



# Stephenson College

## Higher Education Strategy

## Strategic Aims

- To strive for excellence in all aspects of College Services & Provision.
- To respond to the needs of employers and the local community.
- To extend provision at levels 4, 5 and 6 and to widen access to Higher Education (HE) programmes in the area, to ensure equal opportunities for local people to access HE.
- To work with employers and partner HEs and to develop HE based curriculum, which offers progression opportunities for Further Education (FE) learners in all curriculum areas.
- To work with employers to further enhance our good reputation for delivery of contracts on a national basis.
- To develop a peer review network for HE provision with colleges in the region for each area of HE offered by the College.
- To ensure that all HE students benefit from a high quality learning experience, fully meeting their individual needs and the needs of the economy and society.

## The aims of Higher Education curriculum at Stephenson College

### To provide learners with a wide range of knowledge and skills that enables them to:

- Contribute to the economic development of their company
- Contribute to the economic development of the region and/or nation
- Further their career
- Prepare them for progression onto graduate and post graduate programmes

To provide FE learners with a clear progression route to HE programmes.

On completion of a programme of study a student should be able to: -

1. **Demonstrate** a sound knowledge and understanding of the subject area
2. **Demonstrate** a variety of skills appropriate to the subject area, and **apply** those skills to typical work like situations
3. **Analyse** systems, processes or typical problems and be able to document that analysis using standard methodologies.
4. **Specify** the requirements for a product or service in a way that clearly communicates to potential users the detail of what the product or service will offer.
5. **Design** or **model** a product or service using accepted industry standard methodologies.
6. **Identify and solve** problems to typical work related situations
7. **Implement**, construct or provide a product or service using industry standard processes, tools and techniques.
8. **Plan**, devise and carry out systematic tests of a product or service.
9. **Document** any process, product or service to appropriate professional standards.
10. **Research** and find detailed information on any aspect of the subject area in an efficient and well-organised manner.

11. **Evaluate** the knowledge, skills and abilities of self and others in the subject area to a reasonable degree of accuracy.
12. **Organise** and execute a suitable life long plan for further professional development.
13. **Communicate** to people at all level, and in a variety of electronic, written and verbal forms.
14. **Contributing** in a variety of roles in a group or team in typical work related tasks
15. **Monitor and reflect** on ones own learning and develop appropriate action plans and professional targets

## **Target group**

The College provides opportunities for higher level learning throughout life.

HE provision at Stephenson College is designed for any learner normally over the age of 19 who has suitable practical experience at work and has a preparatory level 3 qualification or equivalent. In some cases Accreditation of Prior Learning (APL) may be taken into account to assess a learner's suitability for the programme or to gain credit for some elements of the programme. Our HE students are more likely to be over 25, more likely to study part-time, and more likely to come from areas with low rates of participation in HE than students in universities. They are more likely to be studying foundation degrees and sub-degree programmes such as HNCs and HNDs and tend to come from under represented groups.

## **Scope of provision**

Programmes have been developed in areas where the college has a comparative advantage over other institutions. Such programmes have been developed and will continue to be developed to allow progression from the college based vocational level 3 programmes. Access to these programmes will not be limited to those who studied FE courses at the college but will instead allow access by those who are employed by local regional and national companies, where the college is the provider of first choice.

All HE programmes of study will continue to be vocational in nature. They will be demand-led and will have relevance to local, regional and national employers.

HEFCE funds are used to research the needs of local, regional and national companies to improve the relevance of the curriculum material and to provide links from the college-based activity to the work place. Employers' input to the design and development of all HE programmes are actively sought.

Progression routes are available to local Universities and the college has a number of strategic partnerships in delivering HE programmes and in promoting progression opportunities. We will work with partner institutions to help expand opportunities in both Higher and Further Education and value our partnerships in providing opportunities for further development of our FE and HE students.

The programmes on offer include:

Non prescribed (LSC funded)

- CG7407 Teacher's Certificate
- Diploma in Counselling AAT Technician Certificate
- Diploma in Management Studies
- NVQ4 Care
- Registered Manager's Award
- NVQ4 Children's Care Learning & Development
- NVQ4 Business & Administration

Directly funded by HEFCE

- HNC Building Studies
- HNC Civil Engineering
- HNC/D Early Childhood Studies
- HNC/D Advanced Practice in Work with Children and Families
- HNC Motor Vehicle Management
- HNC in Motor Vehicle Engineering
- HNC in Engineering
- HNC in e Business
- HNC in Business Studies
- HNC in Computer Studies

Indirectly funded by HEFCE

- Foundation Degree in High Performance Engines
- Certificate in Education

Further programmes that the college has short to medium term plans to develop include:

- Foundation Degree in Holistic Therapy
- HND Multimedia
- Foundation Degree in Public Services
- Post Graduate Diploma)
- BA Education (Joint Honours)
- HND Civil Engineering
- HND Building Studies
- Foundation Degree in Construction Management
- Foundation Degree in Teaching Assistants,
- Foundation Degree in Early Years
- Early Years Professional Status level 6 qualification

Access to HE programmes for vocational level 3 learners will be improved by the development of some intermediate programmes that act as stepping stones from the NVQs at level 3 to the more academic programmes at level 4. These intermediate qualifications are needed in for example:

- Those who have completed NVQ3 in Construction
- Those who have completed NVQ3 in Engineering
- Current provision at level 3 City and Guilds 7302, Certificate in Delivering Learning (this will change to 'Introductory award – Preparing to teach in the Lifelong Learning sector' under the new QTLS framework)
- Current provision C&G 7407 Stage 1 (this will change to Professional Certificate – Teaching in the Lifelong Learning sector' under the new QTLS framework, we will probably offer this at level 3 although it will also be available at level 4)

## External Context

The East Midlands is a largely rural region with the second lowest population density of any English region at 270 people per km<sup>2</sup>. The College is developing complementary HE provision at sub regional level in priority areas as identified by employers and regional ISC. Trends for applications are increasing for all curriculum areas. The College is a provider of choice for some nationally based companies.

HE Income for 04/05	£546,156
HE Income for 05/06	£561,135
HE Income for 06/07	£831,379
Planned in 07/08	£924,000

## Early Years

The HNC/D was introduced in 2000/2001 due to student demand for professional and personal development and for higher-level qualifications within the Early Years' setting. Uptake has trebled in line with the drive from the government to up skill the workforce. The provision for higher-level courses within the area is limited to Leicester and Burton on Trent FE colleges. There are Early Years degree courses at Derby and Leicester Universities and North Warwickshire and Hinckley College, which also offers a Foundation Degree in Early Years. South Leicestershire College offers an HNC in Advanced Practice in Work with Children and Families. This network of colleges and universities work to meet the needs of populations spread throughout a rural area. There are 35 students on this programme in 06/07.

### **Motor Vehicle / Engineering**

There are a number of institutions that offer higher-level courses in Engineering. These include Engineering HNC/D offered by Loughborough, which also operates a Contract Management HNC, a Foundation Degree in Electrical Power Engineering and BSC (Honours) in Electrical Power Engineering. Leicester College offers a Mechanical or Electrical/Electronic Engineering HNC/D as does North Warwickshire and Hinckley College, which also offers HNC and HND in Manufacturing Engineering. Stephenson College offers a general Engineering HNC to allow progression from the traditional FE route and offers the region the specialism in Motor Vehicle courses at HE level including the Foundation Degree. The Foundation Degree is in the first year of operation in 06/07 and has small numbers. This provision is expected to grow in 07/08. The other HE programmes are well established and numbers are around 100 students.

### **Construction**

This provision has been available for 7 years mainly for experienced construction tradesmen wishing to move into construction management and those individuals working in a design or control environment within the industry. The HNC programme is used as a progression route to degree programmes. Block, day release and evening only attendance patterns are available to meet the needs of those in work. Original numbers have grown from 12 to 88 students. The College is the preferred provider for some of the national construction companies and as a result numbers are expected to increase year on year. HNC in Building Studies is also offered by Leicester College. The college has a CoVE in Construction in partnership with Leicester College and a number of local authorities have requested the development of an HNC in Civil Engineering. This programme is also planned for 07/08. HNC/D in Civil Engineering is offered by Burton College, which also offers HNC Civil, HND in Construction and offers a Foundation Degree in Construction and Construction Management.

There is a demand for an HND in Construction and this is planned for introduction in 07/08, for those learners completing their HNC but not wishing to progress onto a degree programme. Numbers are predicted to be 101 HE students in 07/08.

### **Care**

The percentage of economically active adults qualified to NVQ level 4 in the region is 2.4% below the national average (30.4%). South Leicestershire offers an NVQ4 in Care and in the Registered Managers Award for the South of Leicestershire with Stephenson College delivering these qualifications to the North. Loughborough offers access to HE in Nursing and Health

Studies and Stephenson College offers NVQ4 in Children's Care Learning & Development. This area of HE is under developed and the College plans to develop further HE course in this area. Current numbers are at around 40 learners in 06/07.

### **Teacher Training**

Leicester College offers a Certificate in Education course in collaboration with De Montfort University. Burton College offers a Foundation Degree for Teaching Assistants, B.A. (Honours) in Education and a PGCE course in collaboration with Nottingham Trent University. Stephenson College currently offers Cert.Ed. (PCET) and PGCE qualifications in Teacher Training in a collaborative partnership which includes South East Derbyshire College; Derby College; Loughborough College and with Derby University as the lead and validating body.

As this is a modular programme there is currently demand from internal candidates to combine this qualification with subject specific modules offered by the University to gain a Foundation Degree; or to extend their learning programme at Stephenson College through Business management modules to gain a BA Education – Joint Honours award.

### **IT / Computing**

South Leicestershire College offers HNC in Computing (ICT Systems Support). Leicester College offers a Foundation Degree in Computer Networks and Computing HNC/D, which leads to BSc (Honours) at De Montfort University. Burton College offers HNC / Foundation Degree in Computing and Business Information Technology whilst North Warwickshire and Hinckley College offer the HNC/D in Computing. Stephenson College offers HNC in Computer Studies and this feeds a BSc in Computing delivered in collaboration with Sunderland University. Each institution meets the needs of their local rural population. Approximate numbers are at the region of 47 learners.

### **Business Administration**

South Leicestershire College offers an NVQ4 in Administration. Leicester College offers progression to HNC/D in Business in part time provision and has a link with De Montfort University for the full time HND in Business. North Warwickshire and Hinckley and Burton Colleges offer an HNC in Business. Burton also offers a BA (Honours) top up Degree. Stephenson College offers HNC in e Business as well as the standard HNC in Business Studies to serve the local adult market. There are 29 HE students in 06/07.

### **Hair, Beauty and Holistics**

The College currently trains a large number of learners to level 3 in this curriculum area. Requests have been made by these learners for a progression route to higher level qualifications. The College is in the process of responding to this request in designing a suitable programme.

### **Modes of Attendance**

These programmes are offered with a wide range of flexibility in delivery to meet the needs of the community and local employers. Full-time day release, evening only and block programmes are available. The delivery is demand-led and very responsive to the needs of employers.

## **On Programme**

All HE students receive an induction to the college and the course and sit initial diagnostic assessments. These assessments reveal any support needs and 100% of students are offered support. Group and individual tutorial support is provided as a standard element of any college programme.

A wide range of attendance patterns enables participation by an increased population of employed learners.

E-learning is a major strength of the college and unlimited e account access is afforded to HE students.

## **Support Systems for Learning & IAG**

IAG is provided by the Central Student Services Section (SSS). All of the SSS staff providing advice is matrix accredited. All HE programmes have a dedicated programme leader and they work with SSS to provide further guidance, detailed subject-related information and take part in informal interviews with prospective students. The College has recently invested in an HE Advisor on recognition of the growth in HE provision.

## **Marketing Processes**

The College has a dedicated Marketing and Communications Manager, who works with lecturers, programme leaders and managers to develop marketing literature and other materials for internal and external published material. In house literature is currently being reviewed and for 07/08 all handbooks etc will follow a standard format and will comply with a 'house style'. Course Information is available in electronic and paper-based format.

Roaming profiles for computer students allow them to access their own desktop from any computer within college, at home or at their place of work. All students are able to access and work electronically from any computer.

## **Teaching and Learning Strategies**

The College Mission Statement is "Excellence and Innovation in Learning" and this permeates all aspects of College provision. The building is a purpose-built facility and the College has the financial capability to maintain up to date software and equipment. The Resources are excellent. There is a strong commitment from Senior Management and Middle Managers for staff development to improve standards of teaching. For all teaching staff Mandatory training days are used to develop teams and are driven by strategic managers for cross-college themes and by operational and middle managers to address issues relating to individuals or subject area teams. Subject learning coaches take part in national and regional networks. The College has two Centres of Vocational Excellence in Motor Vehicle and Construction. Staff benefit from national networks and conferences in these fields. All staff are encouraged to participate in staff development, which includes attendance at regional and national conferences and events.

A wide range of delivery methods are utilised to develop students' enthusiasm and to keep their interests. The College has a strong emphasis on e-learning and all schemes of work and learning materials are accessible for students at all times via the Intranet and Internet.

## **Quality of Performance**

Key performance measures indicate that the HE provision is good. Internal and external audits (QAA reviews) have always indicated that the provision is good across the College. There is a drive for excellence shared by senior managers, middle managers, programme leaders and lecturing staff.

Annual internal audits in line with the Common Inspection Framework include teaching observations, which are graded.

Student surveys are held at several points throughout their course and these have always indicated extremely high satisfaction rates with all aspects of the service provided. As there are no national benchmarks publicised for HE the College is developing links with other Colleges to establish a Peer Review Network.

## **HE in FE**

The college does not segregate FE and HE learners by any physical barriers in a brand new purpose built facility, which has been recognised as state of the art by various peer institutions from the college and university sectors, architects, LSC and so on. HE learners in colleges progress from FE courses, in the main, and provide inspiration to FE learners and help to raise awareness of progression opportunities to HE. Some of our HE learners act as mentors to FE learners from the same company. The College is well placed to respond to the skills agenda.

The nature of the HE experience is very different from that provided by a University. College HE students have built up confidence in the college and their lecturers and trainers. Some HE students would find entry to a university prohibitive in terms of their confidence levels and the sheer numbers that attend those institutions. In the main, College HE students do not have family members who have completed an HE qualification. Their aspiration tends to centre on their role at work. Having accessed the college at the FE level means that the student has successfully completed a course at the college and progression becomes a more natural outcome.

The college is well-placed and has a crucial role to play in responding to the skills agenda in the development of a higher education system that meets the growing needs of the learning society and increases the opportunities for students from disadvantaged backgrounds to participate.<sup>1</sup>

Sir Andrew Foster's report<sup>2</sup> concluded that there is a need for colleges to adopt as their primary purpose improving employability and supplying economically valuable skills. The report also saw the contribution of colleges to progression and delivery of higher level skills as absolutely essential. The FE White Paper takes up this theme when it states that: 'We agree with Sir

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<sup>1</sup> Stephenson College acknowledges the Higher Education in further education colleges consultation document and Processes

<sup>2</sup> 'Realising the potential: a review of the future role of further education colleges', DfES, November 2005.

Andrew Foster that the key strategic role for the sector – the role in which the contribution of FE to learners’ lives, to society and the economy can exceed that of any other part of the education and training system – is to help people gain the skills and qualifications for employability, so that they are equipped for productive, sustainable and fulfilling employment in a modern economy.’<sup>3</sup>.

The College has the EmSkills quality mark for responding to the needs of employers across the full curriculum range. This includes: Care, Early Years, Hair Holistics and Beauty, Engineering, Motor Vehicle Engineering, Construction, IT and Business Administration, Teacher training, Travel and Tourism, Art and Design. All areas are renowned for dynamism and responsiveness. The College provides courses in a variety of delivery patterns, full time, day release, evening and block release in direct response to market demand.

HE numbers may be affected by the introduction of variable fees for full-time provision. Higher level learning is not expected to be predominantly linear in the future, for example from undergraduate to postgraduate. Much more learning is predicted to take place over an extended period, with individuals moving in and out of learning, and with learners moving around at the same level, or moving between levels as needs dictate. Our HE numbers have shown steady growth but at less than 500 learners we would be seen as a small HE provider by the HE funding council, HEFCE.

### **Non-prescribed higher education**

HEFCE is empowered to fund any education at HEIs<sup>4</sup>, but only prescribed courses of higher education at FE colleges<sup>5</sup>. Both HEFCE and the LSC can fund non-prescribed HE but HEFCE must do so in or through an HEI. There are two kinds of non-prescribed provision that is described as HE:

- higher level provision, accredited by the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA) for inclusion in the National Qualifications Framework at Level 4 or higher
- provision leading to a qualification given by awarding bodies or other external organisations, which is not accredited by the QCA and is outside the National Qualifications Framework, but which is described as HE level by the awarding body.

Following the recommendations of the Dearing report, responsibility for funding all higher national qualifications (HNCs/HNDs) was transferred to HEFCE from what was then the Further Education Funding Council, now the LSC; but other higher level provision falling outside the definition of prescribed courses has remained the funding responsibility of the LSC.

Non-prescribed HE is offered by both colleges and universities. It includes courses leading to a range of qualifications awarded or recognised by professional bodies, the bulk of which are found in colleges. The provision leading to such awards could make a significant contribution to the development of new kinds of higher level and workplace learning to meet the need for a qualified workforce.

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<sup>3</sup> Cm 6768, DfES, March 2006, paragraph 2.4.

<sup>4</sup> Under section 65(2) of the Further and Higher Education Act 1992, which can be found at [www.opsi.gov.uk/acts/acts1992/UKpga\\_19920013\\_en\\_1.htm](http://www.opsi.gov.uk/acts/acts1992/UKpga_19920013_en_1.htm)

<sup>5</sup> Prescribed courses are defined in the Education (Prescribed Courses of Higher Education) (Wales) (Amendment) Regulations 1998, which were amended to apply to England, see [www.opsi.gov.uk/si/si1998/19981970.htm](http://www.opsi.gov.uk/si/si1998/19981970.htm)

## Funding routes

1. We have offered three types of funding relationship with HEFCE for HE. The funding types are:
  - a. Indirect funding, in which the student numbers belong to a University and are franchised to us. The University retains responsibility for the student numbers, the curriculum, and the quality of the provision and the student experience. Eg the University of Derby collaborative partnership for teacher training.
  - b. Direct funding, in which the College has a direct contract with HEFCE, which it manages itself. It can set its own fees but needs to have the curriculum validated by an awarding body. The College has responsibility for the student numbers, and the quality of the provision and the student experience, but the standards of the award are the responsibility of the awarding body.
  - c. Consortium funding, in which the members of the consortium enter into a partnership in which one member (usually but not always a university) manages the contract with HEFCE on behalf of the others. The student numbers are shared among the consortium members and can be moved between them, while the individual members retain responsibility for the quality of the student experience. The precise nature of the relationship is determined by the consortium agreement.

The College is open to all types of funding arrangements but currently operates funding types a and b. The College is part of the CULN network and plans to develop this partnership to fund further growth in HE numbers through type c provision.

The distinctions arising from different funding arrangements will have little meaning for learners and will not influence the way the curriculum is developed to meet the needs of learners and employers.

HE in College operates at a funding and administrative boundary, which has posed progression problems for students. Those students, who complete an NVQ in for example Construction, do not have the mathematical or scientific base to enable them to progress to HE courses in Construction. Stepping stone qualifications are needed to allow access from vocational qualifications to HE qualifications.

The college will seek to form partnerships with other providers of HE to the best advantage of our students.

We will develop relationships with other higher education networks and agencies, including the Higher Education Academy, the QAA, the Joint Information Systems Committee, Foundation Degree Forward and the Lifelong Learning Network.

We will ensure that staff involved in HE provision are appropriately qualified, have opportunities for scholarly activity and are supported by adequate learning resources, in order to ensure a high quality learning experience for the learners. Our reciprocal arrangements enable learners to access resources from partner institutions.

Future developments in HE will link to the programmes delivered to FE learners consistent with the institution's overall strengths, resource base and its staffing. The College currently operates two CoVES in Motor Vehicle Engineering and Construction.

### **Centres for Higher Education Excellence**

Investing in excellence is one of our strategic priorities. We are in a consortium with Leicester and Derby Universities as a Centre of Excellence for Teaching and Training, CETTs. The CETT application focused on the twin themes of employability and widening participation and will therefore align with HEFCE's priorities for the sector. The competitive bidding process and proposals are conditional upon the resources available to HEFCE following the forthcoming Comprehensive Spending Review. The college has a history of external recognition and investment: CoVES; QAA reviews; student feedback; and testimony from employers or professional bodies.

### **Quality Assurance**

HEFCE and the QAA are developing a new method for quality assurance of HE in FECs, entitled Integrated Quality and Enhancement Review, or IQER. IQER considers the college's entire portfolio of HE provision (both directly and indirectly funded) and makes judgements on how the college is managing its own responsibilities with regard to that provision. The College is part of the pilot for IQER, which is taking place in 2006-07. This will be followed by a five-year cycle of reviews.

The burden of IQER will be more proportionate as it takes a risk-based approach: those institutions that have a good record of quality will receive less scrutiny than those with a poorer record. The disparity in quality assurance methods between universities and colleges meant that colleges appeared at a disadvantage. IQER will result in a set of judgements that are analogous to those used for HEIs in institutional audit. This will enable the public, particularly potential students, to compare provision between providers and give colleges more parity with universities.

The internal quality audit team monitors the quality of teaching and learning within each curriculum area. Standardisation meetings within the institution and with external partners assure the assessment processes. The HE Board of Studies meets each semester and is the cross college committee for standardisation, moderation, consideration of audit reports, EV reports, evaluating current provision and validating new provision and dissemination of good practice. Self-evaluation is an annual process and results in the Self Evaluation document. Each curriculum area contributes individual SE documents to the overall college document.

