



## FAQs

### What is a Career College?

Career Colleges increase the range and choice of education opportunities open to 14–19-year-olds, to improve their employment prospects. They provide accelerated vocationally-focused programmes of study at colleges equipped to the highest standards and are staffed by expert teachers, supported by employers. They:

- Are established by employers and Further Education colleges
- Specialise in subjects linked directly to sectors with exceptional job prospects
- Partner with employers to design and deliver the curriculum and work experience
- Ensure employers represent a minimum of 40% of career college board members
- Offer 14 to 19 provision, with progression to Apprenticeships, higher education and employment
- Ensure academic rigour and include core National Curriculum education in tandem with skills-based learning.

Against a background of high youth unemployment, the over-arching target is that every young person leaving a Career College, whether at 16 or 18, will be in work, training or education.

### How do Career Colleges differ from a regular FE College?

Career Colleges offer practical training and education designed by industry, with direct input from employers to the training of young people. They are specialist training centres, offered in areas with real prospects of employment, driven by the market.

They differ from a regular FE college by being a “college within a college”. They have access to specialist teachers, employer-led education and industry standard facilities. Each Career College creates its own identity.

The Career Colleges Trust has drawn on national and international best practice to develop a curriculum framework to marry expertise in delivery of the National Curriculum, preparation of young people for work and vocational education. This includes best practice in teaching and learning and a wealth of resources, including technology to support learners, teachers and employers.

### Why are they important? Why do we need them?

The skills gap is evident in the UK and there are high levels of youth unemployment. People with outstanding vocational and practical abilities are vital to our economy.

The Government has already put in place reforms to ensure that students can combine core academic subjects with high quality vocational qualifications from age 14. And at 16, two thirds of students in full time education take some kind of vocational subject by specialising in a vocational area relevant to the local labour market, Career Colleges help engage employers and give young people the chance to start a high quality level 2 vocational course at 14. If they choose to stay in that vocational area, they will then be ready to progress to a higher level of vocational learning at 16. This could put them ahead by a whole two years.

In addition, Career College students learn through real-world challenges set and supported by employers. Coupled with work experience – both pre- and post-16 – and other links with local businesses, they will develop the wider employability skills which employers rate so highly.

Combining academic and vocational studies in this way has been proven to work. It’s the popular choice for huge numbers of young people in Austria, Switzerland and Germany – and as a result, their youth unemployment is far lower than almost anywhere in the world, including England. It’s easy to see why.

Career Colleges are set in context of a further education sector, which is able to respond to local needs by determining the right offer and the most appropriate delivery model to meet those needs.

### Who conceived, developed and launched CCs?

Career Colleges owe their origins to Lord Baker, former Secretary of State for Education.

In his book, “14–18: A New Vision for Secondary Education”, Lord Baker wrote about specialist high schools in New York. These cater for students aged 14–18 and blend vocational study with key subjects including English, maths and science. They have transformed education for many young people across the city.

Lord Baker sees Career Colleges as a natural extension of University Technical Colleges, which specialise in science, engineering and technology subjects. ➔

Career Colleges will draw on the established expertise of further education colleges in subjects directly linked to labour market needs.

Initial support for Career Colleges was provided by the Edge Foundation, an independent education charity dedicated to technical, practical and vocational learning. Another charity – the Helping Hands Trust – came forward to offer additional support. This sparked a groundswell of interest locally, regionally and nationally.

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### **Who funds them? Are they profit-making ventures?**

Career Colleges are run by FE colleges and learners are funded through the usual public funding mechanisms available for 14 to 19 year olds. Any surplus produced is used to reinvest in the education and training mission of the Career College Trust, which operates as a charity serving young people.

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### **Who runs the Career Colleges? Is there a separate Principal?**

Career Colleges have separate leadership and management, appropriate to the specialist sector training provided.

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### **How many Career Colleges are now open?**

Three. Oldham College has opened a Digital and Creative Career College, Hugh Baird College in Bootle, Liverpool has a Catering and Hospitality Career College and Bromley College has opened its Food, Enterprise and Hospitality Career College.

A further five are expected to be approved later this year, with more to open in 2015.

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### **How many students are there?**

Student numbers vary between Career Colleges. Some Colleges will be set up as pilot projects in the initial stages – with smaller numbers of students. For example, Oldham College is planning incremental growth, which will be phased with the development of brand new bespoke facilities being built for its Digital Career College.

The size of each Career College is based on demand for the sector-based education. Many Colleges will have stepped plans to increase enrolments through a measured development programme over several years. Some have ambitions to have 1000+ students after 5 years, whilst others are proposing 100 to 200 learners in total. Ultimately this will depend on the local sector career opportunities available and what the capacity each College has to deliver excellent uncompromising education and work experience for students.

The ambition is to open 40 Career Colleges in 4 years, driven by market needs, not individual interest. Over 60 institutions, including employers and FE colleges, have expressed interest in opening a Career College since the launch of the Trust in October 2013.

### **Who decides on the curriculum? Can they specialise in ANY subject?**

The curriculum is driven by requirements for progression to higher education and employment, with great influence and direction from employers in the relevant sector they serve. As Career Colleges are demand-driven, their subjects are determined by need and opportunities for young people in that particular region, ensuring adherence to national requirements for 14 to 19 education.

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### **Are there specific entrance requirements?**

Yes, as appropriate to the sector they serve and to ensure learners are given the best opportunity of success.

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### **Do students still study for academic qualifications (GCSE/A levels)?**

Yes, Career Colleges provide the opportunity to combine the appropriate vocational, professional and general qualifications (GCSE/ A levels) as appropriate, in accordance with national requirements for 14 to 19 education. This includes Maths, English and Science being compulsory for 14 to 16 year olds. The critical ambition and requirement of a Career College is to provide young people with a well-rounded education, ensuring strong communication skills, a grounding in maths and English and preparation for the world of work- both employment and self-employment.

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### **How would an FE college go about setting up a Career College? Can any College apply to set one up or are there requirements in regards to the Colleges performance levels?**

FE colleges may express an interest in setting up a Career College if they have been judged by Ofsted to be Good or Outstanding and have sound financial health.

The Government has specified requirements for the education of 14 to 16 year olds in FE colleges, which would also need to be adhered to. Critically, there would need to be substantiated demand for the proposed specialist provision of each Career College, supported by employers, with real work prospects available for young people.

Employers and industry bodies may also express an interest in opening a Career College and need to be the driving force to clarifying their industry needs, shaping the curriculum for their sector and supporting and mentoring learners to ensure their effective preparation for work.

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### **If an FE College sets up a 'Career College' as part of its offering – does it get ownership of the students or will a separate organisation take the lead?**

The College will continue to have full ownership and guardianship of all its students.

However, the Trust does stipulate that there must be an individual senior manager appointed - who is given direct responsibility for managing the specialist sector provision at the Career College and the students within it.

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### **What sort of private companies sponsor Career Colleges? Can any company get involved or do they have to meet certain criteria?**

Private companies are being encouraged to engage in Career Colleges to advise on industry standards and the skills required to work in their sector. They provide practical advice on training requirements, mentor young people, support curriculum design and delivery, offer learning resources and provide work experience opportunities.

Support isn't limited to private sector businesses: there is strong interest from public sector employers and charities, too – and 40% of members of Career College boards are local employers.

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### **Why is the entry age 14? Isn't this too young for children to specialise in subjects and decide on their future career?**

There are many examples of international education systems where age 14 is used as a point of access to a broader range of education. Many of these economies, such as Austria and Germany, have much lower rates of youth unemployment. The principle of 14+ has an opportunity to access a range of learning pathways is also established in the UK, more recently with University Technical Colleges and the Government's announcement to allow 14 year olds to enter FE colleges full-time.

Critically, Career Colleges offer a broad base of education. Students start at the age of 14,15 or 16, combining core curriculum subjects with vocational learning and hands-on projects. Subjects such as English, mathematics, science, languages and humanities are taught in the context of the chosen vocational specialism. This brings these subjects to life, giving them new meaning. Because of the emphasis on core subjects, students can change direction at 16+ if they decide to follow other paths.

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### **Is there a risk Career Colleges will create a two-tier education system in which brighter children avoid them?**

Examples of industry-led training (including employer endorsed academies and UTCs), demonstrate the opposite outcome is true. Students and parents are drawn to opportunities for 14 to 19-year-olds, which prepare young people for progression to adult life – together with academic rigour, and practical development support leading to real work opportunities.

Students leaving UTCs at 18 have been offered places at a wide range of universities, including members of the Russell Group. They've also been offered Apprenticeships with leading businesses such as Rolls Royce and Jaguar Land Rover. That's proof – if proof were needed – that specialist education doesn't close doors.

### **Does the Government fully support Career Colleges? Is it providing funding?**

The Government has commended this initiative. Funding is provided through the usual means for 14 to 19 education in FE colleges.

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### **How do Career Colleges fit with the Government's plans for Education?**

The Government's plans for education include driving up standards in English and maths – what Professor Alison Wolf describes as the “most vocational subjects of all”. Career Colleges help improve literacy and numeracy by showing how language and numbers are used in context. We know the approach works: early results in University Technical Colleges show good passes in English and maths GCSEs, precisely because they have been taught in the context of engineering and technology.

The Prime Minister recently called for more specialist colleges. Speaking in October 2013, he said, “We've already got technical colleges run by great companies like JCB.....I say: let's have one of those colleges in every single major town.”

Career Colleges also support the Government's industrial strategy. They connect with sectors that have strong potential to create jobs, and with priorities set by Local Enterprise Partnerships.

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### **How are Career Colleges scrutinised?**

Career Colleges are subject to the same scrutiny and benchmarking as FE colleges across the UK, with opportunities to compare learner successes with all other provision in the UK. We are currently exploring international measures to scrutinise standards and ensure we continue to aspire to provide the best education and work opportunities for young people.

A key measure of performance for Career Colleges will be the number of young people who secure work and further and higher education, directly following their education in a Career College. The Career Colleges Trust has direct guidance and support from Ofsted to review and inform the quality standards and guidance to Career Colleges.

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### **Who is responsible for the success of the Career Colleges?**

The individual Career College is required to adhere to national standards, monitored by Ofsted. In addition, the Career Colleges Trust supports Career Colleges with guidance on best practice and provision of services (including training and resources). Regular audits are carried out to ensure Career College standards are being met, to maintain the accreditation required.

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### **Can a CC specialise in STEM subjects or are these the preserve of University Technical Colleges?**

Applications for Career Colleges are reviewed on a case by case basis, (naturally including STEM) to assess suitability. Career Colleges are driven by a sector-led approach (demand) and not limited to any particular range of industries. ➡

The key considerations are **i:** Are there employment opportunities in the sector/industry proposed; and **ii:** Would the Career College be able to prepare young people to work effectively in the sector/industry.

### Would you need to admit 14 year olds straight away? Isn't this the main feature of a Career College?

For many colleges, delivering the National Curriculum is a new experience and requires careful and considered planning; there are also statutory and regulatory requirements for 14–16 provision. As such, Career Colleges have the option to phase their opening over two years, allowing them to open as 16–19 in year 1, increasing to 14–19 in year 2.

### Have new principals been recruited?

The Career Colleges Trust stipulates that a dedicated senior manager must be recruited for each Career College. All three of our operating Career Colleges have such leaders, who run these organisations. Some leaders have been sourced from the industry of focus for the Career Colleges whilst other leaders are recruited from the FE college team. The critical question the Trust asks is what expertise are required for leadership for each individual and unique Career College?

### How are employers involved?

Employers are absolutely critical to the design, delivery and management of Career Colleges. In order to ensure career-led education pathways, employers are involved from the inception of the idea for a Career College and commit time and resource to supporting, and in some cases, leading aspects of the education and work-based opportunities and industry projects set for learners.

*Think of a young person...*

...designing an App for your phone, to a specification set by an employer ... training as a chef, under the supervision of a Michelin Star chef ... involved in the construction of a landmark building.

None of this is possible without employers at the helm, providing practical opportunities for young people to develop their skills for employment, building their confidence and working to defined career pathways, alongside a broad core education.

### How much is each college paying to become a Career College? What is the minimum fee?

There is no minimum or 'set' fee. When we launched last year, the Trust considered a fixed fee, for transparency, but this was not well received by prospective Career Colleges, who all pointed out that they had different requirements, served different sectors and therefore had different needs. We have therefore developed a bespoke service, tailored to the needs of each individual Career College.

We work through a due diligence audit and business plan with each prospective Career College sponsor to determine requirements and use this as the basis to agree fee structure.

The Career Colleges charitable Trust is funded through donations from the Trustees and Chairman, Luke Johnson, together with the agreed cost contributions from each Career College.

### What do they get for their money?

The Career Colleges Trust provides a range of specialist services and support to prospective Career Colleges. These include:

- A clear, nationally known and respected brand understood by parents, employers and other colleges/learning providers
- A team of industry experts and specialists to support all areas of the College's offering – ensuring standards are maintained
- Support to source and ensure strong employer engagement
- PR/Marketing support to raise national and regional awareness of the Career Colleges brand
- Support FE Colleges with policy and statutory requirements when introducing 14–16-year-olds for the first time. This includes support with Maths and English for staff and learners
- Helping Colleges access grants and financial investment via our relationships with LEPs and other expertise in securing additional funds
- A wealth of teaching and learning resources, best practice guidance and communication and support tools via our industry standard online Portal – plus R&D into best uses of technology to improve learning and learner engagement
- Full details of the Trust's franchise offer can be found on our website [www.careercolleges.org.uk](http://www.careercolleges.org.uk)



**Career  
Colleges**

14–19 Preparing young people for work

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