Costing the sixth form curriculum
March 2015
Executive Summary

This report attempts to provide the evidence for the true cost of providing a worthwhile sixth form curriculum. The evidence necessarily comes from a variety of sources: SFCA surveys and curriculum expertise, London Economics – an independent research organisation with expertise in financial and data analysis, and the UCL Institute of Education (IOE), providing leading academics in educational research, Professors Ann Hodgson and Ken Spours. The evidence supports the following contentions.

- There is a broad consensus over the form and content of the 16–19 curriculum which can be translated into contact hours per week for students.
- The consensus is that 16–19 study programmes should have the characteristics of a Baccalaureate approach which values not just qualifications but also tutorial and support activities and a co-curriculum including work experience to develop the ‘soft’ skills essential to higher study and employability.
- International comparisons support this contention and show how leading economies invest much more time and resource into direct teaching and support than can be found in England.
- The overall evidence from the international data is that around 25+ hours of direct teaching and support is common in high performing systems. SFCA is recommending that between 22–25 hours are needed to deliver a worthwhile curriculum in the current context.
- Sixth Form Colleges, for financial reasons, operated on 18 hours of direct teaching and support in 2012–13 and are planning to reduce this to 15 hours by 2016–17. This is between 7–10 hours less than required and is not a choice – it is a consequence of the current 16–19 funding settlement.
- Survey evidence shows that Sixth Form Colleges have, for financial reasons, reduced the teaching workforce by 13 per cent between 2010 and 2012 while seeing an increase in students of 1.5 per cent.
- A detailed analysis of College finances and 16–19 funding allocations reveals that the variables which have the greatest impact on the costs of delivery are class size, teacher salaries and teacher contact time.
- Since 2010, teacher contact time has increased in Sixth Form Colleges, teacher salaries have remained static and class size has increased.
- In 2012/13, the actual cost of delivering a worthwhile curriculum would have cost £674 more per student than the average Sixth Form College actually received. It is worth noting that in the Sixth Form Colleges sector the efficiency of non-pay costs is already very high and the average class size is 16.5.
- By 2016–17 Sixth Form Colleges will require funding to support an additional 7–10 hours of direct teacher/tutor support if they are to deliver a worthwhile curriculum. By 2016–17 we estimate that figure will require at least £1,000 per student more than the current planned settlement.
- Sixth Form Colleges average 1,700 students and are efficient because the economies of scale have pushed average class size to 16+, an average well above what can be achieved in schools and academies where the average sixth form size is around 250 students and classes are necessarily quite small. This drives the cost of delivery for schools and Academies significantly higher and they will require a figure well in excess of an additional £1,000 per student to properly fund the sixth form curriculum.
- The four case study colleges, chosen for their financial vulnerability, provide direct and compelling evidence of what would be lost to their communities if present funding levels and planned further reductions continue.

Two fundamental recommendations

If young people in England in state maintained education are not to be disadvantaged and able to compete for jobs and opportunities in an increasingly global arena:

- A fundamental review of the funding allocation formula for all phases of compulsory education (5–18) is urgently required.
- Funding policy and allocations must be rooted in evidence of the requirements of a worthwhile curriculum at all phases matched to the realistic costs of delivering that curriculum.

David Igoe
Chief Executive
Introduction

Sixth Form Colleges have, for some time, been perplexed. Despite being highly efficient and outstanding providers of high quality level 3 academic/vocational education, outperforming all other non-selective publicly funded institutions, they have suffered the most from the recent spate of funding reductions and curriculum reform.

College Governors, Principals and leaders have serious concerns that, despite their very best efforts, they will struggle to continue to provide the rounded 'worthwhile' education that will allow their students to compete successfully and on equal terms with students from independent and better resourced institutions.

This report articulates these concerns and makes the connection between the kind of curriculum that most agree should be the basis of a worthwhile study programme at 16–19 and the cost of delivering that curriculum. If there is no change, the current funding settlement for 16–19 will drive all institutions providing sixth form education to either raid or cross subsidise from other funding streams, or, like Sixth Form Colleges, who have no other sources of income, they will have no choice but to continue to remove uneconomic although vital subjects, increase class size further, scale back or remove enrichment and offer students little beyond basic tuition in key qualifications.

This report provides the evidence that a significant change to match the cost of delivering the curriculum to the funding will allow Sixth Form Colleges and others to continue to give young people the very best opportunity to progress, realise their ambitions and become productive and active citizens of the 21st Century.

A short history of Sixth Form College funding

- First Sixth Form College (Luton) established
- 120+ SFCs established by 1990
- 30 SFCs lost to merger or dissolution nearly all for financial reasons
- Incorporation
- Curriculum 2000
- Performance Standards Payments (PSP)
- Study programmes introduced
- GCSE and A level reform
- New Funding methodology
- transitional protection ends
- formula protection ends

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Funding per student</th>
<th>AWPU Age Weighted Pupil Unit</th>
<th>Convergence</th>
<th>Success for All</th>
<th>Wolf reforms</th>
<th>?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Local Authorities</td>
<td>FEFC</td>
<td>Learning &amp; Skills Council</td>
<td>YPLA</td>
<td>Education Funding Agency</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Under Schools’ regulations

Before Incorporation in 1993, Sixth Form Colleges were legally and unambiguously part of the maintained secondary schools system in England. Education in England was funded through a block grant to Local Authorities who redistributed these funds to schools and Sixth Form Colleges through an ‘aged weighted’ formula. The resulting AWPU (age weighted pupil unit) on which secondary school funding was based had been calculated on the rational basis that the cost of educating young people generally increased as they moved through the school from Year 7 to Year 13.

The reasons put forward for the increases with age were various but broadly focussed on the structure of the curriculum appropriate for each phase. At age 11 and 12 (Years 7 and 8), pupils were taught in fixed groups with a common timetable. At age 13 (Year 9), options were generally introduced and this required some flexibility to give choice. This need increased as pupils moved into years 10 and 11 and had to make GCSE choices. It was also recognized that there would be resourcing and infrastructure costs for pupils needing a more vocational and practical curriculum from age 14.

The prevailing sixth form curriculum offer in the late 1980’s was almost exclusively academic and involved three A levels or equivalent from science or humanities areas, an active tutorial programme and other enrichment studies including general studies, sport, music, visits and trips. Class sizes rarely went above 10. This effectively required an AWPU double the size of that required for an 11 year old.

This kind of analysis led most Local Authorities to weight pupils according to age/phase and fund accordingly. In simple terms a Sixth Form College of 500 students received the same funding as an 11–16 school of 1,000 pupils and employed a similar number of teachers.

After Incorporation, the funding of Sixth Form Colleges moved sharply away from an age-weighted system to an activity-based system developed by the FEFC and refined later by its successor body the LSC.

Incorporation 1993

After Incorporation, the funding of Sixth Form Colleges moved sharply away from an age-weighted system to an activity-based system developed by the FEFC (Further Education Funding Council) and refined later by its successor body the LSC (Learning and Skills Council). In essence, the bigger the programme a student followed, the more funding they attracted.

This coincided with an efficiency drive through the 1990’s, which saw around a 25 per cent reduction in baseline unit of funding for Sixth Form Colleges through a process of ‘convergence’ with the rest of the FE sector. Sixth Form Colleges coped with this by increasing programme sizes (often referred to disparagingly as ‘tariff farming’) and by increasing class size (from 10 to 19).

Funding eased a little for FE after the 1997 election with the recognition that efficiency may have gone too far. Sixth Form Colleges were funded in 2001, to introduce a performance payment scheme (PSP) for teaching staff, to mirror the threshold process in maintained schools and generally baseline funding increased above the inflation levels over the next five years, with a rationalisation of funding streams through the ‘Success for All’ initiative and the introduction of Curriculum 2000. However, Sixth Form Colleges gained the least through this process (a pattern set to continue over the next decade).
The Problem

What had been lost, through all these changes, was much consideration of the actual cost of delivery and how that related to an appropriate curriculum for the 16–19 phase. Colleges, for financial reasons, were forced to adopt, in recent times, strategies that maximized the funding which were not always, as Alison Wolf observed, in the students’ best interest or driven by good educational principles.

Equally Government policy on post-16 funding seemed to be driven, not by a serious appreciation of the costs of a worthwhile curriculum, but by what they could afford from a dwindling Treasury settlement.

In 2011, a new funding methodology was announced and introduced in 2013–14. Effectively it signalled a return to a per capita funding model where it was hoped that students would be spared the ‘churn’ of pursuing qualifications that did not help them make progress and that colleges could plan sensible ‘study programmes’ adapted to individual needs. This was a laudable objective but would only work if the funding rate was sufficient to allow colleges to deliver those worthwhile programmes that helped students make progress, increased their employability skills and inspired them to achieve their potential.

It is our contention, and this report will seek to show, that the funding that will be available from 2016/17, after the transitional and programme protection safety nets have been removed, will seriously challenge every college’s ability to run appropriate and effective programmes for sixth form students. It is our contention, and this report will seek to show, that the funding that will be available from 2016/17, after the transitional and programme protection safety nets have been removed, will seriously challenge every college’s ability to run appropriate and effective programmes for sixth form students.
This report presents evidence from four discrete sources

**Curriculum analysis**

The curriculum analysis describes the structure and content of a typical sixth form curriculum both from surveys of actual student programmes and timetables and also from current policies on 16–19 found in educational research, current coalition government plans and those of the main opposition parties. We show that there is a broad consensus concerning the shape and structure of this key phase with only small differences of emphasis. The direction of travel is towards a ‘baccalaureate’ approach for both academic and technical/vocational pathways.

**International comparisons**

International comparisons looks at six national education systems chosen because of their prominence in OECD and Pisa rankings much quoted by Ministers as evidence of the UK’s poor showing in rankings of educational attainment and ability to deliver a workforce with appropriate skills for the 21st Century. The analysis focuses on the amount of time invested in 16–18 education as a proxy for the match between public investment in upper secondary schooling and successful outcomes.

**Financial analysis**

The financial analysis looks at the size and costs of the Sixth Form College curriculum over three critical years: 2010–11, 2012–13 and 2016–17. 2010–11 was the last year before the major changes to the funding methodology and study programmes were implemented. This year gives a valuable insight into the shape and costs of Curriculum 2000, the curriculum model which had dominated the previous decade. 2012–13 is the last fully audited financial year available and gives a first indication of the impact of the changes to programmes, workforce numbers and financial health. 2016–17 is a projection, based on colleges’ best assessment of how the funding and curriculum changes will develop at the point when their full impact will be felt and there will be no transitional relief or protection.

**Case studies**

The case studies present four colleges, with potentially perilous finances, all serving their communities and providing highly efficient and high quality programmes for young people. These case studies describe the impact they have locally and what would be lost if they had no choice but to merge or cease to operate through lack of sufficient resources.
Contents

Part 1: Towards a worthwhile sixth form curriculum


Part 3: The size and costs of the sixth form curriculum

Part 4: Four Sixth Form College case studies
Part 1: Towards a worthwhile sixth form curriculum

Report by: David Igoe
Background

In 2011 Alison Wolf published her review of vocational education\(^1\), which recommended, amongst many other things, a change to the basis of all and not just vocational 16-18 funding from a qualification driven to a per-capita driven formula. These recommendations were accepted and the current administration is on track to bring all funding allocations into line with this policy. Sixth Form Colleges (SFCs) have been the financial losers from this process and this has been further exacerbated by the recommendations on study programmes which limits the size to a notional 540 - 600 guided learning hour envelope.

For SFCs this meant planning for a significant reduction in funding (on average 17% in cash terms and 25% in real terms) and a reshaping of the curriculum offer to manage this reduction. All things being equal this has meant planning to reduce the typical SFC offer to a maximum of three A levels or BTEC equivalence over two years, reducing tutorial and enrichment support to the funded 30 hours per year and hoping this has limited impact on both recruitment and progression of students into HE or employment. Few believe this will be less than extremely challenging for most SFCs who will no longer be able to compete with either schools, which can cross subsidise from their more generous 11-16 funding stream or the Independent sector who will continue to offer comprehensive and enriched programmes such as the International Baccalaureate (IB).

Of course, SFCs do not have to make any such changes to their curriculum offer. Government and funding agencies have made it clear that decisions about the curriculum offer are entirely a matter for the professional judgement of College leaders! The moot point is that the reforms are essentially about what Government/Funding Agencies are prepared to pay for. Colleges are free to offer what programmes they want, but their funding will be limited to a per capita funding rate currently fixed at £4,000, a 15 per cent reduction in cash terms from 2010 levels.

This implies that Government either believes that there are considerable efficiency savings still possible or that the programmes, which have developed over the last 10-15 years in response to *Curriculum 2000* and previous funding methodologies, are intrinsically flawed. It is hard to see where new efficiencies could come from. National Audit Office (NAO) and Public Accounts Committee (PAC) reports consistently point to highly efficient delivery in SFCs and the recent report commissioned by SFCA from London Economics, broadly accepted by the Government, indicates that SFCs are both the most efficient and the most effective in accountability measures of all comparable publically funded institutions. It is difficult, therefore, to escape the conclusion that Government believes that the shape of the prevailing sixth form curriculum needs radically altering. That is, of course, one thrust of the Wolf Report which pointed to the remorseless ‘churn’ and ‘race to the bottom’ to benefit from a funding regime which rewarded qualification success however meagre and inappropriate, to the real progression of learners. Admittedly that charge was largely laid at the door of schools and general Further Education Colleges (GFEs), but there was also financial reward for Colleges in promoting bigger and bigger programmes and the charge of ‘tariff-farming’ has long been laid at

---
\(^1\) Review of Vocational Education. By Alison Wolf. DfE, March 2011.
the door of some of our SFCs which had, historically, high average SLNs per student. This issue has not been helped by the possibly misconstrued yet still widely held view that top Universities, such as those from the Russell Group, do not expect students to have more than three A levels and set entry requirements around just three high grades. The accumulated effect of this seems to have led to the present belief within the administration that £4,000 is sufficient to fund the 16-18 phase.

What is missing in all this discussion, in our view, is a considered view of what an appropriate sixth form curriculum really looks like and what it realistically costs to deliver.

**Curriculum models**

Alison Wolf was right to point out the unintended consequences of a funding model which encouraged placing students on programmes solely in the pursuit of funding and league table positioning with scant regard to their progression needs. However, this is not a criticism which leads inexorably to the conclusion that large programmes or current curriculum models are inappropriate. It entirely depends on progression needs which, we would argue, often do require substantial and challenging programmes.

**Aiming high**

Current curriculum models in SFCs have been developed over many years and have been arrived at in response to what students need to progress more than the current debate generally gives credit for. For instance there is a wealth of experience in Sixth Form Colleges in designing programmes that prepare able students for top Universities and in this we compete very favourably with the best of the Independent sector. Over time SFCs have identified the following elements which make up effective programmes for students with high ability who should be applying to top Universities.

- At least four AS levels leading to 3/4/5 full A levels (IB as an alternative)
- Extended Project Qualification (EPQ) and/or Critical Thinking.
- Relevant and appropriate work experience (essential for many careers such as medicine, veterinary, engineering).
- Opportunities for personal growth through sport, drama, music, clubs, societies, trips and visits
- Personal tutoring for target setting, progress monitoring, Career and UCAS application advice, counselling and personal support as necessary.

**Closing the gap**

Curriculum leaders in our Colleges would argue that the needs of students of average and modest ability aiming at Higher Education are not significantly different to the above. However the balance of the elements may be different. These students often require significant personal support and coaching to make the progress they are capable of. Furthermore, SFCs have a proud record in ‘closing the gap’ and lead the way in enabling students from disadvantaged backgrounds to
progress to both ‘selecting’ and more modest ‘recruiting’ universities. A typical programme for these groups would look like this:

- Three or four AS levels leading to three full A levels or BTEC equivalent
- Individual/group additional support as necessary
- EPQ or other relevant qualification appropriate to career path (e.g. sports coaching)
- Relevant work experience
- Opportunities for personal growth through sport, drama, music, clubs, societies, trips and visits
- Personal tutoring for target setting, progress monitoring, Career and UCAS application advice, counselling and personal support as necessary.

Education for all

Sixth Form Colleges major in dealing with students aiming at University and have progression rates typically around 80 per cent of the cohort. However there is a detectable shift in aspiration with many students now considering direct entry to employment or to apprenticeships including advanced apprenticeships. There is also a growing interest in SFCs in developing Level 2 and level 3 vocational pathways to respond to Raising of the Participation Age (RPA). Where these programmes already exist they are again not significantly different to the structures described above. It is the balance of the elements that may change to meet the specific needs of these students.

SFBac

Some Sixth Form Colleges see the elements of the sixth form curriculum, as described above, best expressed as a commitment to holistic education and have formalised this by adopting the Sixth Form Baccalaureate (SFBac). This is a ‘wrap-around’ award, promoted by the Sixth Form Colleges Forum (SFCF) and Trident (formerly OCN) which promotes and guarantees the elements of subjects, skills, values and breadth within sixth form programmes. It was developed in response to the perceived need to create an endorsement of the approach to the sixth form curriculum present in most, if not all, SFCs. This could still form the basis of an effective quality assurance (QA) framework for any existing or emerging curriculum model.

Other Baccs

The broad frameworks, described above, are entirely consistent with the, now shelved, coalition proposals for the Advanced Baccalaureate (ABacc) and the Labour party’s proposals for a National Baccalaureate. Sixth Form Colleges already deliver programmes with most, if not all of the elements proposed in both the ABacc and the Labour Party’s idea of a National Baccalaureate. We may have had some small issues, in the case of the ABacc with the balance of facilitating subjects but there is much synergy here to be exploited and developed. The Labour party proposals already acknowledge a high degree of coherence with the SFBac.
Educational research

The most recent significant work in this area was a collaborative report commissioned through the Nuffield Foundation. The Nuffield Review\(^2\) undertook a major review of 14-19 education in England and Wales and concluded that an holistic approach to the curriculum which recognised that education at this phase needed to be much more than qualifications was the way forward. This is consistent with and supports the approaches described above which advocate moving to a Baccalaureate system for upper secondary education.

Overview

There is a broad consensus about the 16-19 Curriculum. In addition, there already exists, in SFCs, a sixth form curriculum model which is fit for purpose and delivers what present and future Governments are likely to expect from a reformed sixth-form experience. Essentially there are five principle elements which should be present in all programmes- Qualifications, skills, tutorial, enrichment and work experience.

Balance of curriculum elements

The chart\(^3\) shows how the balance of the elements may change in response to individual needs and progression routes but the overall size of the programme isn’t significantly different. This balance may affect the size and cost of delivery but we would argue that the difference in cost may not be as significant as might be thought. Able students may need to be stretched with full and demanding programmes such

---


\(^3\) Based on SFCA curriculum modelling workshops 2012 – Is there a case for differential funding?
as the IB, which requires considerable teaching input, but students of more modest ability often require significant individual support to build their confidence and bring out their potential. Providing these support systems also carries significant cost.

Curriculum and pastoral leaders in SFCs are convinced that the key to success for 16-18 students across the ability range is to have full and ‘busy’ programmes. This is not an argument for more teaching but it does require planning, organising and supervision for any activity to be effective.

The key here is the amount of time students spend being actively taught or properly supervised. Colleges construct timetables for students around a notional 30-hour week and we would contend that a ‘worthwhile’ programme, incorporating the elements described variously above, would need active tutor/teacher engagement of at least 22 -25 hours to be effective. This is also the conclusion that UCL IOE comes to after its review of international comparisons (see part 4). Significantly, the London Economics research (part 3) shows that colleges were delivering in 2012-13 just 18 hours a week of active support and that was set to decline further by 2016.

Report by: UCL Institute of Education
Introduction

The amount of tuition offered by sixth form colleges (SFCs) in England is being constrained by recent funding decisions made by the Government. From 2016, SFCs are to be offered a base-line amount of £4000 per student following the final phasing out of transitional protection, although there will be small additional amounts according to the size of student programmes and particular needs. From 2016, the same amount will be offered to 11-18 schools, but they will retain the opportunity to cross-subsidise from earlier years to support their sixth form provision. SFCs have traditionally tried to offer a curriculum that is broader than a three A Level diet, but this is proving to be very challenging in the current economic and political climate, particularly for smaller sixth form colleges that find it difficult to achieve economies of scale.

As part of a review of the issue of funding the post-16 curriculum, the Sixth Form College Association (SFCA) asked the UCL Institute of Education (IOE) to undertake a brief review of how the current situation in England, in terms of hours of tuition per week, compares with upper secondary education in other relatively high performing education systems.

In this paper, therefore, we compare the current situation in English upper secondary education (16-19 education in the case of sixth form colleges) with that of countries representing three global models of education (Sahlberg, 2007) – Pacific (Shanghai, China; Singapore), Nordic (Alberta, Canada; Sweden) and Anglo Saxon (New South Wales, Australia; England) in order to draw out the key dimensions of support for learning in this important transitional phase of education.

In terms of the paper’s methodology, the data presented have been derived from academic literature, policy documents and on-line sources, but also an interview with Swedish civil servants. The differing nature of educational systems and the methods of data collection and reporting means that the primary data used for this paper exist in several different forms (e.g. annual entitlements for tuition; the number of lessons per week; the amount of credit required for a graduation diploma/certificate and, in some cases, the amount of time allocated per lesson or unit). Deriving the number of hours of tuition per week across different education systems and different data sets, therefore, has required the triangulation of these various pieces of evidence, together with a very broad assumption that there are 38 weeks in an academic year.

Five countries and states compared

Shanghai and the requirements of the 2010 curriculum plan

According to the 2010 Plan, the curriculum in Shanghai has three components: a basic compulsory curriculum; an enriched, mainly elective, curriculum; and an inquiry-based, outside school hours, curriculum. As part of the last element, students conduct research, the aims of which are to help them ‘learn to learn’, think critically and creatively, do community service and promote social welfare. Shanghai’s plan for educational reform and development for 2020 calls for an
increase in school-based curricula as well as a credit system at the senior secondary level to make learning more individualized and flexible (OECD, 2010).

The upper secondary curriculum encompasses Grades 10 to 12 and there are 35 lessons per week for each of these three years. The curriculum in Grade 12, which is the most specialized, is based on eight ‘Fundamental Subjects’ (Chinese, Mathematics, English, Science, Thoughts and politics, Society, Arts and PE) that occupy 19 lessons per week. In addition, there are ‘Extended Subjects and Activities’ that allow for greater specialization or new or collective forms of learning. These occupy 14 lessons each week. Finally, there are research-based subjects that take two hours per week. Overall, there is a total of 35 lessons per week to which is added one extra hour per day for meetings and physical exercise.

Lower and upper secondary education offer broadly the same number of lessons (34 and 35) per week, but the upper secondary curriculum contains fewer fundamental subjects and more extended subjects. Schools must guarantee that extended subjects and research-based subjects will be taught, with fundamental subjects not exceeding a total of 27 lessons per week. Furthermore, in Shanghai there is a tradition of a long school day of up to 9 hours before the allocation of homework. The working assumption, therefore, is that students receive at least 30+ hours per week of tuition and possibly more.

**Singapore – 16-18+ post-secondary in junior colleges**

The upper secondary curriculum in Singapore is based on core examination subjects; elective examination subjects and compulsory non-examination subjects:

- Core examination subjects – General Paper and Chinese/Malay/Tamil (8 hours per week).
- Elective subjects – students choose 3-4 subjects at one of three levels from a broad offer not unlike the number of subjects offered in a large school sixth form or sixth form college (4-6 hours per subject per week).
- Compulsory non-examination subjects – Assembly, physical education and character development programme (4 hours per week) (Isaacs et al., 2015)

The Singapore upper secondary education curriculum looks quite specialised compared with Shanghai, but the combined effects of its core, elective and compulsory non-examined subjects and programmes raises the number of hours overall to between 27 hours per week for those taking three elective subjects and 32 hours for those taking four. The duration of study is either two or three years.

**Alberta, Canada and the requirements of the Alberta High School Graduation Diploma**

The Alberta education system has gained an international reputation for its choice-based, yet highly professionalized and public approach to education. Educationalists and politicians from different positions on the political spectrum have used Alberta as a reference point for international comparison.
The High School Graduation Diploma (here the example of the English Diploma) is based on 100 credits taken from a wide range of compulsory subjects - English Language Arts, Social Studies, Mathematics, Science, Physical Education and Career and Life Management. A further 10 credits can be attained by studying a combination of additional courses including a second language and fine arts and 10 more credits from an additional set of practical options, including an apprenticeship programme and special projects (Alberta Education, 2014).

Most senior high school courses are offered for 3, 4, or 5 credits, but some courses may be offered for 10 credits. Each student must have access to at least 25 hours of instruction per high school credit. Overall, junior high school students must have access to a minimum of 950 hours of instruction per year per grade and senior high school students, a minimum of 1,000 hours of instruction per year. These are spread across 190+ instructional days, which is about 5-5.5 hours per day (Statistics Canada, 2015), totaling about 26 hours per week.

Sweden and the requirements of three-year National Programmes

In Sweden upper secondary education is structured primarily through three-year National Programmes. Students in the vocational programmes are entitled to up to 2430 hours over three years and those opting for the academic higher education preparation programmes, 2180 hours1. The entitlement to these programmes continues to 20 years of age.

Each national upper secondary education programme covers nine foundation subjects – English, history, physical education and health, mathematics, science studies, social studies, Swedish or Swedish as a second language and religion. In addition, a number of subjects specific to a given programme are chosen. There is also a Diploma project and workplace-based learning in vocational programmes.

This very broad core structure applies to both vocational and HE preparation courses. Vocational students have to study 30 per cent general education using the same early modules as in HE preparation, but taken at a slower pace. HE preparation students have more modules in the area of general education, while vocational courses have an extra 300 hours over three years because of the need to study general education and vocational specialisms.

Assuming 38 instructional weeks per year, students in the general programmes receive about 19 hours of tuition a week and those in VET programmes 21 hours, broadly the same as England. The crucial point to note, however, that this entitlement is for three years and not two.

New South Wales and the requirements of the Higher School Certificate

1 These data were derived from an interview with civil servants from the Swedish Ministry of Education and Research, 13 January 2015.
In New South Wales, Australian students in Years 11 and 12 aim for a Higher School Certificate (HSC). The only compulsory subject is English. Courses are expressed in units; most of them are two units. To be eligible for the award of the HSC a student must have satisfied the requirements in at least 12 preliminary level units, and at least 10 HSC level units, with the additional requirements that:

- at least 2 must be English units
- at least 6 units must be Board of Studies-developed courses
- at least 3 courses are of 2-unit or greater value
- at least 4 subjects have been completed
- no more than 6 units of science are studied.

Students can take additional units, each with a value of 1 unit, and schools must provide them with a 25-hour personal development and health education course, *Crossroads* (Isaacs *et al.*, 2015).

Two-unit modules (which comprise the main components of the HSC) involve 4 hours of formal tuition per week. The requirement for 12 units in the Preliminary Year thus suggests a minimum learning programme of 24 hours per week and for 10 units in the HSC Year a minimum of 20 hours.

**English sixth form colleges – the requirements of A Levels and BTEC awards**

A Level students, who constitute the majority of upper secondary learners, typically take 4 AS subjects in the first year dropping down to 3 A2s in the second year of study. However, some students take one more subject and some one less. Each subject has about 4.5 guided learning hours per week, although this varies by institution. In the case-study colleges, A Level tuition now averages 4 hours 20 minutes as the result of funding constraint. Taking this latter measure, a 4 AS/3 A2 programme taken over 38 weeks would lead to 684 hours tuition in the first year and 513 hours in the second. In terms of weekly tuition, the first year would comprise up to 18 hours and, in the second year, up to 14 hours. In addition, there is usually at least an extra hour of tutorial time and there can be enrichment activities. So it is possible for a student to receive between 19 – 21 hours of tuition per week in Year 12, although less than this in Year 13.

**Discussion**

In summary, our findings suggest that upper secondary curricular and graduation arrangements in other advanced economies and societies, regardless of the type of global model of education, generally require a wider range of subjects and additional experiences and breadth for matriculation when compared with England. The driving influences on the breadth and volume of the curriculum and the level of resource allocated differ in each national case, but the overall result is the same – other countries invariably have larger programmes of study.
The forces shaping the upper secondary curriculum in these systems are varied and include:

- national entitlements to study (Sweden and Alberta), together with the requirements of a graduation diploma or leaving certificate;
- the credit requirements of a high school matriculation certificate and the hours attached to each unit (New South Wales and Singapore);
- a broad and highly prescriptive programme of study together with a culture of long working hours (Shanghai);
- an entitlement to three years of study (Sweden).

These forces appear to lead to three global patterns of tuition. The first is high hours (30+) often supplemented by homework and private tuition. This ‘pressure cooker’ approach, epitomized by the Asian/Pacific systems, is seen by many as the key to success in PISA global league tables. The second is medium/high hours that are the result of graduation diploma/certificate requirements, often expressed in terms of units of achievement, each of which has a required number of hours of tuition and, in some cases, is reinforced by a national entitlement (Alberta and New South Wales). New South Wales, a member of the Anglo Saxon model, is at the lower end of this range. The third model (Sweden) is medium to low annual hours, but extended over three years. This model may prove to be the most inclusive because it explicitly provides support for middle and lower attainers who may find high volumes of study difficult and who require more time.

The English system, low hours and short duration, constitutes a fourth and very different model. Its historical origins mean that it stands out as different internationally having a system of tuition designed for an elite where the assumption was that a narrow range of specialist subjects, studied over two years to meet the requirements of three-year subject specialist university degrees, could be supplemented by co-curricular activities. The introduction of Curriculum 2000 and the extra AS in the first year of A Level study has led to a small increase in curriculum breadth in the first year of student programmes. In terms of full-time vocational courses in the 1990s, under FE Incorporation, face-to-face tuition was reduced and has not fully recovered. The current move to ‘16-19 Study Programmes’ that require post-16 English and Mathematics for some underachieving students, a large vocational qualification and work experience will necessitate a small increase in the size of vocational programmes. However, this will apply to a minority of 16-18 year olds and amounts to only a notional 600 hours for a three A Level programme (Igoe, 2015).

As a result of system tradition and more recent policy in England there is no national entitlement in terms of hours of study nor a baccalaureate-type award nor a units and credit system, all of which could boost the volume of study programmes. Moreover, unlike other national systems where the amount of tuition actually increases in upper secondary education when compared with the lower secondary phase, the English experience is the opposite. The sharp reduction in the number of subjects studied post-16 (an average of four subjects) compared with pre-16 (10+ GCSEs or vocational equivalent) appears to represent a sudden movement to a part-time curriculum. English upper secondary education thus remains uniquely narrow and short when compared with other relatively successful systems.
As the English upper secondary phase has expanded, a move now being confirmed by the Raising of the Participation Age, so it is attracting more students who require greater support and longer durations of study. While there is no known correlation between the number of hours studied in upper secondary education and performance as narrowly measured by PISA (Isaacs et al., 2015); we would argue that the English system being so short of what appears to be an international norm for advanced economies runs the risk of being damaging to the capacities of young people.

In response, the way to go initially might not be a large increase in the number of subjects to be studied, although there is a strong case for a role for mathematics, English and a modern foreign language up to the age of 18/19, together with greater attention to what are referred to as 21st Century Competences (Halász and Michel, 2011). All systems included in this small comparative study are allocating increased time and resource to fostering student capacity to undertake research and project work and to engage in citizenship activities and the workplace. The answer for England could well be the development of a baccalaureate-style award that prioritises these capacities in addition to specialist study, sees a modest increase in hours of tuition and, crucially, moves towards a longer upper secondary phase that would offer particular benefits to those learners who could achieve a good Level 3 award if given more time and support.

References


Burdett, N. (2102) Overview of Upper Secondary Curriculum and Qualification: Strategies in a Sample of Countries, Slough: NFER.


Part 3: The size and costs of the sixth form curriculum

Report by: London Economics
The size and costs of the Sixth Form Curriculum

Report for the Sixth Form Colleges' Association

Head Office: Somerset House, New Wing, Strand, London, WC2R 1LA, United Kingdom.

w: londoneconomics.co.uk  e: info@londoneconomics.co.uk  @: @LondonEconomics
t: +44 (0)20 3701 7700  f: +44 (0)20 3701 7701

Authors

Dr Gavan Conlon, Partner (+44 (0) 20 3701 7703; econlon@londoneconomics.co.uk)
Ms. Maike Halterbeck, Economic Analyst (+44 (0) 20 3701 7724; mhalterbeck@londoneconomics.co.uk)
About London Economics

London Economics is one of Europe's leading specialist economics and policy consultancies. Based in London and with offices and associate offices in five other European capitals, we advise an international client base on economic and financial analysis, litigation support, policy development and evaluation, business strategy and regulatory and competition policy.

Our consultants are highly-qualified economists who apply a wide range of analytical tools to tackle complex problems across the business and policy spheres. Dedicated teams of specialists serve high-level topic areas ranging from public policy to regulatory and behavioural economics and provide detailed sectoral expertise in education, finance, labour markets, and space technology.

Our approach combines the use of economic theory and sophisticated quantitative methods, including the latest insights from behavioural economics, with practical know-how ranging from common market research tools to advanced experimental methods at the frontier of applied social science. We are committed to providing customer service to world-class standards and take pride in our clients’ success. For more information, please visit www.londoneconomics.co.uk.

Background and context

London Economics were commissioned by the Sixth Form Colleges’ Association to analyse and compare the size and quality of the Sixth Form (Key Stage 5) curriculum offered by Sixth Form Colleges, and to assess the level and composition of colleges’ costs of providing this curriculum, in the 2010/11 and 2012/13 academic years. By establishing a link between measures of curriculum costs and curriculum size, the analysis then allows for an estimate of colleges’ hypothetical costs of providing a ‘worthwhile’ curriculum, as defined based on the research undertaken by the Sixth Form Colleges’ Association.
Methodological approach

In order to analyse the actual size and costs of the Sixth Form curriculum in 2010/11 and 2012/13, the hypothetical costs which SFCs would have to pay to be able to provide a ‘worthwhile’ Sixth Form curriculum, and to contrast the actual and hypothetical cost with the income and funding received by colleges, our analysis involved several key elements:

- The collection of college-level information on student numbers, income, expenditure, staff levels, and curriculum characteristics from a range of sources, including both publicly available datasets provided by the Department for Education and the relevant funding agencies as well as college-level survey data recently collected by the Sixth Form Colleges’ Association;
- Merging all data sources into a comprehensive dataset containing all relevant information at the college level;
- Establishing, out of total values for each college, the level of income, expenditure and staffing associated only with 16-19 education provision (i.e. the Sixth Form curriculum);
- Analysing measures of the size and quality of the Sixth Form curriculum over time and across colleges;
- Assessing the level and structure of the costs associated with the Sixth Form curriculum over time; and
- Calculating the hypothetical costs that colleges would incur if they provided a ‘worthwhile’ Sixth Form curriculum, and contrast these costs with funding levels and total income level to analyse the impact on colleges’ balance sheet.

Data collection and assembly

Given the range of variables and measures involved, and the requirement to compare information over several years, our analysis of the size and costs of the Sixth Form curriculum in Sixth Form Colleges necessitates the collection and analysis of a wide range of data sources. To undertake the analysis, we made use of college-level data for Sixth Form Colleges including:

- 16-19 learner numbers and funding levels in the 2010/11 and 2012/13 academic years, as provided by the Young People’s Learning Agency¹ (YPLA, for 2010/11) and the Education Funding Agency² (EFA, for 2012/13);
- Detailed financial information on income, expenditure and staff levels per college (2010/11 and 2012/13), based on data commissioned by the Association of Colleges (AoC)³. Of particular relevance to this analysis, this data source includes information on the total number of students per college (i.e. across all ages and education programmes), allowing us to calculate 16-19 students as a proportion of the total student body, at a college level⁴;

---

³ Skills Funding Agency and Education Funding Agency (2014), ‘SFA and EFA financial management: benchmarking data for colleges’. Available here: [here](#).
⁴ Note that the information included in the AoC’s financial data have all been provided directly by colleges themselves; hence, as outlined in the guidance to both the 2010/11 and 2012/13 data, there might exist some errors and inconsistencies within the data on occasion. Of particular relevance to the analysis at hand, there appear to be some errors in the student number measures indicated by colleges as part of these financial data. These result in inconsistencies between the 16-19 student numbers indicated in the YPLA and EFA funding allocations in the years of interest, and the financial data commissioned by the AoC in the respective years.
Information on maximum weekly teacher contact time per teacher and average class size per programme, based on responses to the SFCA’s 2010/11 and 2012/13 Working Arrangements for Teaching Staff Survey; and

Data on average contact time per student per week, by programme and particular activity (i.e. qualification taught time, tutorial time, enrichment activity, personal support time, or other staff led activity), with additional information on average self-directed timetabled time per student per week. This detailed information has been provided by colleges as part of the SFCA’s recent Curriculum Survey, covering both the 2010/11 and 2012/13 academic years, as well as indicative projections for 2016/17.

Table 1 provides a summary of each of these datasets, and highlights the number of Sixth Form Colleges included in the various information sources.

Summary of data sources

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Data source</th>
<th>Key data variables</th>
<th># of SFCs included</th>
<th>Year(s) covered</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>YPLA 16-19 funding allocations</td>
<td>Number of 16-19 learners</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>2010/11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Association of Colleges financial data</td>
<td>College income; expenditure; number of staff; total student body</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>2010/11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SFCA Working Arrangements for Teaching Staff Survey</td>
<td>Average class size by programme; maximum contact hours per teacher per week</td>
<td>78</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EFA 16-19 funding allocations</td>
<td>Number of 16-19 learners</td>
<td>93</td>
<td>2012/13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Association of Colleges financial data</td>
<td>College income; expenditure; number of staff; total student body</td>
<td>93</td>
<td>2012/13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SFCA Working Arrangements for Teaching Staff Survey</td>
<td>Average class size by programme; maximum contact hours per teacher per week</td>
<td>80</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SFCA Curriculum Survey</td>
<td>Contact time per week per student (by activity &amp; programme); self-directed time</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>2010/11, 2012/13 and 2016/17 (projected)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>tabled time per student per week (by programme)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1 This excludes Lowestoft Sixth Form College, which was not listed as a Sixth Form College in 2010/11.
2 Note that we exclude one Sixth Form College from our analysis of financial information, due to significant inconsistencies in the data provided to the AoC by this provider. The original data further include Cirencester College as a Sixth Form College. As this provider is categorised as a General Further Education provider in the EFA’s 2012/13 16-19 funding allocations, we do not include it in the count of SFCs in Table 1.
3 An additional response to the survey was provided by Connell College; however, as this provider is a free school, it has been excluded from the analysis.

Source: London Economics’ analysis of Department for Education (2012), Department for Education (2013), Skills Funding Agency and Education Funding Agency (2014) and survey data provided by the Sixth Form Colleges’ Association

To undertake the intended analysis at the individual college level, the listed data sources were assembled into a comprehensive merged dataset containing information on key characteristics of Sixth Form Colleges, their financial standing, and the curricula they offer to their students.

To base the analysis on the current population and profile of Sixth Form Colleges, the merging process was based around the data included in the 2012/13 16-19 funding allocations published by the Education Funding Agency (EFA); hence, all other data sources were merged into these funding data. To achieve the merging:

- we made use of unique college-level identifiers (UPINs) included in both the central dataset (i.e. the EFA’s 2012/13 funding allocations) and the YPLA’s 16-19 funding allocations for 2010/11 to combine these datasets at the college level;

5 All measures of total contact time presented in our analysis exclude any self-directed timetabled time.
for the remaining data sources, where no such unique identifiers were available, we employed a simple name match of colleges across the different datasets, to again merge all information into the EFA’s 2012/13 16-19 funding allocations data.

### Income and expenditure associated with 16-19 provision

As Sixth Form Colleges typically offer other programmes in addition to their core Key Stage 5 provision (e.g. Level 4 courses), an analysis of the costs and income associated with the Sixth Form curriculum requires adjusting - from total values per college - to the level of income and expenditure that is associated with Key Stage 5 provision only.

Given that the AoC college-level financial data do not allow for an exact direct calculation of this breakdown per college, to estimate the income and costs associated with 16-19 provision only, we allocate income and expenditure to the Sixth Form curriculum and other types of provision based on student numbers at different Key Stages. For this, we make use of the student number data included in the AoC financial data for Sixth Form Colleges, which contains detailed student counts for SFA and EFA funded 16-19 and 19+ students\(^6\), Higher Education funded 19+ students, and Apprenticeship funded 16-19 and 19+ students. In particular, for each college, we divide SFA and EFA funded 16-19 students by the total number of students to estimate the proportion of students per college undertaking Key Stage 5 education. The resulting proportion is then applied to all income and expenditure items as well as staff numbers, to estimate the costs, income and staffing associated with 16-19 provision only\(^7\).

---

\(^6\) And similarly funded students in 2010/11.

\(^7\) Note that while students in the 2012/13 AoC financial data are measured in headcount terms, student numbers 2010/11 data are presented in Standard Learner Numbers – a measure broadly equivalent to full-time equivalent students. Assuming that the calculation of Standard Learner Numbers from headcount should not affect the distribution of total students across the different stages of educational attainment, we apply the same calculations to Standard Learner Numbers (i.e. in 2010/11) as to the headcount student numbers (in 2012/13).
Size and costs of the Sixth Form curriculum

Comparing curriculum size and scope

The number of 16-19 students
Presented in Figure 1 and Figure 2, the analysis indicates that there has been a small increase in the number of students in 16-19 education in Sixth Form Colleges (from a total of approximately 153,000 to 155,300 between 2010/11 and 2012/13, with a corresponding increase in the average number of pupils per College from 1,664 to 1,670).

Total number of 16-19 students in Sixth Form Colleges, 2010/11 and 2012/13

Average number of 16-19 students per college, 2010/11 and 2012/13

Numbers are based on 16-18 Learner Responsive Learners / 16-19 Learner Numbers as indicated in 16-19 YPLA / EFA funding allocations 2010/11 and 2012/13.


However, the nature of the qualifications being undertaken has changed to some extent over time (see Figure 3) and demonstrates the potential narrowing of the curriculum on offer following recent declines in funding levels. Specifically, the proportion of young people undertaking three A2 (or equivalent qualifications) has increased from approximately 25% in 2010/11 to almost 31% in 2012/13, and is further expected to increase to 36% of young people in 2016/17. In contrast, the proportion of young people enrolled in Sixth Form Colleges undertaking four A2 qualifications has declined from 12% in 2010/13 to 9% in 2012/13 and is expected to decline further in 2016/17 (to 7%). Note that a similar shift in provision is expected to take place in relation to AS Levels, where a significant reduction in the proportion of pupils undertaking four or more AS Level qualification is expected (from 39% to 23%) with a corresponding increase in the proportions undertaking three AS levels (12% to 24% in 2016/17).
Average 16-19 students per college by programme, 2010/11, 2012/13 and 2016/17

![Bar chart showing average 16-19 students per college by programme from 2010/11 to 2016/17.]

Numbers are based on 16-19 students per programme indicated by 47 colleges in response to the SFCA’s recent Curriculum Survey. Due to the difference in data sources, and the way in which students are counted across them, the total number of students across all programmes differs from the information presented in 0 previous figures.

Further note that while the averages for 2010/11 and 2012/13 are based on a sample of 47 colleges responding to the SFCA’s Curriculum Survey, only 42 colleges indicated student number projections for the 2016/17 academic year.

*Source: London Economics’ analysis of SFCA Curriculum Survey.*
Staff associated with 16-19 provision

In relation to the number of staff associated with 16-19 provision, not unsurprisingly, there has been a reduction in almost all types of staff employed by Sixth Form Colleges between 2010/11 and 2012/13. In particular, the analysis presented in Figure 4 demonstrates that despite the fact that there is an increasing 16-19 student body, there has been a reduction in the number of teaching staff associated with 16-19 provision on average (from 94 to 82), while there has also been a reduction in the number of support staff (from 26 to 24) and a reduction in the number of staff employed in administration and central services (from 23 to 21). It is important to note that although the average decline in staffing numbers stands at approximately 10% on average (and 6% amongst non-teaching staff), the decline in the number of teaching staff has been disproportionately affected, with a 13% reduction over the period.

Given the increase in the average level of attendance, and the reduction in the number of staff employed by Sixth Form Colleges, the student-staff ratio has increased across the board. In particular, the average number of 16-19 students per member of teaching staff associated with 16-19 education has increased from 18 in 2010/13 to more than 21 in 2012/13, while there have also been increases in the ratio of students to support staff and administrative and central service staff over the period.

Average full-time equivalent staff associated with 16-19 provision per college, 2010/11 and 2012/13

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>2010/11</th>
<th>2012/13</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Senior Management</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Premiers</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Administration and central services</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Support staff</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teaching staff</td>
<td>94</td>
<td>82</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Number of support staff based on number of ‘Teaching and other support staff FTEs’ indicated in the AoC financial data. Other staff based on ‘Other FTE staff No (balancing figure)’. Numbers by category might not add to totals due to rounding.

*London Economics’ analysis of Skills Funding Agency and Education Funding Agency (2014)*

Average 16-19 students per FTE staff, by staff category, 2010/11 and 2012/13

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>2010/11</th>
<th>2012/13</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Teaching staff</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Support staff</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Administration and central services</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Premiers</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Senior Management</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Based on average ratios of 16-19 students (as indicated in the YPLA and EFA funding data for 2010/11 and 2012/13) and number of full-time equivalent staff associated with 16-19 provision (based on calculations from the AoC financial data), by category, across colleges. Number of support staff based on number of ‘Teaching and other support staff FTEs’ indicated in the AoC financial data. Ratios per other staff (i.e. balancing figure) are not presented in the figure.

*London Economics’ analysis of Department for Education (2012), Department for Education (2013), and Skills Funding Agency and Education Funding Agency (2014)*

Further highlighting the impact of reduced funding, and the corresponding reduction in teacher numbers per college, Figure 6 and Figure 7 illustrate the increase in average class size in Sixth Form Colleges. Specifically, compared to an average A2 class size of 16.4 and AS class size of 18.8 in 2010/11, these have increased to approximately 16.9 and 19.0 respectively in 2012/13, further demonstrating the deterioration in the quality of educational provision that is now possible given ongoing funding cuts.

---

Average class size by programme (av. across colleges), 2010/11

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Programme</th>
<th>2010/11</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AS Courses</td>
<td>18.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A2 Courses</td>
<td>16.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intermediate Courses</td>
<td>15.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Foundation Courses</td>
<td>12.4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Based on between 41 and 75 colleges indicating non-zero values for average class sizes for the different programmes.

London Economics’ analysis of SFCA Working Arrangements for Teaching Staff Survey

Average class size by programme (av. across colleges), 2012/13

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Programme</th>
<th>2012/13</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AS Courses</td>
<td>19.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A2 Courses</td>
<td>16.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>International Baccalaureate</td>
<td>9.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Edexcel Ext. Diploma</td>
<td>16.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Edexcel Diploma</td>
<td>16.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Edexcel one year...</td>
<td>16.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Edexcel two year...</td>
<td>16.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Edexcel Certificate</td>
<td>16.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GCSE</td>
<td>16.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BTEC First Award</td>
<td>13.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BTEC First Certificate</td>
<td>15.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BTEC First Extended...</td>
<td>13.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BTEC First Diploma</td>
<td>14.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level 1</td>
<td>12.6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Based on 68 colleges indicating non-zero values for average class sizes for the different programmes.

London Economics’ analysis of SFCA Working Arrangements for Teaching Staff Survey

Average contact time

The SFCA’s recent Curriculum Survey asked colleges to provide an estimate of the amount of time per week that their students were typically engaged in different activities. The analysis (presented in Figure 8) identified that in 2010/11, total student contact time stood at approximately **19.0 hours** per week (of which **15.9 hours** per week related to qualification taught time, with a further **2.2 hours** per week of self-directed timetabled time. By 2012/13, the level of contact time had declined to **18.6 hours** per week - almost entirely as a result of a reduction in qualification taught time (to **15.5 hours** per week). Respondents expected that both total contact time and qualification taught time would further decline by 2016/17 (to **18.0 hours** per week and **14.7 hours** per week respectively), with a corresponding increase in the number of self-directed timetabled hours to **2.8**.

This information is also presented in Figure 9, where the proportion of allocated timetabled time is presented; however, it is important to note that in addition to the proportion of time engaged in qualification taught time declining (or expected to decline) over time, it is also the case that the total contact time is declining over time (i.e. the size of the pie in 2016/17 is getting smaller).
At the individual college level, we calculated weighted average contact time (and self-directed time) for a typical student across programmes (weighted by student numbers per programme), separately for each activity. We then calculated averages of these results across all colleges to arrive at the numbers presented in the figure. Based on 47 colleges indicating non-zero contact time values any of their programmes in 2010/11 and 2012/13, and 42 colleges indicating projected non-zero contact time for any of their programmes in 2016/17.

*London Economics' analysis of SFCA Curriculum Survey*
Distribution of average contact time per student per week by activity, 2010/11, 2012/13 and 2016/17 (projected)

Based on 47 colleges indicating non-zero contact time values for any of their programmes in 2010/11 and 2012/13, and 42 colleges indicating projected non-zero contact time for any of their programmes in 2016/17.

London Economics’ analysis of SFCA Curriculum Survey
**Curriculum costs**

In Figure 10, 11 and 12, we present average staff-related expenditure, non-staff expenditure, and total expenditure (i.e. both staff and non-staff) associated with 16-19 provision per college, respectively. The analysis in Figure 12 indicates that total expenditure per college has declined from approximately **£8.8 million** per annum in 2010/13 to **£8.3 million** per annum in 2012/13; however, this reduction in total expenditure has been focused entirely on a reduction in expenditure on teaching staff (from **£4.2 million** in 2010/11 to **£3.7 million** in 2012/13, see Figure 11) - despite the increasing student numbers experienced by Sixth Form Colleges. It is not possible to exactly predict developments by 2016/17; however, if the level of resource available to Sixth Form Colleges further decreases, it is likely that this will be reflected in further reductions in expenditure on teachers and teacher numbers, with a corresponding reduction in total contact time, an increase in average class sizes and a reduction in pupil-teacher ratios, and a narrowing of the curriculum available to young people at Key Stage 5.

**Average staff expenditure associated with 16-19 provision per college, in £m, 2010/11 and 2012/13**

![Bar chart showing average staff expenditure associated with 16-19 provision per college, in £m, 2010/11 and 2012/13.](chart.png)

Staff costs associated with teaching include teaching staff costs and contracted tuition services. Other staff costs include expenditure on maintenance staff, running costs, income generating activities, catering, residences, and conferences, and other staff-related costs. Restructuring costs relate to initial staff costs, enhanced pension charges, and FRS 17 adjustment costs.

*London Economics’ analysis of Skills Funding Agency and Education Funding Agency (2014)*
Average non-staff expenditure associated with 16-19 provision per college, in £m, 2010/11 and 2012/13

Non-staff costs associated with premises include expenditure on running and maintenance costs and rents and leases. Other non-staff costs include expenditure on income generating activities, catering, residences and conferences, franchised provision funded by the SFA and YPLA, and other non-staff related costs.

London Economics’ analysis of Skills Funding Agency and Education Funding Agency (2014)

Average total expenditure associated with 16-19 provision per college, in £m, 2010/11 and 2012/13

Total costs associated with teaching include teaching staff costs, contracted tuition services, and non-staff costs associated with teaching. Costs associated with premises include expenditure on running and maintenance costs and rents and leases. Other costs include expenditures on income generating activities, catering, residences and conferences, franchised provision funded by the SFA and YPLA, and other staff and non-staff related costs.

London Economics’ analysis of Skills Funding Agency and Education Funding Agency (2014)

In terms of total costs associated with Key Stage 5 education, Figure 13 and Figure 14 provide an assessment of the components of Sixth Form College expenditure in 2010/11 and 2012/13. Reiterating the above observations, the analysis indicates that within a declining unit of resource (and aggregate budget), expenditure associated with teaching is accounting for a declining proportion of total expenditure, decreasing from 51% of total expenditure in 2010/11 to 48% in 2012/13.
Comparing total income and total expenditure

It is clear that the reduction in total expenditure experienced by Sixth Form Colleges constitutes a direct consequence of the reduction in the level of funding available to colleges. The analysis presented in Figure 15 demonstrates the average yearly total expenditure incurred per student per college, the income per student generated by colleges, and the difference between the two. The analysis indicates that, on average across colleges, total income per student in 2010/11 stood at £5,501 (from all sources). Compared to a level of expenditure per student of £5,339, this implies an average surplus across colleges of £162 per pupil per annum. However, by 2012/13, the £378 reduction in EFA funding income\(^9\) (from £4,682 to £4,304) and in income generated from other sources (from £819 to £757 per pupil per annum) resulted in a decrease in average expenditure by £318 per pupil per annum. As a result of the change in income and expenditure, the average level of surplus stood at only £40 per pupil per annum in 2012/13.

It is important to note that these averages mask a high degree of variance across the sector. According to the AoC financial data, and considering total income and expenditure per college (including all education provision\(^10\)), while 16 colleges were operating in deficit in 2010/11, this doubled to 32 colleges in 2012/13\(^11\). Given the proposed future cuts to funding, this number is likely to increase.

---

\(^9\) The numbers on YPLA (2010/11) and EFA (2012/13) funding income are based on total 16-19 funding allocations received by colleges from these funding agencies, adjusted to account for the income associated with 16-19 provision only (as outlined in Section 0) and averaged across colleges. This includes total 16-19 and 19-24 programme funding as indicated in the funding allocations.

\(^10\) i.e. income and expenditure associated with all education provision, not just Key Stage 5 students.

\(^11\) This is based on the corrected AoC financial data for 2010/11 and 2012/13. To ensure accuracy of the financial information provided, we checked the consistency between the funding allocations data indicated in the AoC financial data with the actual YPLA / EFA 16-19 funding allocations published by the Department for Education, and corrected any inconsistencies in the AoC data accordingly. Based on the original (i.e. uncorrected) AoC financial benchmarking data, 12 colleges were in deficit in 2010/11, increasing to 28 colleges in 2012/13.
Average income, expenditure and surplus/deficit per 16-19 student, 2010/11 and 2012/13

2010/11

Income: £4,682
Expenditure: £5,339
Surplus: £677

2012/13

Income: £4,904
Expenditure: £5,021
Surplus: £1,404

Note that the information included in the AoC financial data have all been provided directly by colleges themselves; hence, there might exist errors and inconsistencies within the data at points. To ensure accuracy of the information provided, we checked the consistency between the funding allocations data indicated in the AoC financial data with the actual YPLA / EFA 16-19 funding allocations published by the Department for Education, and corrected any inconsistencies in the AoC data accordingly.

Source: London Economics’ analysis of Department for Education (2013) and Skills Funding Agency and Education Funding Agency (2014)

Costing the ‘worthwhile’ curriculum

Finally, in this section, we provide an analysis of the hypothetical costs which Sixth Form Colleges would have to incur if they were to provide a ‘worthwhile’ curriculum. Specifically, based on the above analysis and research undertaken by the SFCA, to provide a level of total contact time comparable to international best practice, the average total contact time would need to increase to approximately 25.0 hours per week of total contact time (from 18.6 hours per week in 2012/13). Again excluding self-directed timetabled time.

12
teaching staff\textsuperscript{13}; while this involves significant additional costs, these can, to some extent, be mitigated by increasing the average class size.

Table 2 outlines the resulting costs of and the deficit associated with providing a ‘worthwhile’ curriculum, based on a total of 25 contact hours per student per week and average class sizes. Based on the current average class size (16.5\textsuperscript{14}), the analysis indicates that the additional cost per pupil per annum required to deliver a ‘worthwhile’ curriculum stands at £740 per pupil per annum, which on average would result in colleges incurring a financial deficit of £674 per pupil per annum. If, in addition to increasing contact hours, it was decided to reduce average class sizes to 15.0, this would require an additional expenditure per college of £1,042 per pupil per annum (on average), resulting in an average deficit of £976 per pupil per annum. However, if the decision was made to increase average class sizes (to 22), the additional teaching cost could be absorbed within the current financial envelope, resulting in a (small) surplus of £59 per pupil per annum.

Please note that the average costs of providing the ‘worthwhile’ curriculum are marginally different from the previous section, as the analysis of ‘worthwhile’ curriculum costs is based on a sub-sample of colleges for whom all relevant information exists.

**Average costs and deficit per student of providing a ‘worthwhile’ curriculum, 2012/13**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Average class size</th>
<th>Contact hours per student</th>
<th>Income</th>
<th>Costs of current curriculum</th>
<th>Additional costs of ‘worthwhile’ curriculum</th>
<th>Total costs of ‘worthwhile’ curriculum</th>
<th>Resulting deficit</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>£5,022</td>
<td>£4,956</td>
<td>£1,042</td>
<td>£5,999</td>
<td>-£976</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>£5,022</td>
<td>£4,956</td>
<td>£839</td>
<td>£5,795</td>
<td>-£773</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17 (actual)*</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>£5,022</td>
<td>£4,956</td>
<td>£740</td>
<td>£5,696</td>
<td>-£674</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>£5,022</td>
<td>£4,956</td>
<td>£500</td>
<td>£5,456</td>
<td>-£434</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>£5,022</td>
<td>£4,956</td>
<td>£357</td>
<td>£5,313</td>
<td>-£291</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>£5,022</td>
<td>£4,956</td>
<td>£229</td>
<td>£5,185</td>
<td>-£162</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>£5,022</td>
<td>£4,956</td>
<td>£112</td>
<td>£5,069</td>
<td>-£46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>£5,022</td>
<td>£4,956</td>
<td>£7</td>
<td>£4,963</td>
<td>£59</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Based on total of 74 colleges for which all relevant information is available. Due to this restriction to a sub-sample of all colleges, average costs, class size and total income levels per student may differ slightly to the information presented in previous sections.

* Current average class size in 2012/13, based on average class size across programmes and colleges, amounts to 16.5 students.

Source: London Economics’ analysis of Department for Education (2012), Department for Education (2013), Skills Funding Agency and Education Funding Agency (2014) and data from the SFCA’s Curriculum Survey and Working Arrangement for Teaching Staff Survey

\textsuperscript{13} Cost mechanism:

\[
\text{Teaching staff costs} = \frac{\text{(\# of Sixth Form students \times Contact time per student)}}{\text{(Contact time per teacher \times Average class size)}}
\]

Note: Contact time per teacher based on maximum contact hours per teacher per week, without remission to other duties.

Average class size based on average class size across programmes per college.

\textsuperscript{14} Actual average class size in 2012/13, based on average class size across programmes and colleges.
Index of Tables, Figures and Boxes

Tables

Table 1: Summary of data sources 5

Table 2: Average costs and deficit per student of providing a 'worthwhile' curriculum, 2012/13 17

Figures

Figure 1: Total number of 16-19 students in Sixth Form Colleges, 2010/11 and 2012/13 7

Figure 2: Average number of 16-19 students per college, 2010/11 and 2012/13 7

Figure 3: Average 16-19 students per college by programme, 2010/11, 2012/13 and 2016/17 8

Figure 4: Average full-time equivalent staff associated with 16-19 provision per college, 2010/11 and 2012/13 9

Figure 5: Average 16-19 students per FTE staff, by staff category, 2010/11 and 2012/13 9

Figure 6: Average class size by programme (av. across colleges), 2010/11 10

Figure 7: Average class size by programme (av. across colleges), 2012/13 10

Figure 8: Average contact time per student per week, by activity, 2010/11, 2012/13 and 2016/17 (projected) 11

Figure 9: Distribution of average contact time per student per week by activity, 2010/11, 2012/13 and 2016/17 (projected) 12

Figure 10: Average staff expenditure associated with 16-19 provision per college, in £m, 2010/11 and 2012/13 13

Figure 11: Average non-staff expenditure associated with 16-19 provision per college, in £m, 2010/11 and 2012/13 14

Figure 12: Average total expenditure associated with 16-19 provision per college, in £m, 2010/11 and 2012/13 14

Figure 13: Distribution of average 16-19 costs per college, 2010/11 15

Figure 14: Distribution of average 16-19 costs per college, 2012/13 15

Figure 15: Average income, expenditure and surplus/deficit per 16-19 student, 2010/11 and 2012/13 16
References


Part 4: Four Sixth Form College case studies

Report by: UCL Institute of Education
Introduction

This section of the report provides four sixth form college (SFC) case-study accounts of how they have been coping with financial constraint, the kind of curriculum they offer now and their plans for 2016. Each of the colleges is relatively small compared with most other SFCs and, due to their size, may be more vulnerable to financial pressures. However, like all other SFCs, they are trying to offer choice, breadth and quality of the curriculum predominantly at Level 3 and, in some cases, also at Level 2. All four colleges, in their different ways, make a distinctive contribution to their local community. However, beyond these common features, there are important local differences related to their ethos; the organization of post-16 education in each locality; the level of competition or collaboration; the type of students they recruit; and their relationship with the local labour market.

Each case study account broadly follows a common format by providing - background information on student numbers over recent years; the local context in which the college operates; the college mission and the ways it contributes to the local community; its current and future curriculum models and, finally, the perceived challenges it faces in the short-term. The case-study accounts have been written by a senior manager from each college; edited by UCL IOE researchers and then handed back to their authors for final checking and amendment.

Finally, we have attempted to protect the identity of each case-study college, so they are known here as Colleges A, B, C and D. This has meant removing some detail from the local context. We hope, however, that exercising this ethical consideration does not reduce the illuminative power of the cases themselves.
Sixth Form College A

Background

Number of students (FTEs)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>16/18</th>
<th>19+</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2010/11</td>
<td>832</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2012/13</td>
<td>784</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2015/16</td>
<td>600</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Number of staff (FTEs)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Teaching</th>
<th>Support</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2010/11</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2012/13</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2015/16</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The large increase in support staff reflects some movement towards these staff taking on roles previously performed by teaching staff and the growth of catering services supplied to other schools.

Main types of provision

The College offers mainly A Levels with some vocational Cambridge Technical provision at Level 3 that is being extended for 2015-16 to allow progression and to facilitate mixed programmes for less academic level 3 or Level 2.5 students. There is also a range of Cambridge Technical awards at Level 2 to offer progression from Key Stage 4 for students not having completed Level 2 or not having the qualifications to progress to A Levels. In addition the College offers key GCSEs (mathematics, English and a science) to facilitate progression to higher education and employment.

Local context and community

There are falling learner demographics locally, with a declining Year 11 cohort that will continue falling before levelling off, albeit with some fluctuation. There is no primary bulge working its way through.

In the town itself there are two 11-16 academies (both Ofsted Grade 4), a Catholic 11-16 High School (Ofsted Grade 4) and a 3-18 free school (latterly a private school and not yet inspected by Ofsted). Just outside the town there is another 11-16 county school (Ofsted Grade 2) and further away, but within travel to study range, two 11-18 county schools (both Ofsted Grade 2) and two other 11-16 schools that provide a handful of students to the college. It would be fair to characterise secondary education in the town itself as
underperforming. There is also a small general further education college with whom the college collaborates rather than competes in terms of curriculum. The general further education college is atypical, with a large proportion of both higher education provision and work for local large employers.

The town is dominated by one large, high-skills technology employer with its associated business services and supply chains. There are also several other high-skills technology and other engineering companies. The care sector is a significant employer. Apprenticeships at the large, high-skills technology employers are highly valued by school leavers and seen as likely to provide a good life income without student debt. Progression to higher education is low compared to national norms, but numbers of students not in employment, education or training (NEETs) at 16 are low. Despite having high-skills technology employers, deprivation and family debt is a significant issue as is health, including mental health, and teenage pregnancy, although the hinterland beyond the town presents a more mixed picture.

**Contribution to this community**

The College is by some margin the largest A Level provider in the town with the best value added and the broadest offer. It offers a site on the outskirts conveniently accessed by students from the rural areas beyond the town as well as from the town itself and attracts students from a broad swathe of the locality. The college works collaboratively within the local consortium and supports the local alliance of system leaders to take forward the vision set out in the 2010 White Paper ‘The Importance of Teaching’. The college principal chairs a partnership of the sixth form college and schools. This partnership aims, firstly to inspire students in the partnership to aim towards excellent higher education and apprenticeships and to prepare them well for competitive interviews and secondly, to strengthen links between the schools and sixth form college with industry and to expose students to today’s business environment through selective work experience and visits. The principal is also company secretary of the Local Education and Skills Partnership (a balanced partnership between local education and local business aiming to raise the aspirations of local young people and to provide current, real-world, applied learning opportunities for them in all three education phases) and serves on the court of the local university. The College maintains strong links with all the local universities, to which many students progress.

The College is co-sponsor of an 11-16 academy in the town and works closely with two local special schools. It takes some of the special school 16-18 students for a course for part of the week, co-taught by the College and staff from the special schools. It also works with difficult to place secondary-age students, offering them support and tuition in order to facilitate their reintegration into mainstream schooling. Discussions are progressing between the College, local schools and the local authority for the college to provide an alternative more accessible and appropriate curriculum for students for whom the school curriculum is proving inappropriate. While
progression to higher education locally is low, the College works to raise the aspirations of young people and to have a high proportion of first-in-family applicants to HE as well as a growing number of students aspiring to places in prestigious, research-led universities. College students gain many of the places on local A Level trainee schemes, supplying local employers with the skilled workforce they require at that level.

The College has modest, evidence-based, entry requirements and the ethos is to try to offer students a second chance if necessary, if their qualifications and aptitudes indicate that they are likely to benefit from the curriculum the College offers. This is important in the context of three schools in the town currently being awarded low Ofsted grades. College A’s general entry criteria are based on a student’s average GCSE score and their GCSE English grade, with some A level subjects having subject specific criteria.

The curriculum

Aims and purposes

The purpose of the College curriculum is fundamentally about progression, encouraging young people to aspire to further and higher education and to prepare them with the knowledge, understanding and skills to equip them to succeed in higher education or employment.

To that end it offers an academic curriculum (i.e. A Levels and key GCSEs) with vocationally oriented options (i.e. Cambridge Technical awards) for those for whom these are wholly or partly appropriate. It is a curriculum that focuses on Level 3, but includes a Level 2 tier as a stepping-stone, thus allowing a ‘Level 2.5’; a mixed Level 2/Level 3 programme, for those for whom it is appropriate.

There is a broad curriculum at advanced level, offered to both AS and A level to allow students to follow their interests while keeping a watchful eye on ensuring progression routes are facilitated by students’ choices, including sufficient facilitating subjects. The College retains the ability to offer subject choices in any combination to fit the interests and needs of students. Alongside the academic options, vocationally oriented options are available in different combinations to allow students to progress after one year’s study at Level 3 (for example to apprenticeships) if that is appropriate, and to allow students to transfer between courses if their initial choices turn out to have been too ambitious academically.

The curriculum is enhanced by strong support and guidance, including the development of “key” skills to prepare students for further study and employment and the opportunity for good quality work experience if appropriate. This curriculum offer is enriched by opportunities beyond those found in programmes leading to students’ main qualifications (e.g. theatre, music, dancing, trips and visits, Duke of Edinburgh and Young Enterprise). The curriculum is also enhanced by opportunities to be academically challenged through, for example, the Extended Project Qualification.
Current curriculum model

Currently a typical student takes four subjects in their first year, dropping to three in the second year of an A Level programme. Recently, student contact hours have been cut to 4 hours 20 minutes per A Level block. A taught tutorial has been replaced by 1:1 mentoring and large student meetings are being used to deliver some key ‘pastoral’ inputs, for example, on internet safety, child sexual exploitation, radicalisation, driving safely and alcohol awareness. The College relies on staff goodwill to deliver enrichment and has an excellent staff who continue to work over and above their contracts for the benefit of the students.

Future curriculum plans and strategies

The main plans are to develop greater opportunities for academic stretch and challenge (e.g. the Open University or appropriate MOOC courses) and to offer access to professional qualifications (e.g. accounting and project management qualifications) in order to make A Level students in particular more ‘job ready’ at age 18. However, funding cuts may force the College to reduce the breadth of the A Level offer.

Main challenges and issues going forward

The main challenge is to remain financially viable while improving quality, maintaining the ethos of the sixth from college and the breadth of provision available in all the combinations that are required. Many students come to the college in anticipation of a three-year programme having not achieved Level 2 at school, but still aspiring to HE. The reduction in 18+ funding is not fair to these students. Other services (e.g. mental health) are stretched and the college spends increasing sums of money on social work and mental health issues rather than education per se. In addition, transport subsidies have been removed, making choice at 16 a reality only for those that can afford it, unless the College spends more money each year on subsidising travel. These last two points frustrates the College senior management team as they wish to spend all the money they can on teaching and learning.
Sixth Form College B

Background

Number of students (FTEs)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>16/18</th>
<th>19+</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2010/11</td>
<td>752</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2012/13</td>
<td>828</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2015/16</td>
<td>690</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Number of staff (FTEs)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Teaching</th>
<th>Support</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2010/11</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2012/13</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2015/16</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Main types of provision

The majority of provision at College B is Level 3 A Level and BTEC provision (95.84%). There is a small Foundation Learning programme (3.14%) and Level 2 provision for Mathematics and English GCSE resits (1.02%).

Local context and community

This is a small college based on two adjacent sites in a market town in the east of England with a catchment area covering 400 square miles of coastal and rural land. The College was established in 1984 to provide sixth form education for students from the six high schools in the locality and plays an important role in addressing problems of low aspiration and achievement. The College has an extremely good reputation locally.

The economic structure of the area is characterised by agriculture and tourism, which is traditionally low wage employment. Unemployment is slightly below the national average and there are increasing job opportunities in the agri-tech, business, energy, advanced manufacturing and digital creative industries.

The College recruits from the traditional catchment of the local area and transport is a key factor. Threats of increased costs, including significant reduction of the County Council subsidy, are a concern. The 16-18 cohort has been falling for the last three years and between 2015-17 it will fall by a further 12 per cent. The College operates in a very competitive market for A Level study, with the main competition coming from another sixth form
college, a general further education college, six medium-to-small sixth forms, two new free schools and a 14-19 university technical college (UTC).

**Contribution to this community**

The College is successful in terms of attainment, with a 98 per cent pass rate, 48.8 per cent A*-B and 72.9 per cent A*-C rate at A level. At AS Level, the pass rate is 89.7 per cent with 59 per cent achieving A-C rates. In BTEC National Diploma, the pass rate is 100 per cent with 71 per cent achieving high grades. Using the ALPs value-added measures, the College has been rated as outstanding for AS Level courses over the last six years. Using the average point score per entry the College achieved 210.6. This rates it as 25th out of the 94 sixth form colleges. The College’s most recent Ofsted inspection rated the College as consistently ‘good’.

Young people in the locality are less likely to participate in post-16 learning at 17 years old than their national or statistical neighbours, with only 82 per cent remaining in education at 17 and 56 per cent at 18. Progression to higher education is extremely low in the area with only 19 per cent making this transition. At the College 72 per cent progress on to university, with between 15-19 per cent going to Russell Group Universities. In 2014, six students gained places at Oxbridge, after being involved in the College’s A+ and Oxbridge programmes. In 2015 seven students have been offered places at Oxbridge. Some 30 per cent of students at the College go directly into employment, often in the nearby city. They access a range of employment opportunities, in finance, care, retailing and IT. In addition students provide a significant input into the local and regional economy through part-time and voluntary work. The College has recently developed some good links with business, including scholarships for students. Many students have part-time jobs in cafes, retailing and local tourist attractions.

**The curriculum**

**Aims and purposes**

For its size, the College offers a broad range of AS, A Level and BTEC qualifications. Although it is a small sixth form college, it is seen as a large provider in the local area compared to the small school sixth forms who offer a narrow range of subjects. Its curriculum enables students to progress on to higher education and high quality employment or apprenticeship opportunities. Students are encouraged to aspire and develop their potential through the curriculum and specialist tutor programmes. All students are supported to develop their skills, including employability skills through the enrichment programme and the College Employability Skills Award.
Current curriculum model

The College operates a four-block timetable, with students engaged in 85-minute lessons. Students on AS/A2 level programmes have three 85-minute lessons for each subject, a tutor period and enrichment opportunities on Wednesday afternoon, when the timetable is suspended. Students on A Level programmes also have two supervised study periods. The College starts the day at 9.05am to accommodate bus and train timetables. Many students travel long distances, often taking over an hour to get to College. The college has introduced lunchtime support by teachers for students who are not meeting target grades. All the staff are involved in the programme.

The College offers a full range of enrichment opportunities on Wednesday afternoons, including sport, drama, volunteering and Duke of Edinburgh Award. The College has its own Youth Theatre Group, which puts on productions throughout the year, including tours of local primary and secondary schools. The College has its own Employability Skills Award.

Future curriculum plans and strategies

The funding situation is certainly determining the College’s plans for curriculum change. The College plans to go to a three A Level model in 2016/17, which will save it an estimated £80-£100k. The programme of study will include enrichment, supervised study and tutorial. The College currently operates a co-ordinated cross-College revision session and mock examinations. It plans to continue with its enrichment programme linked to the Employability Skills Award. It will also continue to deliver A Level and BTEC programmes.

Main challenges and issues going forward

The College faces three inter-related challenges. It is difficult to plan when there are uncertainties over curriculum reform and future funding levels. This is being compounded by a severe demographic downturn over the next four years that will only gradually recover in this rural area. Finally, there is increased competition in an already saturated market for Level 3 provision. Even after the development of two new free schools and a UTC, there is still a threat of more providers entering this market.
College C

Background

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of students (FTEs)</th>
<th>16/18</th>
<th>19+</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2011/2</td>
<td>918</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2013/4</td>
<td>1012</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2014/5</td>
<td>1118</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2015/2016</td>
<td>1200</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of staff (FTEs)</th>
<th>Teaching</th>
<th>Support</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2011/12</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2012/13</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2014/5</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2015/6</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Local context and main type of provision

The College is a Catholic sixth form college situated in a large metropolitan area with a diverse and growing local population. It was established in 1978/9 and has provided a predominantly Level 3 programme of qualifications since that time.

Contribution to this community

The College’s mission is to educate all its students academically, spiritually and pastorally to the highest standard within a Christian setting, founded on Catholic values. Its mission statement sits at the heart of everything the College does and this is reviewed bi-annually by all members of the College community.

The College has two nominated Catholic feeder schools and both send around 80 per cent of their Year 11 cohorts to the College each year. The College then admits the rest of its students from a wide geographical area and draws from over 50 feeder schools. The College’s admissions criteria are agreed by the governing body each year. It admits Catholics and students from other Christian-based religions first and then opens up to other faith groups, based on academic ability and average GCSE point scores.
The numbers on roll have grown incrementally over the last four years. The College has consciously decided to implement a growth strategy for this academic year and next, in order to anticipate the financial downturn in 2016 when the formula protection is withdrawn. With a roll of 1200 this should enable the College to be financially secure until the end of 2017. Whilst expanding the College roll, leaders and managers have kept staffing requirements to a minimum (see above). A restructured leadership team has absorbed some of the administrative functions and will continue to take on additional responsibilities over the coming years as the College further seeks to reduce staff costs.

The student body is at the centre of all that the colleges does as an institution. Students have above average attainment on entry. The current 2014/5 intake has an average ALIS score of 6.8. The students are hard working, committed to their studies and are ambitious for their futures. University admissions remain very strong with 90 per cent successfully gaining a place in 2014, 48 per cent of those being at a Russell Group university.

The College has had above average outcomes for a long period of time. The 2014 examination series results saw 66 per cent of students achieving A* to B and a 99 per cent A* - E pass rate. It was second in the country in the list of sixth form colleges on the A* to B measure. At AS Level, 97 per cent of the students achieved A - E and 56 per cent A – B grades. The College ALPS score was three for AS and four for A2 and we reduced the numbers of U grades at AS to 70 from 123 in 2013. The un-validated Level 3 value-added score for the 2014 series indicates above average progress in the majority of the College’s departments.

The curriculum

Aims and purposes

The curriculum aims to ensure breadth as well as depth of opportunity and we have made a very deliberate decision to try to maintain both of these going forward into 2015. A unique feature of the College is that it can offer 29 A Level courses, all students can select any combination and the College is able to run these programmes. This provides a fantastic learning opportunity for the students, which cannot be replicated elsewhere. The College also aims to ensure the highest quality of teaching and learning and this has been demonstrated over a long period of time.

We feel it is important that students can develop their skills and interests deeply during their two-year A Level programmes and have the opportunity to explore new and different subject areas. If this does not happen at 16, then it is highly unlikely to at a later point in time.
Current curriculum model

The College aims to provide breadth of opportunity for all its students and currently offers 29 A Levels and a small amount of BTEC Business National and Extended Diploma programmes. It also offers GCSE maths and English re-sits. General RE is compulsory for all students and around 200 students study for the Extended Project Qualification (EPQ) each year. Activities are offered to students in the first term on a Wednesday afternoon. The curriculum is designed to meet the needs of all students who are ably supported by all staff whilst they are at the College.

In considering the financial downturn in 2016, the College decided to protect its provision, which is considered its unique selling point, ensuring that it continues to meet the needs of the Catholic and wider communities that have been served for 35 years. A decision was made that to accommodate a large number of additional students, the College day would have to be lengthened. This has been achieved and has been in operation since September 2014. The length of each lesson has been maintained (4x65 minutes per subject) and the College believes that this is the minimum amount of teaching to ensure students have the best opportunity of academic success at the end of their two years. However this is something that will need to be kept under review. In addition all students attend a number of timetabled workshops each week to support them with specific aspects of their programmes of study.

The longer day has placed additional demands and pressures on the staff but, in true form, they have risen to the challenge in order to protect and preserve what they all believe is one of the best sixth form colleges in the country.

The current Principal has a particular interest in teaching and learning having himself been an Advanced Skills Teacher (AST) and has developed this aspect of the College over the last two years. An Assistant Principal leads four teaching and learning leaders who are in post for two years to further develop pedagogy and practice in both the College and partnership schools and colleges. Teaching and learning is strong in the College. The staff are innovative in their practice and have excellent subject knowledge. In recent inspections with Ofsted inspectors, brought in by the College, 40 per cent of teaching was judged to be 'outstanding' and the rest good. The College has excellent outcomes because of excellent teaching.

Future challenges and future curriculum plans

Securing the College’s financial position for the long term is the aim of the Governors and Senior Managers. College staff are keen to ensure that the future curriculum meets the needs of its ambitious, highly motivated student body. The challenges of a new A Level curriculum are being managed to the best of the College’s ability given difficult national constraints. In 2015/6 the College will continue to offer four AS Level examinations because this is felt to be in the best interests of the particular cohort of students coming into the
College. Beyond 2016, the situation will be kept under review, compared with other similar institutions and then a decision will be made, always with the best interests of students at heart.
Sixth Form College D

Background

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of students (FTEs)</th>
<th>16/18</th>
<th>19+</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2010/11</td>
<td>1261</td>
<td>85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2012/13</td>
<td>1471</td>
<td>118</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2015/16 (est)</td>
<td>1100</td>
<td>u/k</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of staff (FTEs)</th>
<th>Teaching</th>
<th>Support</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2010/11</td>
<td>99</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2012/13</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2015/16 (est)</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>48 (est)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Main provision and local context

The College is located in a small town of 6300 residents, located approximately 20 miles outside London. It aims to serve the needs of both its local students, who are academically mixed, as well as significant numbers of students from its extended catchment. The College has managed to do this in recent years by offering a broad range of Level 3 courses (AS/A2/BTEC), which can be taken in virtually any combination. The College has also changed its Level 2 provision, by extending the range of Level 2 BTEC courses in response to interest from local partner schools.

The College has six partner 11-16 schools in the two local boroughs, which in recent years have contributed about 60 per cent of the College’s students. There are also three 11-18 faith schools and one general further education college serving the two boroughs. The remaining students come to the College from over 100 different schools, in part because of the excellent rail and bus links, which serve the town. As well as the three 11-18 schools, there is also strong competition from three other local sixth form colleges.

The College grew steadily from just over 1000 full-time 16-18 year olds in 2005 to 1261 students in 2011. Then, following a successful marketing strategy, numbers increased to 1471 students in 2013. However, the recent opening of five new school sixth forms in the outer catchment has had a big impact on numbers, which fell sharply to 1215 in September 2014. Although the number of students enrolling from the six partner schools has remained relatively steady for several years, numbers enrolling from the outer catchment has fallen sharply in the last two years.
For the past few years, the conversion rate from application to enrolment has been around 40 per cent. This is largely because students are encouraged by their schools to apply to more than one college or school sixth form. For the past three years, about 25 per cent of ‘live’ applicants failed to turn up to enrolment and a significant number of students have left the College in the first two weeks. The main reasons why students apply but do not enrol, or enrol and leave in the first few weeks after enrolment are stated as: high travel costs; time spent travelling; some school sixth forms / other colleges requiring lower entry GCSE grades for specific courses; returning to current school sixth form; offered a place at another college nearer home.

Overall, the academic ability of AS students (as judged by their GCSE score on entry) has remained constant between 5.9 and 6.0 for the past four years. Between 2011 and 2014, however, the proportion of AS students with an average score of 6.4+ has fluctuated between 32.1 and 27.4 per cent, whilst the proportion of those with an average score of <5.5 varied between 25.3 and 30.6 per cent. At A2, the average GCSE score rose from 6.0 in 2011 to 6.2 in 2013 and 2014. The proportion of students with an average score of 6.4+ rose from 34.2 per cent in 2011 to 42.9 per cent in 2014. The average GCSE score for Level 3 BTEC students has remained constant at 5.1 for the past four years. The proportion of Level 3 BTEC students with an average score of 6.4+ has increased from 13.3 per cent in 2012 to 19.9 per cent in 2014. In recent years, two of the six local 11-16 partner schools have been judged by Ofsted to be ‘inadequate’ whilst GCSE results in the other four schools are good and improving. This means that there is a wide range of academic ability within the College and ‘adding value’ to students who come from the improving schools is a challenge, as many have been spoon-fed to achieve their grades.

The curriculum

Aims and purposes

The College aims to provide a broad, high quality and responsive curriculum that meets the needs, aspirations and interests of students within its broader catchment area.

Current curriculum model

Currently, 95 per cent of students take Level 3 programmes. The College offers 41 AS levels, 39 A2s and 9 Level 3 BTEC subjects (one Extended Diploma and eight Diplomas/Sub Diplomas). The College also offers five Level 2 BTEC Certificate courses and four GCSE subjects. Currently, most first year Level 3 students take four AS or equivalent courses. Most second year Level 3 students take three A2 or equivalent courses. The requirement to take a fourth course in the second year was dropped in 2014, although around 30 per cent of second year students chose to take the Extended Project Qualification (EPQ).
The proportion of Level 3 students taking at least one Level 3 BTEC has risen sharply from 36 per cent in 2012 to 47 per cent in 2014, with 31 per cent of Level 3 students taking a mix of AS/A2 and Level 3 BTEC courses in 2014. Approximately 10 per cent of Level 3 students are also taking either Maths or English GCSE.

Entry requirements

The current entry requirement to study four AS Levels or equivalent is five A*-C grades including Maths and English at grade C. Students with five A* to C grades including English can take three AS Levels or equivalent with Maths GCSE re-sit. Students with four A*-C grades, including Maths or English, can take a Level 3 BTEC programme with Maths or English GCSE.

Most AS Levels require English GCSE at grade C. Some AS subjects, such as Biology, Psychology, Economics and Business Studies, require a grade C in Maths GCSE. A grade B in Maths GCSE is required for AS levels in Maths, Computing, Physics and Chemistry. Students wishing to take AS Biology, Physics, Chemistry or Computing must have a B in a science subject, and those wishing to take AS French, German or Spanish must have a grade B in that subject.

In 2012, the number of students starting Level 3 courses at age 17 was 80. This rose to 111 in 2013, with many students applying for a ‘fresh start’ from local 11-18 schools and other colleges. In 2014, the College took the decision to apply stricter entry requirements for ‘fresh starts’, because the success rate for these students was poor.

Contact/teaching time

In September 2012, when student numbers increased from 1360 to 1470, teaching time for AS and A2 courses was cut from 4 hours and 35 minutes to 4 hours and 10 minutes per week. At the same time, the number of AS/A2 or equivalent groups taught by a full-time teacher increased from five to five and a half. These changes were the result of introducing a new timetable, which was needed in order to fit the increased number of students into existing classrooms. In September 2014, the timetable was changed again after the completion of a new teaching block, allowing the teaching time per subject to be increased to 4 hours 30 minutes per week.

In 2014-15, a typical AS student currently has between 19.5 and 21 hours of taught time per week. This is made up of four x 4.5 hours of teaching plus one period of tutorial. About 30 per cent of first year students also participate in enrichment activities, on average lasting 1.5 hours per week.

In 2014-15, about half of the second year students have 15 hours of teaching, including a tutorial per week. The other half, who are taking an EPQ or another fourth course, or who participate in enrichment activities, have about 16.5 hours of teaching per week.
In 2014-15, most Level 2 students attend the College on four full days per week and take four courses (mostly Level 2 BTECs and GCSEs). They also have one tutorial period per week. This means they have, on average, 19.5 hours of teaching per week.

In addition, all students are expected to attend at least one period of independent learning in the Learning Centre each week, where staff are on hand to provide further support for their learning.

**Enrichment activities**

The College’s enrichment programme is considered to be a very important part of its provision. On Wednesday afternoons, students are offered the opportunity to take part in a range of activities including boys’ and girls’ football, rugby, netball, Duke of Edinburgh, choir, drama, dance, creative writing, debating, Latin for beginners, JAVA programming, Young Enterprise, fitness instructing and event planning. Students can also enrol onto the volunteering programme.

In addition, the College provides enrichment courses to encourage and support students who are aspiring to become vets or doctors and/or are aiming at attending a top university. Whilst the College does not traditionally send many students to Oxbridge, the success of these specific enrichment courses has resulted in four students being offered places at Oxford and Cambridge for 2015 – the highest number for six years.

Up until 2011-12, it was compulsory for all students to participate in one or more weekly enrichment activity. As a result of funding cuts, this programme has been heavily reduced each year since then and it is no longer compulsory.

**Tutorial and guidance**

Each student belongs to a tutor group that meets once a week for a group tutorial. Each tutor is allocated one lesson of 90 minutes per week in which they deliver a tutorial programme which covers a range of topics including active citizenship, study skills, personal safety, plagiarism, time management, drugs and alcohol awareness and basic first aid. Four times a year, the tutor programme is suspended in order to allow students to meet with their tutor on a one-to-one basis to monitor and discuss their academic progress. Tutors are responsible for writing employment and UCAS references, monitoring and dealing with poor attendance and are normally the first point of contact for parents. Tutors are managed by Guidance Team Leaders and work alongside a team of careers advisors, counsellors and other staff in Student Services who provide advice on welfare and financial matters. A rise in the number of students with mental health issues (especially anxiety and depression) has had a big impact on staff time. A team of Learning Assistants, led by the Support for Learning Manager, provides support to students with a wide range of learning needs, from students with specific
learning difficulties or disabilities through to study support in essay writing, time management and revision techniques.

**Adult Learning provision**

The College is relatively unusual for a sixth form college in that it has a significant Adult Learning provision, ranging from full-cost recovery courses to Foundation Degree level. For a number of years, the College provided a Foundation Degree course for a local university, which generated an annual surplus of over £250k. As a direct consequence of having their numbers of undergraduates capped, the university halved the number of places on the Foundation Degree course in September 2012 and withdrew this provision completely in September 2013.

In 2013-14, the College had a Skills Funding Agency income of around £314k. In addition, the College earned another £188k from its full-cost recovery courses, generating a surplus of £37k. However, in 2014-15, the SFA income was reduced to £275k and enrolments onto full-cost recovery courses have declined. The future of this whole provision is currently under review.

**Challenges, curriculum plans and strategies**

Until 2011-12, the College offered students a ‘busy programme’, which comprised academic courses, tutorial and compulsory enrichment courses. On average, students had 20 hours 15 minutes of teaching time per week. As a result of this ‘busy programme’, the College’s standard learner number (SLN) was 1.43, which was the seventh highest of all sixth form colleges. This meant that the College has had to make greater savings than many other sixth form colleges as a result of the implementation of Study Programmes. This coincided with the significant loss of income from its Foundation Degree provision.

In order to manage the steep reduction in income, the College devised a strategy to grow from 1260 to 1500 full time students by 2014-15, alongside making savings wherever possible. Between September 2011 and September 2013, the College successfully grew to just under 1500 students.

For the 2012-13 budget, significant savings were made by decreasing the number of heads of curriculum departments, increasing teacher contact time, decreasing student contact time, removing the ‘busy programme’ by cutting the number and range of enrichment courses (for example, the range of sporting activities was significantly reduced), charging students for materials wherever it was permitted and moving some administrative functions, such as responsibility for examinations, staff development and management information systems from teachers to support staff. A number of teachers took voluntary redundancy and two part-time teachers of sign language and rowing were made redundant.

During 2013-14, as the level of transitional protection reduced and as the full impact of the loss of the Foundation Degree course was felt, further savings
were made for the 2014-15 budget. This included a voluntary reduction in teaching hours for some teachers, further voluntary redundancies and one compulsory redundancy. The senior leadership team was reduced from five to four and wherever possible, vacancies were filled by staff on lower salaries. Second year students were no longer required to take a fourth subject.

For 2015-16, savings of a further £1.2m must be found compared with 2014-15. This is largely a result of the loss of 256 students, but is also due to the 17.5 per cent reduction in funding for those age 18 at the start of the academic year and increases in pension and national insurance contributions. In 2016-17, further annual savings of over £350k will be needed as the final tranche of transitional protection is removed.

Plans to save this money include changes to student programmes of study, a reduction in the range of courses we offer, a further round of redundancies, a further reduction in management costs, cuts to the staff development budget, planned maintenance and replacement of equipment. The College will attempt to diversify its income through increased lettings, but this is not expected to generate a significant amount of money.

With the introduction of linear A levels and harder Level 3 BTEC qualifications, the College is reducing the number of courses that most new students will take from September 2015. All new Level 3 students will normally take only three courses in their first year, instead of the current four. In order to maintain market share, students with a good set of GCSE results will be permitted to take a fourth course at Level 3 if they wish. Students who need to re-take Maths and/or English GCSE will normally take this as an extra course. Further changes to study programmes include a potential reduction in time allocated to tutorial/guidance and further reductions to enrichment.

These curriculum changes are being made solely in response to the reduction in the level of funding. The College cannot afford to keep its current level of provision and remain financially viable.
Conclusion

A confluence of five perfect storm factors

In Part 1, *Towards a worthwhile sixth form curriculum*, David Igoe, Chief Executive of the Sixth Form Colleges Association (SFCA), talked of the real risks to the sixth form college curriculum as a result of funding cuts following the withdrawal of transitional protection. This financial threat is certainly reflected in the accounts from the four case-study colleges.

However, their stories indicate a more complex and potentially damaging situation as the result of the confluence of five ‘perfect storm’ factors – persistent education funding cuts; demographic decline that still has some way to go; cuts to local services and student finances that make travelling to learn more difficult; increased costs of addressing mental health issues amongst students and, crucially, the saturation of the local education market by new school providers that set up in direct competition to these SFCs. Local, comprehensive, high quality and inclusive provision is at risk.

Responses from the colleges

The four case-study SFCs report their efforts to offer a choice-based; diverse and high quality curriculum that is superior to that being offered by the majority of school sixth forms in their locality. Although the colleges involved in this study are themselves relatively small in comparison to most other SFCs, they are often the largest provider of advanced level 16-19 education in their area. Therefore, not only is curriculum choice and education quality under threat, so are economies of scale when the public funding of education is so tight.

The five perfect storm factors, however, are not breaking on each institution in an identical way. Local context and institutional characteristics continue to count. Two of the colleges in particular are feeling the effects of a sudden increase in the intensity of institutional competition, which in the last year has halted and even reversed recent increases in student numbers. One college, on the other hand, exists in a very particular and isolated ‘local ecology’ in which it continues plays a pivotal role amidst a range of weaker providers. The fourth college is untypical for a small SFC because it is actually expanding, having taken advantage of being able to recruit high attaining students across a global city region as well as having dedicated feeder schools.

Nevertheless, all four institutions feel under financial pressure, while their responses have differed according to the variable impact of the other ‘storm factors’. Financial constraint is not new, although it is becoming much worse. In response, cost savings have been underway for some time and these have included reduction in support staff; voluntary and even compulsory redundancies amongst teaching staff; and an increased reliance on staff goodwill to deliver the curriculum. But now it is the SFC curriculum itself that
will be hit, with three of the four colleges planning significant changes for 2016/17. The expanding college, and evidently the most confident, thinks it can ‘hold the line’ regarding its A Level offer and keep its focus on high quality teaching and learning. However, the more vulnerable institutions are planning to retrench to a three A Level model and to reduce the amount of taught time for each subject, thus abandoning the last vestiges of the *Curriculum 2000* reforms and the fourth AS subject. The reasons for this are not simply financial, they are also a response to the threat of new linear A Levels, which are being perceived as being too risky for some students to take large programmes. At the same time, all four colleges are trying to retain some provision in terms of tutoring or enrichment activity although, in most cases, also at a reduced level. Some of the institutions are becoming more selective in their recruitment. Despite an interest by some in wanting to promote a ‘Level 2.5’ for students who need three years of tuition rather than two, the current climate may frustrate a needed development. This is not only due to the recent cut in funding for 18 year olds, but also as a result of impending funding reductions.

The part-time curriculum - a reversal of standards, opportunity and inclusion

The threats to breadth of the SFC curriculum could well lead to a reversal of standards and opportunities. First, there will be an undermining of the distinctiveness of the SFC offer, which has traditionally been noted for its breadth and opportunity. Localities will be worse off because school sixth forms usually cannot offer the same richness or choice of provision as SFCs which means a narrower range of A Levels with the potential loss of some specialist subjects, such as Music or the less common Modern Foreign Languages. Second, the standard of upper secondary education in England compared internationally will diminish. As the section on hours of tuition in six national systems shows, England already lags well behind more successful advanced upper secondary education systems that provide greater breadth of study and greater support for longer periods of time. England’s approach – in effect a part-time upper secondary education curriculum - will increase the international gap, particularly in relation to the second year of advanced level study. Third, in this context it is the ‘middle attainers’, who often just satisfy entry requirements to A Level study, who are likely to suffer the most. These are the students who need more support and who have been able to take four AS subjects in the first year of advanced level study, providing them with the option of dropping the subject which they are not doing so well in before starting their second year. They need choices in the first year of advanced level study to know what they are most likely to succeed in – the fourth AS thus effectively works as a ‘safety net’ as well as broadening their study programme. Restricted choice could well lead to greater levels of drop-out from or repetition of advanced level programmes, which is a waste not only of public funds but of time and opportunity for these young people.
Supporting a full 16-19 curriculum for all

The *Towards a worthwhile curriculum* section provides an outline of a curriculum entitlement that reflects the aspirations of SFCs and their students within the traditions of a good English advanced level education. This curriculum should comprise the following:

- At least four AS levels leading to 3/4/5 full A levels or a vocational equivalent (IB as an alternative)
- An Extended Project Qualification and/or Critical Thinking.
- Relevant and demanding work experience (essential for many careers such as medicine, veterinary, engineering).
- Opportunities for personal growth through sport, drama, music, clubs, societies, trips and visits
- Tutorials for target setting, progress monitoring, Career and UCAS application advice, personal, social, health and citizenship-related issues, counselling and personal support as necessary.

With regards to hours of tuition and support each week for an advanced level student in the first year of study, this framework would require a minimum of the following:

- Four x 4.5 hours per AS subject or vocational equivalent
- Three hours per week for enrichment, work experience, research short courses and maths and English (for those who need it)
- One hour for tutorial sessions.

It would seem, therefore, that the minimum entitlement for students to undertake study that helps sustain their participation in upper secondary education and provides them with the opportunity to develop specialist knowledge and broad 21st Century Competences will require a minimum of 22 hours of tuition and guided learning per week (about 830 hours per year). This is significantly more than the notional 600 hours provided by the new 16-19 Programmes of Study. There is also a strong case for this level of support to be maintained in the second year of study because of the need to engage with an EPQ and the opportunity to take a contrasting subject if one of the four AS subjects is not continued to a full A Level. Other upper secondary systems described in this report do not reduce hours in upper secondary education compared with lower secondary education nor in the second and third year of study compared with the first.

A higher number of hours would also be needed to support the introduction of a National Baccalaureate. The English system appears to be entering an era of baccalaureates with increasing agreement across the political spectrum that A Levels on their own are not enough. SFCs have contributed to this movement for a broader and more innovative curriculum by piloting the SFBac. The curriculum framework and its costs outlined above are arguably the minimum for a baccalaureate framework to be successfully implemented.
in SFCs in order to realise the aspiration of breadth, quality and achievement for the whole cohort.

However, the problems facing curriculum breadth and entitlement cannot simply be addressed by funding, critical though this is. Something has to be done about the other ‘perfect storm factors’ and, in particular, the destabilizing and fragmenting effects of local institutional competition and the over supply of 16-19 provision. An out-of-control market for a declining cohort of 14-19 year olds is damaging high quality post-16 provision. Greater choice of institution is leading to diminished curriculum choice. What is needed is a new era of 14-19 collaboration, with colleges, schools and work-based learning providers working together in the interests of all students in a locality. With demographic changes and fiscal constraint many areas will also need to consider the more difficult issue of rationalizing 16-19 provision by reducing the number of small school sixth forms and creating (or supporting existing) more viable and cost-effective providers.
The Sixth Form Colleges’ Association (SFCA) has been representing the interests of the sector since Sixth Form Colleges became independent corporations in 1993. Since that time, the role of SFCA has evolved considerably. While the main role of the Association is still to negotiate national pay and conditions with the trade unions that represent teaching and support staff, the organisation has three other key functions:

**Representing Sixth Form Colleges:** particularly in discussions and negotiations with officials from government departments and agencies.

**Promoting Sixth Form Colleges:** to a wide range of stakeholders including the media, politicians and potential students.

**Supporting Sixth Form Colleges:** on a range of issues (including HR, funding and industrial relations) through the provision of research, guidance and one to one advice.