SOUTH STAFFORDSHIRE COLLEGE

Compact Report V7
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Assessment Information

Assessment Type	Accreditation Review
Assessor's Decision	Standard Met
Assessor's Name	Graham Walton
Visit Date	20 - 29/03/2023
Client ID	C11409
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Continuous Improvement Check Year 1 due by	6/04/2024
Continuous Improvement Check Year 2 due by	6/04/2025
Accreditation Review onsite visit to be conducted by	6/04/2026

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Organisation – Introduction, Aims, Objectives and Outcomes

South Staffordshire College (SSC) was established in 2009 through the merger of several Colleges that combined to serve a large area of the Midlands. The identity of the Colleges has been preserved with each College site referred to as 'College', for example Tamworth College. The College has campuses at 5 sites in East and South Staffordshire:

- Cannock Campus: Skills and Innovation Hub in collaboration with the local Council which delivers courses, training and apprenticeship opportunities for the local and wider communities

- Lichfield Campus: joint venture between the College and Staffordshire University that delivers mainly creative arts and business provision along with Adult Community Courses (ACL) programmes

- Rodbaston Campus: specialises in a Land Based Curriculum and includes an equestrian centre

- Tamworth Campus: focuses on vocational provision and offers courses in hair and beauty, catering, sport, travel and public services, engineering, automotive, IT and business

- TORC Centre in Tamworth: offers SLDD and high needs provision alongside construction

There are currently 5362 learners at SSC: Study Programme (2634), Adults (1910), Apprenticeships (722) and Higher Education (96). The College delivered vocational learning to over 362, 14-16-year-old school pupils across a wide range of sector areas including Motor Vehicle, Construction, Catering and Land based provision. Education and training are delivered in 14 of the Skills Funding Agency's sector subject areas.

The College has an Executive Leadership Team (ELT) consisting of 6 members which is supported by the Leadership Team. Strategically, the intention is to concentrate on quality with targeted growth areas. For the 14-19, adult provision, and apprenticeships learners these will be in engineering, electrical, digital and the health sector. In Level 4, Level 5, higher education and higher apprenticeships they are engineering, digital, health and wellbeing sectors and business and creative industries. The number of campuses may be reduced to 4 sites as there will be a new College building opening at Tamworth soon.

The SSC vision is to be a '*first choice College'* and the College purposes are around '*transforming people's lives*' through the 5 Ps (Performance, Provision, Promise, Prosperity and Participation). Current priorities include boosting the workforce at all levels, increasing the employability and self-confidence of all individuals through effective career education, increasing CPD opportunities for employees and ensuring the content of education and training programmes is innovative and up to date. The Values in place are to be *Supportive, Transparent, Ambitious, Respectful* and *Sustainable.* At the same time, SSC has '*Careers not courses'* as its strapline. Leadership and direction are further considered on pages 9,10 and 13.

There is an SSC Careers Strategy which also functions as the Information, Advice and Guidance (IAG) Policy. The Strategy aim is to '*encourage and empower learners of all ages to explore the full range of options available to them after their chosen course of study ends*', and also wanting to '*ensure that our learners have both the aptitude and skills to effectively communicate and add value within the workplace and their local community*'. The College monitors its compliance against the Government's Career Strategy, including the 8 Gatsby Benchmarks. The Gatsby Benchmarks mean average remains stable, with 7 Benchmarks having 100% achievement.

Staff from across SSC described what IAG meant to themselves:

- "*When I give my IAG, I have a chat with the person about their interests and then I tell them about the different courses. I know when I reach my limit, and I speed them on to the next contact for their input*" (Learner Services Hub Administrator)

- "*IAG is where we respond to learners' enquiries that come through different channels*" (Learner Services Coordinator)

- "*Our first conversations with learners are around IAG as we help them establish their journey. These conversations can take place throughout their course as we continue to help them decide what to do next*" (Director of Faculty)

- "*IAG captures what learners know at the beginning and where they want to be. Our IAG continues throughout their apprenticeship to see where they are and then gives them the options for their choices*" (Apprenticeship Tutor)

- "*IAG is about enabling and empowering learners to make decisions for themselves, I always tell them myself that it is not my decision*" (Careers Advisor)

Learners are provided with an overview of the IAG that they can expect whilst undertaking their SSC programme. The Handbook informs them that there are '*qualified and impartial Careers Guidance Advisors who offer career information, advice and guidance to current and prospective learners. Any potential learner who is unsure what course to apply for, or what career options are available within the subject area they are interested in, can book an appointment to discuss their ideas with the team'.* At the same time, all learners are provided with a tour of the Campus with their Tutor during their initial induction which includes them being shown the IAG that they can access. This includes an introduction to the mentors and the Hub staff who are there who can be contacted for IAG. The tutorial staff see the learners on a regular basis and one of their roles is to signpost the learners to other College services, such as the mentors where they can access specific IAG.

In terms of the outcomes from IAG, SSC has established a range of objectives. It is intended to give the learners the opportunities to explore the various options available to them. Another outcome is that it will support the learner in increasing their resilience, self-awareness and confidence. IAG is intended to reduce the risk of learners becoming NEET (Not in Employment, Education or Training). Outcomes for those intending to go to university are that they will understand university entry requirements and know how to write an effective UCAS application and personal statement. When applicable, an IAG outcome is that learners will be successful in applying for their next level course or apprenticeship vacancy via the National Apprenticeship Service (NAS). In 2022, the outcomes were considered when SSC set up a working group to take a deep dive into IAG across the College. Staff from across SSC were able to consistently capture the IAG's purpose and its outcomes:

- "*IAG is about getting the right student on the right course so they can then get the right job*" (Assistant Principal)

- "*IAG fits in with everything, with every bit of the College. It helps learners change their minds if they need to and achieve the job that will help society*" (Learner Services Manager)

- "*At SSC we care about everybody who comes through the door, we want to hear their success stories and see them grow*" (Learner Services Coordinator)

- "*We're the middle person, we're the signposters, to help our learners to get to their goal*" (Learner Services Hub Administrator)

- "*IAG is to find the right course. Students are not sure what to do, our IAG has to manage their expectations"* (FE Teaching Staff)

- "*All staff at the College are involved in IAG, learners' aspirations can only be achieved if our IAG is fit for purpose*" (Learning Support Manager)

- "*There are so many options that the learners can feel overwhelmed, with our IAG we help them with the bigger picture and how they can know themselves.* (Careers Coordinator)

- "*Our learners have spent the whole time being told what to do, IAG is about helping them go down the road themselves. It is their journey; we have to help them take care of their own business*" (Mentor)

- "*IAG makes sure the right information is provided for the learner to make the right decision for their future. We need to give them information that helps them make sure they get to where they want to be*" (Head of Marketing)

Various approaches and processes are in place to measure and evaluate the learner outcomes. These include induction learning walks and more general learning walks, induction surveys, student focus groups, and exit monitors. The resulting evidence is formally reviewed when the Curriculum Managers meet 3 times a year and rate individual areas Red, Amber or Green. The outcomes are used to inform how services can be improved and developed. For example, the provision of IAG to adult learners was judged as needing further development. It has therefore been decided to introduce in 2022/23 progression tutorials for adult learners. A channel has been added to the Careers Team, where relevant information for adult learners can be added as and when received.

There are also a wide range of Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) in place which are used to measure and evaluate service delivery. These are considered on pages 9 and 13.

IAG is very much seen by all staff as being an integral part of their role and purpose and is evident throughout the learner journey:

- **Course planning**: Labour Management Information (LMI) and metrics from previous courses are applied when new courses are being planned. IAG is also accessed around skills gaps and opportunities including establishing salary levels and what career options that the course will lead to

- **Prior to enrolment**: SSC staff attend career conferences, school careers activities and open events where IAG will be made available. Prospective learners contact the College about a possible course through various channels including by phone, face to face, when attending open events. People can also go onto the SSC web page where they can make an application. A Hub Team member will forward the expression of interest to the appropriate SSC staff member who will respond with IAG

- **Course offer**: An IAG course presentation is then provided which SSC is currently trialling instead of a face-to-face interview. If people wish to join the course, an email invitation is sent out with a conditional offer. There is a link if people wish to accept the offer. IAG is also contained in the email

- **Lead up to enrolment**: A further email is received in February in which people are invited to a taster and also receive a 'keep warm' IAG newsletter. IAG continues to be accessible to the individual via the new applicant hub as well as through social media. IAG is available on learner bursaries and a course preview day is arranged after Easter for those learners who have applied and been accepted. Peer IAG is accessed at this day so that the future learner will connect with others who will be on their course

- **Enrolment and induction**: IAG are sent which outlines what needs to be brought in when learners enrol. All enrolments take place on site when they meet their teaching team who

deliver IAG. An induction day takes place where the mentors are introduced as the tutors provide them with IAG. There is a 4-week induction period for learners. The Induction Programme for 2022 was viewed which is undertaken by all full-time learners and is delivered in the first 4 weeks of the Tutorial Programme. The Course Tutor will take responsibility for all parts of the induction being completed. IAG is a key component of this Induction Programme which includes completing the Careers Learning Plan, industry placement/ work experience

- The learner works with their tutor to produce a career learning plan which is completed sequentially throughout the course and which records the IAG received. Learners have a Career Learning Plan which is used to monitor the learner's career journey, with career planning meetings being based on the plan. The learners' decisions on what actions they would take to reach the next level are identified. The process includes the learners setting SMARTER targets on what they need to do to progress. In the recent induction learner survey, 92% or more learners agreed that '*the guidance I received at enrolment was helpful*' and 89% or more learners agreed that '*I received good advice on the extra support and guidance I could access*'

- **During the course**: Throughout the programme, the Hub Learner Service Administrators are available at each site for IAG which includes signposting and referring learners to the Careers Team. There is also access to mentors at each Campus who can provide IAG. The Careers Team makes available various IAG activities throughout the programme. IAG covers areas such as UCAS personal statements and CV writing, and there is a clear channel between each curriculum area and the Careers Team. Learners can also book a face-to-face IAG session either online or through the Hub staff. The Team is involved in National Careers Week. After each 1 to 1 session, the learner receives an email with an agreed list of actions. Learners can have their IAG personal session delivered face to face or digitally.

  Learners have a 'right course' interview after 4 weeks to establish if they are on the right course for them. Learners receive a further five 1:1 tutorial throughout the academic year, allowing progress to be reviewed and targets set to support their personal development, and the growth of their academic and industry skills. This includes progress relating to meaningful work experience. If a learner indicates they are looking to leave their programme, they are referred to the Careers Team for supportive IAG. Each learner has a progression tutorial where they consider their next steps. Where needed, tutors arrange for a further IAG session with learners from the Careers Team. The progression interview is followed up by an exit tutorial where the proposed progression outcomes are considered. In the recent survey of full-time learners on programme, 89% or more learners agreed that '*I am aware of what I can do after my programme'* and 88% or more learners agreed that '*This College course is helping me make future decisions about my future*'

- **Post-course completion**: Good relationships have been built up between the College and its learners who have completed their course. As a result, learners frequently contact the SSC for IAG on their future career and also establish College courses they may wish to enrol in

The above procedures are amended and adapted to deliver bespoke IAG for Learning Difficulty and/or Disability (LDD) and Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) learners. The Careers Team are involved in making IAG available at the learners IAG review meetings where the Education Health Care Plan (ECHP) is produced. There is a group of tutors who provide IAG to distance learners that tend to focus on career pathways and how different courses can help them get there. Across all Campuses, there are well maintained notice boards which display IAG content.

Social media is used extensively to promote courses and programmes to prospective learners. These postings direct to the SSC website where further details can be accessed. The Careers Service also makes IAG available from its website where links are provided to careers for those looking to work in specific areas such as law, sport, and construction. Parent or carers can contact the Careers Team for IAG if needed.

Learners were able to describe to the Assessor how the IAG they had received had impacted on themselves as individuals:

- "*My expectations have been exceeded with my course, my tutor sees me regularly and helps me develop weekly SMART targets*"

- "*All the time I get encouragement and help to be independent*"

- "*It is made clear to us that, if we are struggling about anything or have nothing in reserve, the tutors are here for us*"

- "*All my teachers have different experiences, and they share that with us – they are really comfortable doing this so we can make our choices*"

- "*They get us ready for industry through their previous work in industry, they don't sugarcoat things – they tell it as it is*"

- "*My school suggested I go to a college open day; I was clear I wanted to go on a sports course. That open day changed my life as I realised doing a public service course would mean I could do sports and get a job*"

- "*I never knew about all the opportunities that were available in hairdressing. My tutors all have practical experience which has helped me appreciate what is out there*"

- "*I was not set on what I wanted to do, I got really scared at the open day and the Tutor sat me down and helped me find the course for me*"

- "*The opportunities are there for everyone – we get to meet and talk to people from industry to see what the world is really like*"

- "*I want to have my business eventually and I am getting the IAG that is going to help me get there*"

- "*I did not have a clue what I wanted to do but my tutor helped me decide, they then gave me contacts and help in successfully being accepted on an apprenticeship programme*"

- "*There are so many opportunities out there that I had no idea about until my tutor helped me look to my future*"

SSC has moved forward positively after COVID-19 and has used its experiences that technology is embedded and apparent in everybody's work. All staff are passionate about making sure learners succeed in moving to where they want to be. There is a sense of pride in the positive differences SSC makes in ensuring the employability of their learners. Evidence based practice is apparent across the College where staff apply performance data and lessons from external initiatives to continually improve the IAG and the wider learner experience.

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Strengths

A number of strengths were identified during the assessment, which are detailed below. The numbers in brackets refer to the element and criteria of the **matrix** Standard.

- SSC has set up effective systems and processes to measure and evaluate the Key Performance Indicators (KPIs). All staff were able to identify with the Assessor the KPIs they were responsible for, how they were performing and how KPIs were used to enable improvement. There is a headline SSC Quality Improvement Plans (QIP) that is broken down by KPIs for the individual ELT member. Each has a list of responsibilities with KPIs that they have to report on performance to the SSC Governors. The curriculum areas have KPIs that link in with the headline KPIs with individual College services establishing their own. SSC staff members took the Assessor through the SSC Prosolution dashboard which includes their KPIs and described how they had improved IAG as a result of the performance data:

  o The Assistant Principal was responsible for the College retention KPI which was 92%. This was not quite being reached. As a result, further IAG sessions took place for those learners who were identified as being at risk of leaving

  o The Head of Marketing's KPIs are primarily based around the number of learners recruited and the income generated. It was established that an adult plumbing course had had 15 applicants but there had only been 8 entrants. Further investigation established that these prospective learners did not have timetable information on when the courses were delivered and how long it would last. IAG is now provided across these areas and enrolments have improved

  o The Hub staff KPI on timeliness is to respond to all emails on the day of receipt and to complete any action on applications within 3 days of receipt. These are being met but there are pressure points during the academic year. Work is taking place to establish the specific times, and interventions are occurring to bring performance up

  o It was established that work was needed around improving the IAG for adult to make sure adult learners make informed decisions about their future careers. Various KPIs were put in place including decreasing the early withdrawal numbers (within 42 days) and improving attendance. Work has taken place on establishing through a survey why adult learners withdraw from their course with employment changes and gaining employment being the two main reasons. The decision has been made to introduce mental health in the survey as it currently is not included

  The College dashboard also provides management information from previous years that captures KPI trends in recruitment, applications and enrolments. The QIPs and KPIs also feed into the College Self-Assessment Review (SAR). A trial has been completed by the Estates and IT services whereby their KPI outcomes were given bronze, silver and gold status. This will be rolled out across all services and linked to rewards and recognition. There is an expectation that every 6 weeks, services will provide a report on the progress in their key areas (1.1, 4.1)

- The 'Careers not courses' strapline very much shapes and directs how IAG is delivered to learners. All staff without exception were very complimentary and supportive about how the ELT conducts itself. They appreciated how visible they were and how they focused on the positive. Morale is excellent and staff described how it had improved year on year since 2019:

  o *"The ELT communication is great; we have a clear view that they are here to support staff"*

  o *"They have high standards and want the College to be the best for everyone"*

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- o *"ELT really are engaged – they connect with you and they listen".*
- o *"The ELT is good at communication, that is why SSC is a great place to work"*
- o *"The ELT always focus on the positive, they appreciate what we do and want to hear our views"*
- o *"They really value and appreciate staff; everybody trusts each other"* (1.2)

- Across the organisation, staff are involved in contributing to how the College develops both operationally and strategically. This is related to the effort invested by ELT in communicating with the wider College about developments and plans: "*At ELT, our major role is to support staff, we need to be seen*" (Assistant Principal). The communication channels include video conferencing, recorded videos, emails and walkabouts. Managers then take this information to their Teams to consider the implications for their delivery. An example was provided of a suggestion from a staff member that emails should not be sent after 18.00 or the weekends. This was considered by ELT and is now in place. Input is sought by ELT from staff to make suggestions and comments when the College strategy is reviewed. Staff were unanimously positive about ELT and their commitment to communicate.

  There are also processes and systems in place to support learners influencing how SSC operates. There were various examples apparent where the learners' involvement was apparent. Learners developed IAG content on the tools and equipment that engineering students can expected to use. Posters have been used which include QR codes that will take learners to student produced IAG videos. Learners described to the Assessor how they had worked with the College to improve Wi-Fi access throughout Campus. There is a Learner Forum which meets 3 times a year, and consists of elected students and all members of the ELT (1.7)

- At the organisational level, SSC works with Colleges across the West Midlands. There are also strong links with the Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPS) and the West Midlands Combined Authority (WMCA). Effective partnership is present across SSC at the curriculum area and the service level. For example, the SSC Careers Team undertakes joint work with the Stoke and Staffordshire Careers Hub and the Careers and Enterprise Company. The following are examples that show where IAG has been taken forward through partnership:
  - o Elective Home Education Officers given a tour of the College and IAG about their provision so that they can understand and appreciate the College offer
  - o IAG is provided to public service learners on site by a member of the armed forces, and the service has an opportunity to engage with future employees
  - o SSC learners are involved in local community arts festivals in performing, social media content, stage production and direction. The SSC learners receive IAG and experience about the world of work, while the community art charity can engage with younger members of the community
  - o IAG is provided on higher education for SSC learners, and there are opportunities to recruit future learners for university

  Partners expressed various views about SSC to the Assessor:
  - o "*SSC are always in touch and always update me with what is happening, they help learners work out where they want to go next. I have been really impressed with their February Taster days; it gives learners a real chance to see what is right for them*"

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- o "*They will give anything a go and are open to any ideas. They are really good at engaging with tutors and getting them onboard*"

- o "*They are a million times better than any other College; they act so quickly- they are fantastic*"

- o "*One of their strengths is communication, you never have to chase them, they are well-organised and good at leading*"

- o "*Communication is tremendous, we email every month and it is good to be involved with them*"

- There were various areas where the IAG delivered to learners was at a particularly high level:

  - o It was noted that learners were struggling with resilience and confidence levels as they moved into attending College after COVID-19. The College and staff have refined and adapted IAG to help learners' resilience and self confidence levels improve. If learners ask for help in making a doctor's appointment or contacting an outside organisation, they often expect the staff to make that call. IAG is provided about how to make the call, the staff member may be beside them when they make that call and can then give positive IAG to the learner achieving this. Staff described how they use real life scenarios to help them learn how to cope:

    - o "*We can help learners achieve more resilience and self-confidence through our IAG is that they know how to present themselves to others, and how to support the community*" (Learner Services Manager)

    - o "*Our IAG is to prepare the learners for their next steps, whatever they might be. The IAG helps them develop the skills they need to make a successful career. The skills we cover in our IAG also includes confidence and resilience to cope with the ever-changing world of work*" (Careers Coordinator)

    - o "*We have to work hard to build resilience in the learners: we get to know them, what they want to do and then gradually help them*" (Head of Faculty)

  - o Most curriculum areas have successfully brought in employers so that the learners can gain insight into working in their chosen industry. Various examples were presented showing the difference that this has made to learners. This was very much in evidence where learners on the animal management course received face to face IAG from an African game park employee. Learners expressed how this encounter had opened their horizons to work and also given them a more realistic understanding about employment

    - o "*We are preparing learners for the world of work, so the IAG has to be right*" (Curriculum Manager)

    - o "*With our IAG, we are helping learners identify the support mechanisms that they can find on their route*" (Curriculum Manager)

    - o "*IAG is massive here, it introduces the learner to all the opinions out there and it helps them broaden their thinking patterns. It is not just about getting to university; it is also about raising their aspirations and seeing how they can respond to the different barriers they will come across*" (Careers Coordinator)

  - o Learners were very much aware of their tutors' previous work experience and how they benefitted from tutors sharing their industry knowledge. For example, they discussed how their tutors had completed apprenticeships and incorporated this experience into IAG sessions:

- o "*My personal tutor is the go-to person, they help me sort everything out. I get help on so many things. They have first-hand knowledge of the industry so I know the information they give is spot on*" (Learner)

- o "*I use my professional experience in the IAG I give to apprenticeship learners, it is built on what I learned in industry*" (Apprenticeship Tutor) (3.2)

- SSC seems to have moved effectively on the journey to digital delivery. There is an SSC Digital Strategy which aims to '*support the adoption of digital learning & technology across the college or provide /identify an escalation point for referral of support'. A* Learner Service Hub Administrator observed that "*we have moved away from paper, so that when I am looking for a course for learners, our website has everything I need*". Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) are now embedded in IAG and a wide range of examples were presented showing how it has been enhanced and improved as a result:

  - o Staff have set up various What'sApp groups across the College that are used to access peer IAG when individuals do not have the information they need

  - o The ProSolution dashboard quickly and easily presents data and KPIS outcomes that inform what IAG learners will receive

  - o Development work is taking place with the company Hundo to implement a careers digital platform that learners can use to shape their careers

  - o An App has been produced to help SSC learners receive IAG about their course including access to their College emails, timetables, printer credit balance, and attendance records in one place on their phone/tablet device. They can access information from Learner Services, receive key news from the College and a link and speak directly to the Marketing Team to share their success stories with us (4.7)

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Areas for Development

Areas for development are offered in the spirit of continuous improvement and a way for an Assessor to add value e.g. where the service is of a high quality, development areas are offered to help the service be even better than it already is, or to give insight into practices seen elsewhere. There is no correlation between the number of strengths and areas for development. Where development areas are greater in number this is not intended to indicate that the information, advice and guidance service is in any way lacking. These will form the basis for discussion at the Continuous Improvement Checks (CIC) conducted twelve and twenty-four months from the date of this Assessment, along with any other notable developments. The numbers in brackets refer to the element and criteria of the **matrix** Standard.

- There is the KPI in SSC about the time taken to reply to an external call. Most of the time, 98% are answered in 41 seconds but during enrolment this falls to 46%. This is a crucial time when prospective learners are seeking IAG about course provision. Having this delayed response to their IAG call could result in some prospective learners not persisting in trying to make contact (1.1)

- In terms of the strategic direction for IAG at SSC there is the Careers Strategy which also functions as the IAG policy. This is very effective in establishing the purpose of Careers and Education Information Advice and Guidance (CEIAG) but does not cover the broader IAG that is in place at SSC. Consideration could be given to developing a policy that reflects the IAG range. SSC has set up effective systems and processes to measure and evaluate the Key Performance Indicators (KPIs). All staff were able to identify with the Assessor the KPIs they were responsible for how they were performing and how KPIs were used to enable improvement (1.2)

- Up until t March 2021, NEET provision was provided through the College Collaboration Fund (CCF) project. With this project ending, the IAG NEET students received had not been at the same level. SSC may wish to consider how IAG can be developed to the standard set before March 2021 (1.3)

- Social media is used effectively and promptly to provide potential learners with IAG about new courses and developments. This is when curriculum areas forward the content to Marketing for inclusion in the social media postings and on the website. There are some SSC curriculum areas where the content could be provided more promptly and effectively. If this occurred, awareness of SSC course provision could be extended.

- The **matrix** logo is not consistently included on the SSC website and it does not appear that staff use the **matrix** logo in their email signatures. If the profile was raised, it could indicate to learners and parents the IAG quality that can be expected (1.6)

- A template is used by tutors to record the information about the new courses they are providing. These go to the MIS department for the course code to be included, and are then forwarded to Marketing for dissemination through social media and the website. There are occasions when the code is not included when received by Marketing which results in delays in social media postings etc. SSC may wish to ensure the codes are present from the outset to allow the College to increase awareness of new course provision (2.2)

- Learners have contact with a range of staff when receiving IAG, including the Learning Service Administrators in the Student Hubs. These staff provide a wide range of IAG which covers signposting and information about courses. The 'Learning Service Administrator' job title does not reflect the wider IAG responsibilities. SSC may wish to explore whether the job titles could be amended to more accurately reflect their roles (2.3)

- The processes and systems in place for the teaching staff Continuing Professional Development (CPD) are effective and appreciated. Tutors frequently mentioned the value they gained from the action learning research projects they participated in with their peers. There is not the same level of CPD provision for administrative staff. There may be some value in replicating the action learning projects with administrative staff. The outcome could inform future IAG provision and the process could be beneficial for the participants (2.4)

- In terms of IAG delivery, SSC could consider the following:

  o IAG at the College is delivered by a range of staff through a variety of channels and at different times during the learner journey. There may be some value in the various IAG stakeholders in the College collaborating to produce a detailed IAG journey map. The process itself could be informative for the participants and the outcomes could be the identification of troughs and peaks in the journey. The resulting map could provide insight that future learners could benefit from

  o Throughout this Review, staff outlined the changes they had perceived in their interactions with parents post COVID-19. There were higher levels of anxiety and the identification of different expectation levels. In this context, SSC may wish to develop an IAG process which clarifies what IAG can be provided to parents and also what is expected from parents. This could provide the framework for the provision of effective IAG to this group

  o When contacting the College, people are given a single number to contact which takes them to the Student Hub. This reduces the chances for first point of call resolution which impacts on the quality of IAG provision. This could be resolved if there were more direct contact lines to specific services and departments than are currently in place

  o Most tutors are impartial in the IAG they provide and give learners the same levels of information about the options open to them. There are some instances where the tutors consistently recommend universities above apprenticeship programmers. The College may look to ensure there is equity in the recommendations made to learners so that they can effectively make their career choices

  o Learners' awareness of career opportunities and the world of work is significantly enhanced when the curriculum areas bring in people from the industry to provide IAG. This happens across most curriculum areas but not in some. SSC could establish how this is addressed so that all College learners benefit from the same experiences (3.2)

- Staff members discussed with the Assessor how they provided the College with the details of learners they had supported who could be contacted for feedback. There were instances where the staff did not see the resulting feedback from the leaner. In the context of continual improvement, the College may wish to ensure the feedback is available to the relevant staff member (4.3)

The annual **matrix** Continuous Improvement Check will allow the organisation to demonstrate on an ongoing basis the developments they are continuing to make in order to support individuals. These may include the Areas for Development above. https://matrixstandard.com/assessment-journey/continuous-improvement-checks/

Please note that annual Continuous Improvement Checks are mandatory and non-completion within the required timescale will impact on your organisation's accreditation, please see the section Assessment Information for dates.

Methodology

The following methods were used to gather evidence against the **matrix** Standard during the assessment process.

The SSC **matrix** 3 Year Review took place remotely, over an 8-day period. Telephone interviews were held with 7 partner employers and 5 focus groups took place with 20 learners in total. There were also interviews with 35 staff. Prior to the Review, the organisation's website was accessed, as were their social media channels. The Assessor was provided with links to video tours of the 5 Campuses. Walkthroughs took place of various systems in place at SSC.

An outcomes session was held where the Assessor gave feedback on the Review.16 documents were provided by SSC and viewed both prior and during the Review.

Conditions of Accreditation

Holders of the **matrix** Standard Accreditation must:

1. Maintain and continually improve upon their services.

2. Throughout the period of accreditation satisfy The Growth Company that the organisation continues to meet the requirements of the **matrix** Standard via the annual continuous improvement checks and the three-year accreditation review.

3. Complete annual continuous improvement checks in a timely way, it is expected these will be carried out annually by the accreditation anniversary date.

4. Inform The Growth Company or their Assessor if the key contact name/contact details change.

5. Submit their Booking Form for re-accreditation to the **matrix** Standard at least 3 months prior to the accreditation anniversary date ensuring all pre on-site activity is completed in a timely way including planning, payment and interview scheduling. Accreditation Reviews are due 3 years from the anniversary accreditation date; it is expected that organisations will be assessed by this date or will risk being de-accredited.

6. Inform The Growth Company of any significant changes made to the organisational structure, senior management or systems that may impact on their accreditation; email: matrixStandard@growthco.uk.

7. Inform The Growth Company immediately if they wish to extend or reduce the scope of their accreditation.

8. Inform The Growth Company of any serious complaint or rise in numbers of complaints received (within the scope of the accreditation).

9. Not undertake or omit to undertake any activity that may be misleading and/or may cause The Growth Company and/or the **matrix** Standard to be brought into disrepute.

10. Only use the **matrix** Standard Quality Mark for the areas within the scope of the accreditation and in accordance with the guidelines. For example, if a certain department is successfully **matrix** accredited, the Quality Mark can only be used on that department's letterhead or on that department's page on their internet homepage.

11. Ensure in cases where accreditation is withdrawn or where they do not come forward for accreditation review, remove from display any certificates or plaques issued by The Growth Company and do not display the **matrix** Standard Quality Mark nor refer to be a former holder of the **matrix** Standard.

12. Be aware that The Growth Company reserves the right to remove any accreditation and/or certification previously applied if payment is not received for services provided.