will be to continue to explore, where possible, flexible delivery options to meet the needs of the student.

Measurable:

- Share good practice and extend PDPs across a number of courses.
- Continue to develop a portfolio of courses which has a dynamic curriculum that includes a range of modes of delivery.

What measurable outcomes do we need to put in place at Stafford?

- All of the above measurable outcomes

## **8.0 Employability and Employer Engagement**

Our Current Position:

NULC provides both academic and vocational qualifications to include apprenticeship (1400 apprentices) and bespoke work based training. We have an extensive network of engagement with employers (800 local employers) and see employer engagement as a key strength of the organisation. The College hosts a range of employer events, supporting local businesses in recruitment and networking. The College also has an onsite shop called the '*Work Shop*' which advertises employment opportunities for students, both part time and full time, seasonal, internships, work placement opportunities, apprenticeships etc. and also assists students with job applications, CV writing and interview skills etc. Employers are invited into the College to talk to students or carry out master classes. Many of our full time Foundation Degrees present students with live briefs from employers with many examples of progression into employment. The College is also committed to supporting projects aimed at enhancing the learner experience through project based learning and inclusion of trips and external visits to enhance courses of study. The College has access to the HEPs online careers E-Coach system to assist students with career progression.

Stafford College also provides both academic and vocational qualifications to include apprenticeships, although with a smaller cohort of students, and also has an extensive network of engagement with employers, some of whom are shared with NULC. As with NULC, employers are invited into the College to talk to students or carry out master classes. Again, many of the full time Foundation Degrees present students with live briefs from employers with many examples of progression into employment. Stafford College is also committed to supporting projects aimed at enhancing the learner experience through project based learning and inclusion of trips and external visits to enhance courses of study.

## Where Do We Want To Be?

We want to work even more closely with employers and establish employer forums where realistically possible to ensure that we continue to deliver programmes that meet local employment needs and opportunities. We also aim to ensure we support students to be 'work ready' and employable whilst developing both entrepreneurial and enterprising skills.

Measurable:

- An increase in the number of employers involved in HE programmes.
- Further increase in the real 'live' work experience opportunities for our full time learners (*all of our part time learners are in employment*).
- Increase in the number of Employer Forum activities.

What measurable outcomes do we need to put in place at Stafford?

- All of the above measurable outcomes
- Introduce a 'Workshop' to replicate the good practice seen at NULC

## 9.0 Teaching, Academic and Professional Practice

### 9.1 Infrastructural Support (Excellence in Teaching and Learning)

Our Current Position:

NULC moved to a fantastic £60 million new campus in 2010 and has since continued to invest in both the campus and its staff to ensure all students have an excellent learning experience in a supportive environment. All of the teaching rooms have SMART boards and are a range of sizes to facilitate varying group sizes and room layouts to accommodate differences in teaching style. The College has a bespoke Higher Education Centre allowing our HE students space to relax in an adult environment. A range of curriculum related, high specification equipment is also available to enhance the student curriculum for our HE students.

Stafford College was in need of investment post-merger and immediate plans were put into place to address this as quickly as possible. All rooms have been decorated and new furniture ordered. The site has been de-cluttered and all staff have been issued with laptops. A review of all desk top computers has been undertaken to ensure fewer high quality machines are available for both staff and students. The College has a dedicated HE area in the newest building on the Stafford site which gives adult students a quieter space to work in what is currently the best accommodation.

## Where Do We Want To Be?

The College aims to continue to invest in both physical and human resources to ensure that it is the '*provider of first choice*' due to its excellence in teaching and learning.

Measurable:

- Growth in HE student numbers.
- Continue to invest and update in the latest equipment required to deliver our specialist HE programmes.

What measurable outcomes do we need to put in place at Stafford?

- All of the above measurable outcomes
- Complete the STEM Centre of Excellence on time and within budget

## 9.2 Developing Excellence in Teaching Via Professional Development and Practice

Our Current Position:

The College has a commitment within its Strategic Plan to ensure that its ongoing support for professional development improves the enhancement and enrichment of the student experience through excellence in teaching and learning. The College has two dedicated weeks for staff development activity (*first week in July and the last week in August*) for cross College and team development and also five *College priority days*. Each academic member of staff has the opportunity and is supported to attend appropriate professional development. Activities range from bespoke onsite training, external training, attendance at conferences, awarding body updates, activities and events with partner HEIs, work shadowing to update professional practice, qualification update (*higher degrees, masters etc.*) Staff also have access to appropriate journals to support and update knowledge to enable students to receive current information regarding professional practice across a range of specialist areas. The College employs a number of Teaching and Learning Coaches, of which one is a dedicated coach for staff teaching Higher Education programmes.

College calendars have been aligned with College priority days and dedicated weeks for development coinciding to allow joint staff development.

Where Do We Want To Be?

The College aims to measure the scholarly activity of staff delivering Higher Education programmes with a view to assessing both the impact of the activity and the cost effectiveness. We will also develop a bespoke induction period for staff delivering Higher Education programmes for the first time using best practice from the New Staff Induction Programme recording document used for all new staff starting in the College.

Measurable:

- Carry out a scholarly activity audit.
- Introduce a bespoke HE induction programme for staff with the dedicated HE Teaching and Learning Coach.

What measurable outcomes do we need to put in place at Stafford?

- All of the above measurable outcomes
- Allow staff at Stafford College – access to the HE Teaching and Learning Coach

## 10.0 Equality and Inclusion

Our Current Position:

Equality and Diversity (E&D) is effectively embedded and promoted in all aspects of College activity. NULC has a Single Equality Scheme and related performance targets which clearly set out the College's commitment to Equality and Diversity. The requirements of the Special Educational Need and Disability Act (SENDA) are effectively discharged by the College in anticipating the needs of such students and ensuring that appropriate support packages are in place for our Higher Education students. The College is also well resourced with specialist staff and adaptive technologies to ensure student needs are fully met.

The College ensures that the curriculum delivered through Higher Education programmes models inclusive practice and reflects the needs of a diverse learning community. A variety of teaching and learning approaches and materials are also used that embrace and celebrate diversity, along with a range of assessment methods to give opportunities for a range of learning styles.

Stafford College also has a Single Equality Scheme and related performance targets which clearly set out the College's commitment to Equality and Diversity. The requirements of the Special Educational Need and Disability Act (SENDA) are also effectively discharged by the College and it is resourced with specialist staff and adaptive technologies to ensure student needs are fully met.

Where Do We Want To Be?

Staff teaching on Higher Education programmes at the College need to have a clearer understanding of the responsibilities of the partner HEIs and the College in relation to support for learners as there is sometimes a lack of clarity regarding this matter.

Measurable:

- Ensure all staff are familiar with the latest contractual agreement with partner HEIs re support.
- Create an induction powerpoint presentation in relation to support available and institution responsibilities to ensure standardised approach and information across all Higher Education courses.

What measurable outcomes do we need to put in place at Stafford?

- All of the above measurable outcomes