



DEFINING FUTURES

CITY OF WOLVERHAMPTON COLLEGE NEWSLETTER

ISSUE 3 /// March 2022

Welcome to the third edition of the Defining Futures Newsletter which provides an overview of college activities from the start of term in January 2022 until February half-term.

We were pleased to welcome students and apprentices back after the Christmas break, and equally pleased to welcome over 250 prospective students to our first open day of the new year on Saturday, 29 January.

The original date of Saturday, 8 January, was postponed in order to keep staff and visitors safe during the surge in Omicron cases across the country, but that so many people attended the re-arranged date demonstrates the popularity of our courses and how the college is seen as a leading education provider in the region.

We're now looking forward to our next **open evening on Wednesday, 9 March** – visitors can find out about the range of courses we offer, have a tour of campus facilities, talk to tutors about the best qualifications for their chosen career and get advice on apprenticeships from our recruitment team. If you know anyone who would benefit from attending, they can book a place at the event [here](#).

Since the start of term there have been lots of newsworthy activities going on – we've joined forces with four neighbouring colleges to offer free staff training to employers, had visits from Michael Gove, the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, and Mims Davies the Employment Minister, the next group of BBC digital journalism apprentices have kicked off their training at college and kind-hearted public services students have spruced up a property to get it ready for a family in need. **Read more from page two onwards**

We've spoken to a range of current students about how they're getting on with their courses, as well as former students to find out what they've been up to since completing their qualifications with us. **Read what they've got to say from page 7 onwards**

What's more, we shouted about our successful apprenticeship scheme during National Apprenticeship Week in February – **find out what we did on page 5** – and have a read of what's been going on in curriculum areas **from page 6 onwards**



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In the news...

College joins forces to offer free staff training to employers

The college has joined forces with Dudley, Halesowen, Sandwell and Walsall Colleges and a range of local industry bodies to launch a new technical skills training initiative for staff in local companies.

The Skills Accelerator scheme encourages employers to enrol their staff for free digital/IT and management and new technologies-based training, paving the way for them to access higher level training.

Fifteen short courses covering a range of topics - including cybersecurity, website design, 3D printing and business improvement techniques - will be delivered by the five colleges before the end of March.

The initiative has been developed in response to priorities outlined in the government's Skills for Jobs white paper for reshaping the technical skills of the local labour market and wider economy.

Read more here. The list of Skills Accelerator courses that we're offering can be found [here](#)



Michael Gove hears about plans for new college campus during visit to city

The Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities was given a tour of the site of the proposed new City Learning Quarter and discussed plans for the college's new campus during a visit to the city on 27 January.

Mr Gove spoke to college principal Mal Cowgill about how the new campus will provide first class learning facilities in key areas of employment and the opportunities it will provide for hundreds of local people who will benefit from the modern teaching and learning facilities. **Read more about the visit [here](#)**



Employment minister visits college's new electrical vehicle training centre

Also in the city on 27 January was Employment Minister Mims Davies who visited the college's new Electric Vehicle and Green Technologies Training Centre which has recently opened in Wednesfield.

The centre, which has moved from its original base at the Wellington Road campus due to the popularity of its courses, is helping to meet the need for qualified electrical mechanics across the region and aims to train over 700 local people over the next 18 months.

Training is provided through a sector-based work academy programme, funded by West Midlands Combined Authority, and offers courses from beginner to advanced level meaning that newcomers to the automotive field, as well as those who already work in the sector, can gain the specialist knowledge and skills they need to work in the fast-growing industry.

Read more about the visit [here](#). Find out more about our electric vehicle and green technology courses [here](#)



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Former college apprentices head up BBC Three's nightly news programme

Two former BBC journalism apprentices who completed their professional qualifications through the college have taken to the airways as presenters of the nightly news bulletin on the new BBC Three channel which launched on 1 February.

Levi Jouavel and Kirsty Grant, who studied for the National Council for the Training of Journalists (NCTJ) diploma through the college, are presenting The Catchup, a weeknight bulletin aimed at young people, which will round up the day's news in just five minutes.

The college has been delivering the digital journalism apprenticeship scheme on behalf of the BBC since 2015 and, to date, trained over 100 apprentices, giving them the skills and knowledge to take on junior journalism roles in the organisation. [**Read more here**](#)

New BBC digital journalism apprentices kick off training at college

A group of future BBC journalists kicked off studying for their professional qualification during a two-week placement at college in February.

The 23 trainee digital journalists, from across England and Wales, are working towards the journalist apprenticeship standard and combining working for the broadcasting giant with studying for the National Council for the Training of Journalists (NCTJ) Level 3 diploma in journalism at the college.

Throughout the 18-month scheme, the apprentices work alongside BBC news teams, learning how to create and deliver quality news content for multiple platforms, as well as studying the theory of journalism – including media law, public affairs, broadcast for TV and radio, journalism ethics and video journalism – during block release placements at the college. [**Read more here**](#)

[**Find out more about the journalism apprenticeship here**](#)

Apprentices start out on journalism journey

A group of future journalists have kicked off their training through a successful training scheme.

The 23 trainee digital journalists, from across England and Wales, are working towards the junior journalist apprenticeship standard at Wolverhampton College.

They are combining working for the BBC with studying for the National Council for the Training of Journalists (NCTJ) Level 3 diploma in journalism at the college. Throughout the 18-month scheme, the apprentices will work alongside news teams, learning how to create and deliver quality news content for multiple platforms, as well as studying the theory of journalism.

College joins national pledge to support students leaving care

Students who have experience of being in care are receiving extra support to access education and training, leading to the college signing up to the national Care Leaver Covenant.

The covenant is a pledge made by the private, public and voluntary sectors to provide support for care leavers aged 16-25 to help them live independently and includes supporting them with any costs for participating in education, training and employment.

Through the college scheme, care-experienced students are supported by a dedicated team of three staff who act as mentors, accompany them during initial college visits and interviews, ensure they have the necessary information on their chosen qualification, give careers advice, and assist with accessing funding to enable them to purchase equipment and resources necessary for their course.

When enrolled at college, the students meet with their college mentor on a regular basis and have a weekly meeting with a member of staff from the Care Leaver Covenant who monitors their progress, ensures they are meeting their targets and are aware of further learning or employment opportunities.

As further support, students are able to access free treatments at the college's hair and beauty salons and free sessions at its sports centre and gym, and personal tutors have been trained to recognise the additional needs they may have and how to access the help required. [**Read more here.**](#)

[**Find out more about the support the college provides to care-experienced students here**](#)

College signs national care covenant

A city college has signed up to a national covenant to help students with experience of being in care receive extra support.

Wolverhampton College has signed up to the national Care Leaver Covenant, a pledge made by the private, public and voluntary sectors to provide support for care leavers aged 16-

25 to help them live independently. It includes supporting them with any costs for participating in education, training and employment and means care-experienced students are supported by a dedicated team of staff as mentors and have access to all information and requirements for qualifications and courses.



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Students get hands-on to spruce up property for family in need

Kind-hearted students got out their sandpaper, paints and brushes to spruce up a property in Telford to get it ready to house a family in need.

The group of 60 students, who are studying for diplomas in public services at the Wellington Road campus, spent a week working on the three-bedroom property stripping wallpaper, sanding skirting boards and door frames, painting walls and applying undercoat and gloss paint to woodwork.

The project links to the students' course modules on good citizenship and improving the local community, as well as giving them the opportunity to do work experience and extend their learning by gaining a range of additional practical skills. [**Read more here**](#)



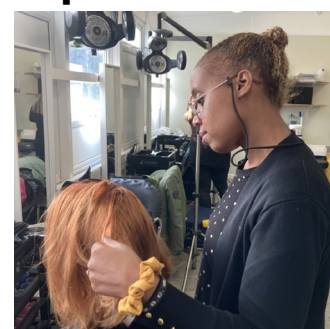
Sunset-inspired hairstyle leads students to final of national competition

A hairstyle inspired by the sunset have led a hairdressing student to the finals of a national competition.

Tara Stephens, a mature student, who is studying for a Level 3 diploma in hairdressing at the Paget Road campus, has been named one of six finalists in the hair colouring category of the Concept Hair Learner of the Year Awards 2022.

In the first round of the competition, Tara had to submit a photograph of the look she had created for her model and her bright copper colour, inspired by the sunset, impressed the judges and earned her a place in the final.

Tara will now compete in the national final, with her entry judged by a panel of industry experts, which will take place at Solihull College and University Centre, on 24 March. [**Read more here**](#)



National profile for Futures tutor!

We were delighted to see Futures tutor Matthew Mason featured in the Teacher Spotlight section of the latest electronic newsletter distributed by CENTURY, a provider of assessments and teaching tools for English and maths.

As well as Matthew's reflection on the valuable lessons he learnt through his years of teaching and how he has used CENTURY in the classroom, the piece also contained an extremely positive comment from a colleague:

"Matthew is an amazing and inspirational teacher who helps students flourish inside and outside of the classroom. He has also taken the lead on digital technology, expanding the curriculum to new realms which is being well received by students."

"Matthew is not only an advocate for our students, he is an ambassador of best practice and is always sharing innovative ways of how we can improve teaching and learning within the college."

"Matthew is supportive, kind and passionate. He embodies what it means to be an outstanding teacher and really deserves nomination for this award."



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National Apprenticeship Week

National Apprenticeship Week ran February 7-13 and throughout the period we showcased the range of apprenticeships we offer, the experiences and views of some of our current apprentices and the career success of a former hairdressing apprentice who opened his own salon aged just 21.

What's more, we heard what some of our employers think about apprenticeship training and our head of employment engagement hosted a session on YouTube answering the web's most searched questions about apprenticeships – **[watch it here](#)**

We've highlighted some of our apprentices below, but you can **[read comments from others here](#)**

Sophie Jones – business administration apprentice

"I'm doing a job I love, learning the skills I need for my future career and earning a wage at the same time," said 19-year-old Sophie Jones, an apprentice at Wolverhampton estate agent Berriman Eaton.

Sophie, who combines working for the company with studying for a Level 3 diploma in business administration at college, added: *"I chose an apprenticeship as it's a good way to get on-the-job training and learn alongside colleagues who have many years' experience working in the industry".*

[Read more from Sophie here](#)



Manvir Singh – construction apprentice

"I chose an apprenticeship as I'll gain workplace experience alongside learning and have better knowledge on how to apply theory to practical situations," said 19-year-old Manvir who started a three-year Level 4 design co-ordinator apprenticeship with housing association Bromford in October 2021.

"It is allowing me to gain new skills by doing a full-time role within a team and to balance working with my college assignments." **[Read more of what Manvir had to say about his apprenticeship here](#)**



Sam Wilson – engineering apprentice

Apprenticeships aren't just for school leavers – they can also be used by employers to train new staff or upskill existing members of the team.

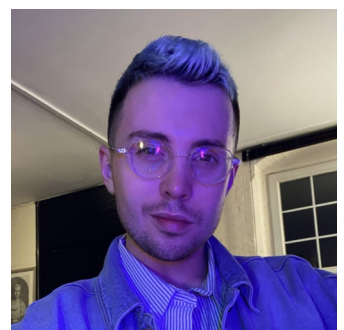
With an interest in engineering, Sam Wilson started as a trainee welder at Syspal Ltd, a manufacturer of stainless steel and aluminium products, in Broseley and was offered an apprenticeship by the company to develop his skills further. **[Read what Sam has to say about the benefits of apprenticeship training here](#)**



Patrick Butler – former hairdressing apprentice

"A few years after completing my hairdressing apprenticeship, I opened my own salon at the age of 21," said Patrick Butler, whose salon – Patrick James, in Stourbridge – celebrates its eight-year anniversary this year.

Patrick, now 29, added: *"I chose an apprenticeship as, for me, it was key to have that hands-on salon experience."* **[Read more about what Patrick has to say here](#)**



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Apprentice employer comments

We also asked employers who use us for their apprenticeship training – including Tata Steel, Budweiser, Syspal, WRR Pedley and Compton Care – for their views on the benefits of apprenticeships.

Tata Steel said: “An apprenticeship provides the individual with a formal qualification while they learn the fundamentals of business administration / customer service.

“It’s a great way to bring new people into the business and get a understanding of the key skills they have, or can gain, to decide where they will best fit in the company when they complete their apprenticeship.”

See comments from the other employers [here](#)

Curriculum Updates

In the **hair and beauty** department, the commercial **New Era hair and beauty** salons at the Paget Road campus have opened to the public, with a range of styling and pampering treatments available at competitive prices. Appointments can be booked by calling the salon on **01902 821340**.

A customer who made an appointment at the salon to have her long hair cut in aid of The Little Princess Trust, praised the staff and the student who did the cut, saying: “The staff could not have done more – they were very helpful, professional and attentive and made me feel very comfortable. The young lady who cut my hair was very professional and did a great job taking her time. When I went to pay, they said the haircut was free as I was doing it for charity.... I couldn’t thank them enough and would like to wish everyone at the salon great success in what they are doing.”



Students studying for **health and social care** qualifications got a taste of working in a hospital during a visit to Staffordshire University. A group of 39 students took part in a range of simulated activities – included performing CPR, intubation and assisting in a delivery suite – designed to give them insight into a range of careers including midwifery, nursing and operating department assistant.



Staff from the **SLDD team** (providing support for students with learning difficulties and disabilities) benefitted from a CPD day with Norwich College, an Education and Training Foundation Centre of Excellence. The team took part in a session entitled ‘High needs curriculum and support; working in partnership to promote student independence’ and representatives from the centre will be returning in July to host a follow-up session.



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Free, short '**Get into Work**' courses, organised by the **adults, community and employability** team, have been helping local people develop the skills they need to work in a range of sectors. All courses include pre-employment training and a guaranteed interview with an industry employer, or help with an employer's recruitment process, at the end of the training.



Pictured are participants in a recent Kickstart business administration course, delivered at the Paget Road campus, which covered behaviours in the workplace, digital skills, workplace skills, health and safety, and application and interview techniques – and, of the 13 candidates, nine secured jobs with local employers.

Other recent courses run by the team include a new Step into Adult Care sector-based work academy programme (SWAP), a Get into Employment course for our Futures students who have special educational needs and disabilities, and five GAP and LASER programmes for young people aged 16-19 which focus on developing personal and employability skills.

And coming up in the next few weeks are a new GAP programme for ESOL students aged 16-18, and a new course for young people which will focus on health and wellbeing, and employability skills, be delivered with support from City of Wolverhampton Council's skills and impact teams at The Way Youth Zone.

Student Stories

It's great to hear from current students about how they're getting on with their course, as well as getting updates from former students about where their qualifications have led them after leaving college.

We've included just a few below, but there's lots more to read on our Student Stories page – **[take a look here](#)**

Current students

Gurpret Singh – A Levels

After moving to the UK from Italy, Gurpret Singh came to college to do an **Access to A Levels** course to give him the grades he needed to progress to **A Levels** as the first step to his future career in dentistry.

Gurpret, aged 20, said: *"After doing the Access to A Levels course I decided to carry on studying at the college as I liked the environment and teaching methods. I'm now doing A Levels in biology, chemistry and maths and have applied through UCAS to study dentistry at university."*

[Read more from Gurpret here](#)



Naomi Hardwick – art & design

"It's really inspiring to have tutors who have worked in the arts world themselves as they've got a realistic view of working in the sector," said 18-year-old Naomi Hardwick who enrolled for the two-year **Level 3 extended diploma in art and design** after leaving school after the first year of A Levels.

Naomi added: *"Because I was academic at school, A levels were pushed on to me and no-one ever told me that there were other options that would be more suitable for me and what I want to do in the future."* **[Find out more about what Naomi thinks about studying at college here](#)**



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Jeevan Singh – engineering

"I want to go to university to do an engineering degree and chose this course to give me an overview of the different areas of engineering so that I can decide where I want to specialise in the future," said Jeevan Singh, who is studying for the **Level 2 extended certificate in engineering**.

"I'd highly recommend the college to others as the tutors are really caring and want you to succeed and, because they've worked in the industry themselves, they can talk about their experiences and give advice on the best way to do certain tasks."

[Read more from Jeevan here](#)



Jessica Dodd – hairdressing

"I've always loved hairdressing and I thought that if I did it as a career I'd always enjoy my job!" said 18-year-old Jessica Dodd, who started on the **Level 1 diploma**, progressed to **Level 2** and is now studying for the **Level 3 diploma**.

"The qualification is going to give me lots of opportunities and I'm going to take whatever chances I'm given and push myself to be a better stylist. I hope to own my own salon one day and my dream is to develop my own product range – I'm excited about the future and what it will bring!"

[Read more from Jessica here](#)



Michele Murderere – hospitality & catering

During the coronavirus lockdown, Michelle Murderere started cooking and selling traditional African and Caribbean food from her home and decided that she wanted to learn how to cook traditional English dishes so that she can open her own restaurant in the future.

Michelle, who is studying for the **Level 2 diploma in professional cookery**, said: *"I'd love to open a restaurant serving all different types of food so that groups of friends or family can sit and enjoy eating together, whatever their taste in food."*

[Read more about what Michele thinks about studying at college here](#)



Dominic Rollason-Hough – IT

17-year-old Dominic Rollason-Hough is in the process of setting up his own e-commerce business with the skills he's learning on the **Level 3 extended diploma in IT**.

Dominic said: *"Doing this course is giving me the opportunity to get an education and gain a qualification at the same time as developing my business, and what I'm learning is really helping me to do that."*

"Since coming to college I've developed a much broader range of skills than I had before and have become more confident too – it was the right decision to come here and I'd recommend it." **[Read more from Dominic here](#)**



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Shanieka Swazie – music technology

"I've enjoyed getting up for college as I'm doing something I enjoy," said 17-year-old Shanieka Swazie who is studying for the **Level 2 extended diploma in music technology**.

Shanieka added: *"I want to become a sound engineer and I knew school couldn't cater for what I wanted, so college and this course was the best option for me."*

"My confidence wasn't the strongest at school but my tutors and peers have helped me develop since starting the course and you get more freedom, independence and flexibility than at school." **[Read more from Shanieka here](#)**



Josh Molloy – performing arts

"I started performing when I was 14 and instantly knew that it was what I wanted to do," said 17-year-old Josh Molloy who is studying for the **Level 3 diploma in performing arts**.

Josh added: *"I feel that I fit more into the format of college life than sixth form and, combined with the course I wanted to do, it definitely felt right to come here!"*

"On a personal level I've developed skills in teamwork and leadership and my confidence has increased as I'm surrounded by people who are as interested and invested in the course and performing as I am which makes it all the more enjoyable."

[Read more about what Josh thinks about being a student at college here](#)



Peter Wilkins – SWAPs

When 46-year-old Peter Wilkins lost his job as an electrician with a maintenance company due to the impact of the coronavirus pandemic, he decided to re-train and signed up for the free **British Gypsum plastering and skimming course sector-based work academy programme**, part of the college's sector-based work academy programme (SWAP).

Peter said: *"It's great that the course is free and accredited by British Gypsum – it's a great opportunity and with a guaranteed interview at the end of the course I'd love to be able to get a job out of it."*

"I would recommend this course 100% and to anyone in a similar situation to me I'd say it's never too late to learn – it doesn't have anything to do with your age and there's nothing you can't do."

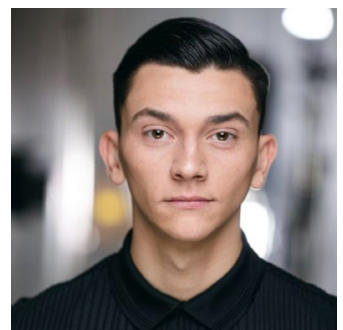
[Find out more from Peter here](#)

Matthew Pringle – uniformed public services

Matthew, aged 22, said: *"Working in public services is always something that I've been interested in and I applied to join West Midlands Police but didn't realise that I needed a Level 3 qualification, so I was turned down."*

"However, I found out that volunteer special constables don't need any qualifications, so I applied for a role and after doing my training it gave me the impetus to come to college to gain the qualification I need to join the regular force."

Matthew, who enrolled for the **Uniformed Protective Services Level 3 foundation diploma**, added: *"I had doubts at first as I wasn't very academic at school and prefer to do practical things, but the tutors put my mind at ease and suggested taking on a leadership role within the group which would help me – and it really has!"* **[Read more from Matthew here](#)**



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Former students

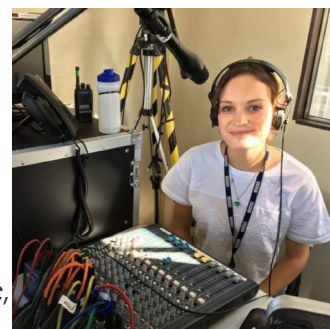
Francesca Price – NCTJ

Whilst working at BBC Radio Shropshire, 25-year-old Francesca Price was advised by her News Editor to sign up for the **Journalism NCTJ Level 3 Diploma** to enable her to progress in her career in local radio.

Francesca said: *"The course covers shorthand, media law, court reporting and video journalism and helped me to get my current job as a producer/journalist at BBC Radio Shropshire – I love every minute of it."*

"If you are thinking about doing this course, go for it! The support is fantastic, the resources are excellent, and it will really help you if you want a career in journalism."

[Read more from Francesca here](#)



Jaswinder Dhadra

43-year-old Jaswinder Dhadra enrolled for the **Foundation Degree in Health and Social Care** to progress in her career and, as well as getting a new job, is now completing a 'top-up' course at the University of Wolverhampton which will lead to a full BA (Hons) in Social Care and Social Policy.

Jaswinder said: *"The course is excellent for people who want to go into social services or social care – it was great fun doing the course and the tutors were helpful and supportive throughout."*

[Read more here](#)

Dan Shelley

For 22-year-old Dan Shelley, the skills he learnt as a music student at the college have led to a job as a music education ambassador for Wolverhampton Music School, where he'll be advising on how to develop what it offers to better engage with young people in the city.

Dan, who completed the **Level 2 diploma in music technology** before progressing to the **Level 3 UAL diploma**, said: *"What I learned has helped me to open doors in the industry and build links with like-minded people. The friendships I made at college – with students and tutors alike – are some that I cherish the most and have been extremely valuable to where I am today."*

"To anyone thinking about applying for this course I'd say do it! Whether you're a budding musician, studio engineer or live sound engineer, this is a great opportunity for you – and, from my experience, having a UAL qualification will turn a few heads!"

[Read more here](#)



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