



ASPECT

Advice • School • Progression • Employability • Careers • Transition

**Standing on my own two feet:
Developing independent learners**

▪ KAT KNIGHT - ASPECT TEAM AT WESTON COLLEGE

■ KAT KNIGHT

I have been with Weston College since August 2013, starting as a graduate trainee before taking over as HE and External Progression Officer in January 2014 on an interim basis, taking it on permanently in August 2014. I have coordinated three successful UCAS cycles, with a College record breaking cycle in 2015. I fundamentally believe in offering individualised support for learners and has been an integral part of the ASPECT team's work in improving our service to ensure it is accessible and right for the learner.



- INTRODUCTION

- Weston College supports over 700 students with their applications to higher education every year
- This requires a huge amount of work from the College's careers team and from their tutors, but also means that we need to encourage learners to be independent to ensure that they take ownership of their application
- This session will give you an idea of the things we do to encourage independence that you can hopefully use in some way in your own institution

■ WESTON COLLEGE

- Weston College serves the community of North Somerset and Somerset
- North Somerset has the seventh biggest gap between most and least deprived areas in the country
 - Parts of W-s-M are now in the most deprived 1% nationally
- In regards to the proportion of the young population that participates in higher education W-s-M is recorded in the lowest two quintiles (HEFCE)
- Creating brighter futures

- THE ASPECT TEAM

- Weston College's Student Progression Team were re-branded ASPECT (Advice, Schools, Progression, Employability, Careers, Transition) in the summer of 2014
- We are Weston College's careers team, primarily for college learners aged 16-18, but also with a responsibility for learner recruitment and school liaison
- This re-brand has made our service clearer to students, parents and staff, and has seen a huge increase in the demand of the team to support learners and their engagement with further education and progression in to higher education or employment
- ASPECT consist of 5 members of staff
- Work closely with Welfare and LibraryPlus staff to deliver the Personal Social Development programme

- THE ASPECT TEAM

- ASPECT were re-awarded **Matrix accreditation** in June 2015
- We received the **Employability Chartermark** in March 2015
- ASPECT were proud to win the **UCAS Progress Beacon Award** in December 2015 from the Association of Colleges for the work we do for our students and the local community in Careers Education and Guidance
- Staff are trained/working towards Level 3 Advice and Guidance and attend a range of conferences and training events

- THE ASPECT TEAM



Ben Cocks

Progression and IAG Coordinator

Ben coordinates the work of ASPECT and is responsible for team strategy. He works with Corporate Management to ensure ASPECT's work reflects college objectives.

Ben is responsible for developing new initiatives and dividing responsibility amongst the team.

Ben is the first point of call for tutors who make referrals to ASPECT through the College's electronic individual learner plans.

Lauren Stacey and Anna Coleman **Progression and IAG Graduate Trainee**

Lauren and Anna generally support team duties such as UCAS and school events. They are responsible for internal information advice and guidance to learners on careers and courses. They work with students to refer them to external services when appropriate.

They support learners with their transition through College by delivering a range of tutorials, theme weeks and advice sessions.



- THE ASPECT TEAM



Kat Knight

HE and External Progression Officer

Kat supports learners with progression to higher education and employment. She coordinates the UCAS process across three campuses, working with over 700 students and 50 tutors to manage this process.

She is responsible for organisation of the Brighter Futures Fair and the UCAS Convention, and ASPECT's UCAS and Student Finance tutorial programme.

Jodie Silmon

Schools Partnerships Officer

Jodie supports learners coming into college in the four Weston-super-Mare secondary schools and outlying schools in the West of England.

She provides information, advice and guidance to secondary school students about post-16 options, and raises their aspirations by organising projects with Weston College curriculum staff to engage students with further education.



- THE ASPECT TEAM

- Unique approach to careers guidance. One team responsible for:
 - Careers
 - School liaison and learner recruitment
 - Employability
 - UCAS and higher education advice and guidance
- We are independent of curriculum areas and other support services to ensure we are completely impartial
- Our model is aspirational but realistic
- We provide quality IAG which is reflected in the awards we have won

- THE ASPECT TEAM

- Everything we produce is branded with the ASPECT logo. We also wear a uniform with the ASPECT logo
- Our displays at each campus and our office are branded with the logo to create continuity across all 3 sites
- This has seen an increase in students approaching us directly rather than tutor referrals
- We are also branded in the schools we work in so students are used to the brand before enrolling at Weston College



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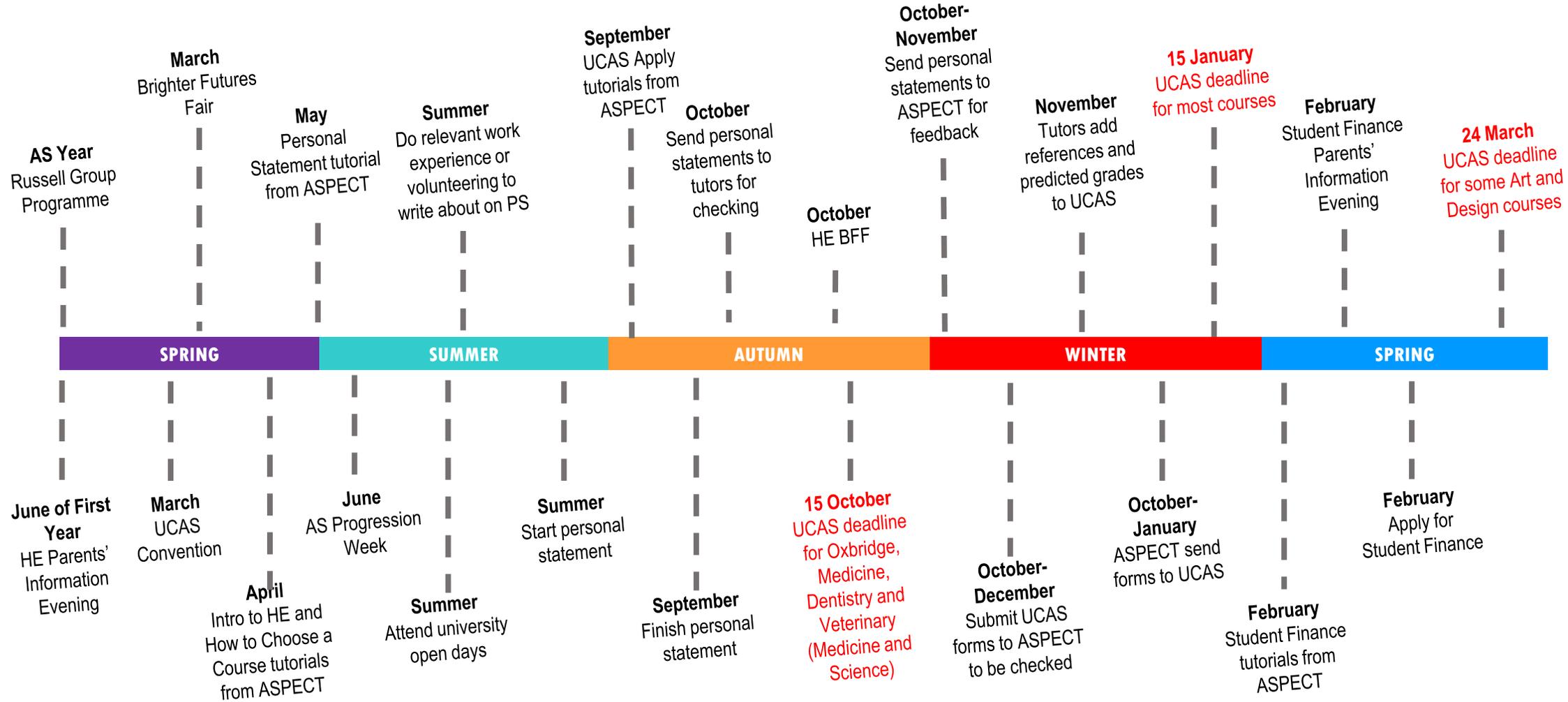
- WHO DO WE WORK WITH?

- Focus when learners enter level 3
- We work across three campuses and we oversee UCAS applications from all three campuses
- We support the Personal Social Development programme which is embedded into college curriculum
- We process over 700 apps to HE each year

- WHO DO WE WORK WITH?

- **A-Levels** – Students on traditional A-level programmes, usually studying 4 AS levels and then 3 A-levels. We also offer subsidiary diplomas, the equivalent to 1 A-level, in Sport and Science
- **BTEC** – Most of our students study BTEC Extended Diplomas, the equivalent to 3 A-levels, in vocational subjects, including Animal and Horse Management, Care and Early Years, Sport and Public Services, Business and IT and Creative Arts
- **Access to Higher Education** – These are adult learners (19+) who do not have traditional qualifications, or may need to study UK qualifications before progressing to higher education. We run five pathways, Health and Social Care, Science, Education, Social Sciences and Business
- **Art Foundation** – A broad art foundation covering several branches of art including visual communication, textiles and surface design and fine art. We have two pathways – one for students who have completed A-levels or Weston College's fast track Art level 3, or mature students who are returning to education
- **Part Time** – Students on part time adult courses, primarily Counselling
- **Apprenticeships** – We also support learners on apprenticeships, particularly our Teaching Assistant apprenticeship

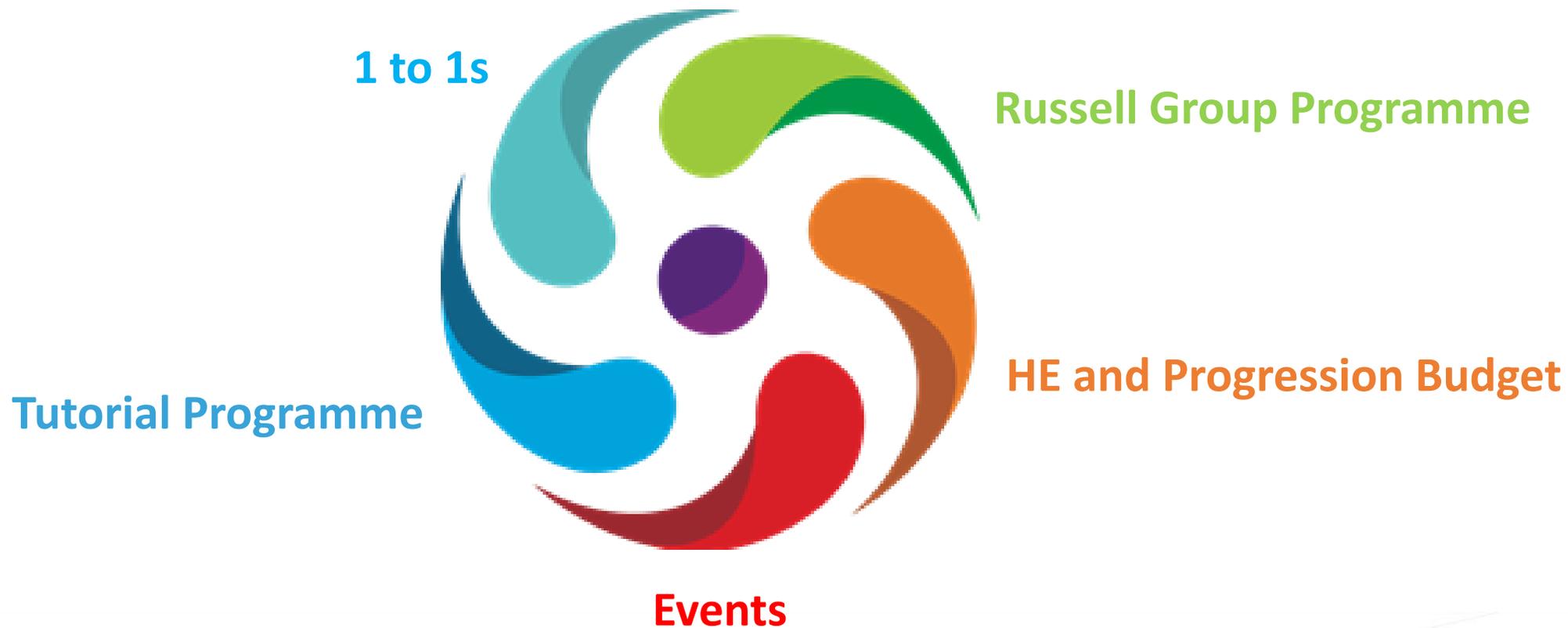
- LIFECYCLE OF A LEVEL 3 STUDENT



- HIGHER EDUCATION

Lifecycle of a student

There are five main parts to the life cycle of a student applying to higher education, demonstrated below.



- RUSSELL GROUP PROGRAMME

- The Russell Group Programme was a new initiative brought in for the 2014/15 academic year
- The programme supports primarily A-level learners to raise their aspirations and help them understand Russell Group universities and how to put in competitive applications
- It runs throughout the students' AS year, starting from the beginning of their time at college.
- The sessions are spread out to allow the learners time to research in between sessions
- 46% increase in Russell Group acceptance in the 2015 UCAS cycle
- More students than ever accepted the Access to Bristol scheme

- RUSSELL GROUP PROGRAMME

The following sessions ran in the 14/15 academic year:

- **September:** WhatUni on how to choose a course
- **November:** Russell Groups overview from the University of Exeter – an overview of Russell Groups and how to prepare an application
- **February:** University of Cambridge on Oxbridge – an overview of applying to and studying at Oxford and Cambridge
- **February:** Intro to HE – a tutorial from ASPECT on applying to university and how ASPECT can support learners
- **May:** Early Applicant Parents' Information Evening – a session for parents of Oxbridge and Medicine/Vet/Dentistry applicants
- **June:** HE Parents' Information Evening – a session for parents to understand the UCAS process
- **June:** AS Progression Week sessions – included a Russell Group talk from University of Exeter, a session on student life from University of Bristol, a session from the independent organisation Push about researching university options, a personal statement workshop from ASPECT and sessions with Oxbridge applicants

- EARLY APPLICATIONS

- Early identification in AS year
- Specialised sessions run by sixth form staff and ASPECT to support early apps
- Mock interviews with Principal
- Work with them intensively in AS progression week

Recommendations:

- We are continuously improving AS identification of early apps
- Sixth form staff to nominate one member of staff to coordinate early apps
- Health professions programme for medics/vets/doctors

- HOW DOES THIS ENCOURAGE INDEPENDENCE?

- Many of our learners are not aware of Russell Group universities, or if they are, they may not have had a chance to experience them
- Encourages them to think about how to put in a competitive application and gives them ideas for types of work experience to get or extra reading to do
- Gives them an opportunity to experience spending time at a university and higher education level lectures
- Bringing a university to them encourages them to ask questions and to take ownership of their application

HE AND PROGRESSION BUDGET

- Corporate management support what we do financially
- The budget is designed to financially support curriculum to take learners on aspirational visits or invite in guest speakers
- 14/15 – 54 visits over 33 subject areas
- Over 12,000 students engaged through the progression budget

- HOW DOES THIS ENCOURAGE INDEPENDENCE?

- Takes them out of Weston-super-Mare to experience other universities but also other towns and environments
- Encourages faculties to take learners on trips/activities that raise aspirations and awareness of progression routes
- This ensures it is faculty specific and relevant to the learner's future

- UCAS CONVENTION

- We take our learners to the UCAS Convention at the University of the West of England every March
- We take around 600 first year, level 3 learners
- For many of our learners, this is the first event that really gets them thinking about progressing to university, as they realise the scope of opportunities available to them

- HOW DOES THIS ENCOURAGE INDEPENDENCE?

- Though it may not seem far away, Bristol is still out of Weston and some of our students have not been to Bristol before
- We deliver sessions to learners beforehand to let them know what the UCAS convention is and how they can make the most of their time there
- Although tutors attend, they encourage the students to go around independently, but can be there to support them when they have questions

- BRIGHTER FUTURES FAIR



- The Brighter Futures Fair is an initiative designed by ASPECT to raise aspirations of our learners
 - Provides them with an opportunity to engage with higher education institutions and employers
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- This event runs in March every year. This year we offered a Higher Education specific Brighter Futures Fair in October
 - The BFF is attended by all college learners from foundation learning through to Level 3 and also by our Higher Education learners
 - 1554 learners attended in 14/15 - 13% increase on 13/14

- HOW DOES THIS ENCOURAGE INDEPENDENCE ?

- Attendance by exhibitors is broad to ensure we are relevant for every curriculum area
- For learners on Level 1/Level 2 programmes, this may be the first time they have really thought about progressing onto higher education or employment
- For learners on Level 3 programmes, this is precious face-to-face time with employers and universities without competition
- Whilst tutors accompany learners to the event they are expected to attend alone. Learners are encouraged beforehand by their tutors to ask questions and to find the information they need

■ TUTORIAL PROGRAMME

- Our tutorial programme supports learners throughout their journey in terms of thinking about progressing to higher education
- 5 Tutorials
 - Intro to HE/HE at Weston
 - How to choose a course
 - Personal Statements/How to use your summer
 - UCAS apply
 - Student Finance

- HOW DOES THIS ENCOURAGE INDEPENDENCE ?

- Our tutorials occur before the summer to ensure learners know what research they should be doing
- Our tutorials are not just information sessions – they include practical activities and tools to help students write their personal statements and take ownership of their research
- Students are introduced to our electronic resources so they know where they can access from home
- Our tutorials are specific to each curriculum area (for example Performing Arts included a section on Drama Schools and auditions) to ensure they have the information they need

- 1 to 1s

- Learners can book 1 to 1 appointments through e-mail, phone or by dropping in to one of our designated drop in times
- As Weston College is spread across three campuses the ASPECT team must be accessible to all learners
- 1 to 1s can also be booked by tutors either because they have a learner who they believe requires support or because a learner feels they need information, advice and guidance
- 1 to 1s can cover a variety of topics such as university course research, help with university applications, student finance, gap years or alternatives to higher education
- The length of appointments is flexible depending on the learners needs
- We use a range of resources to ensure our IAG is impartial and refer to external services such as UCAS, Student Finance or universities where appropriate

- 1 to 1s

- We have seen an increase in the number of online IAG interventions that we have delivered to students this year. This usually comes in the form of e-mail correspondence with students
- We delivered 973 UCAS 1 to 1 appointments between September and December 2015 in person and online
- Learners across all of our curriculum areas are encouraged to email us drafts of their personal statement to read through for feedback
- We provide feedback in electronic comments where we highlight grammatical or structural mistakes and give areas for improvement. We then provide detailed feedback in the email and include links to our additional resources on Moodle or links to external websites if the learner requires extra support

- HOW DOES THIS ENCOURAGE INDEPENDENCE?

- 1 to 1s with learners are all learner led
- Providing email feedback encourages students to be independent when writing their personal statements, to ensure their ideas are their own and reflect their interests
- When we provide email feedback we use guidance we have gained from universities, conferences and training to ensure our students are writing engaging and relevant statements
- We have to encourage them to fill their forms out on their own or they will really struggle at university

- HOW DOES THIS ENCOURAGE INDEPENDENCE?

- We have students with a range of disabilities and learning difficulties
- We believe it is very important to encourage these learners to be independent, ensuring we do not do work for them but put strategies in place to offer the time and support they need
- If a learner requires an appointment that is longer than what we would normally spend then we will happily accommodate this
- Weston College is renowned for its work with learners with additional needs, coordinated by our Inclusive Practice faculty. We work alongside specialist tutors to provide support for learners progressing to higher education and also work with staff at Weston Bay (residential autistic centre)

- SUPPORTING PARENTS

- A large part of encouraging our learners to be independent is encouraging parents to be independent, but more importantly involved in the process
- Many of our learners are the first in their family to go to university, so may not have support from home or parents who want to support their children may not have the information they need to do this effectively
- We have developed a programme specifically for parents which supports them in the application process
- Particularly with regards to student finance, our learners often have complicated home lives that require extra guidance with what support they can get when they move on to higher education
- Parents and guardians are able to meet with us to discuss their concerns and to get individualised support

- SUPPORTING PARENTS

- **Higher Education Parents' Information Evening (HE PIE)** – Our initial meeting with parents is in June of the AS/1st year. We deliver an information session for parents on the cycle of UCAS process, giving our top tips and ensuring they feel confident with the processing of applications. This is a great opportunity for parents to discuss their concerns, and to meet the team so they know who to contact with future questions
- **Student Finance Parents' Information Evening** – Run in February of the student's second year, we offer an information session to parents which covers everything they need to know about student finance
- **Parent Guide/Resources** – At the HE and SFE PIE we have a range of resources for the parents to take home. These include the UCAS parent guide, and resources written by ASPECT such as a jargon buster
- **1 to 1s** – Parents can book 1 to 1s/call/email us with any concerns or questions. We also meet with parents to help them fill out student finance applications

▪ **ELECTRONIC AGENDA**

- To encourage independence we ensure they can access everything in their own time from home such as tutorials and resources
- This supports the College's electronic agenda
- Being online ensures we are also being accessible and that our learners can get hold of resources regardless of their circumstances
- Having resources in a range of formats helps learners to access resources in a way that suits them
- On the following slides are some of the ways we utilise the electronic agenda

■ INTRODUCTION VIDEOS

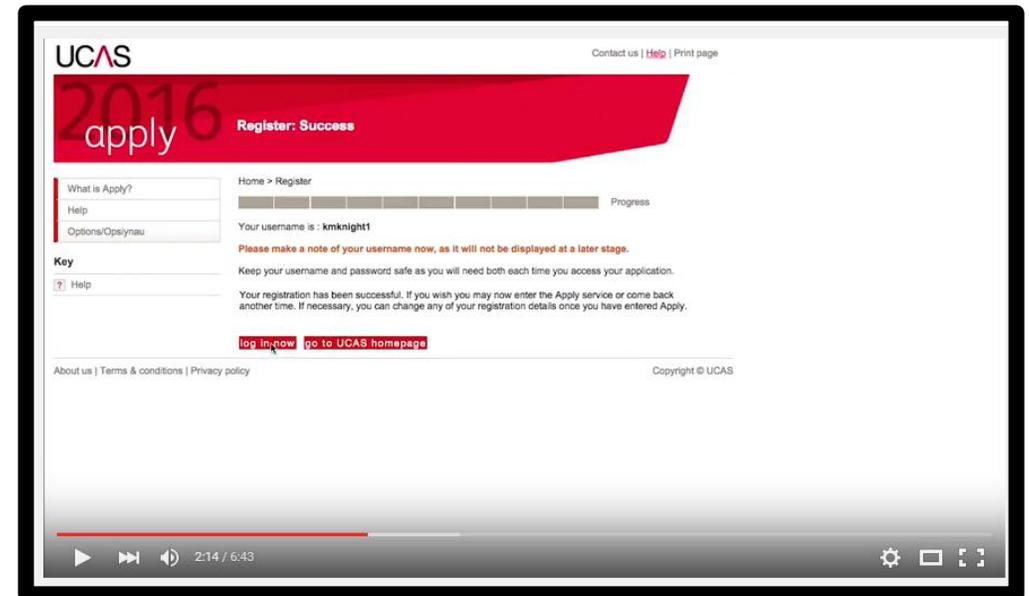
Due to the large number of tutorials we deliver I am not always the ASPECT member of staff who delivers the initial UCAS tutorials. Therefore, this video is included in all presentations so the students can see what I look like and still know who they can contact with any question about UCAS or student finance.



- UCAS APPLY RUN THROUGH VIDEO

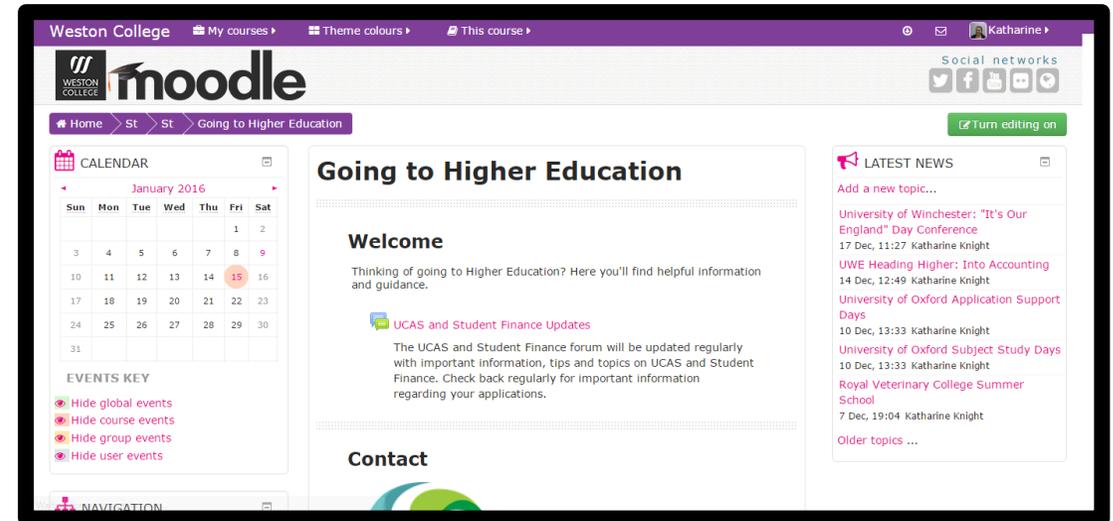
This video takes the learners step by step through the UCAS apply service and gives them top tips on how to fill out the application. This is a great tool for students who are not able to attend tutorials, or ex-students.

The video is supplemented by specific guides on how to fill out the education section depending on the student's qualifications, and there are written notes to accompany it.



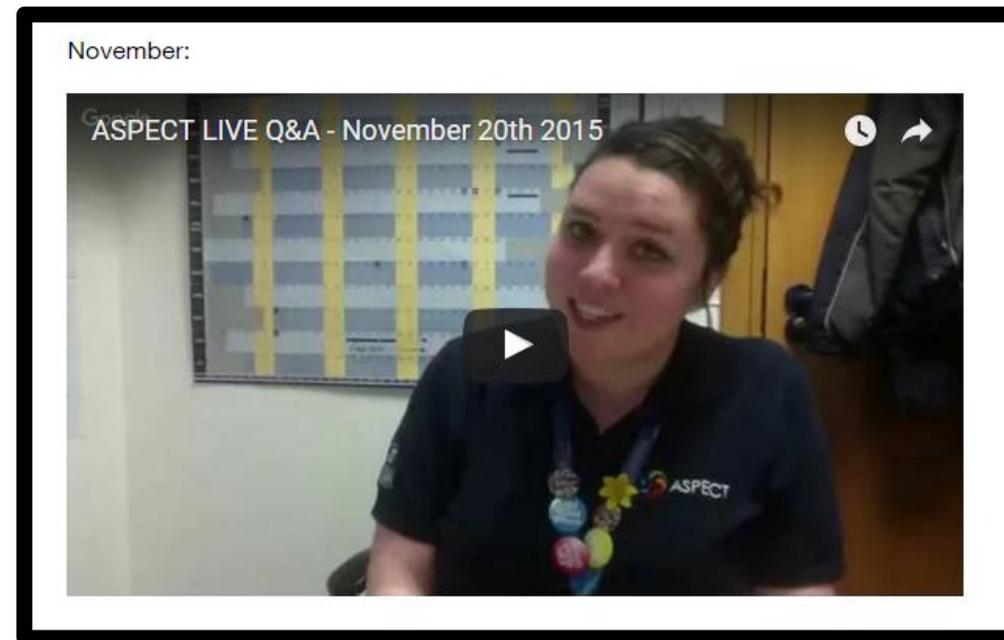
■ MOODLE

Moodle, the College's Virtual Learning Environment, allows us to post all of our resources, links to other websites and post videos to support students through their application journey.



■ ELECTRONIC AGENDA

ASPECT Live is a new initiative for the 15/16 academic year. Every month we post a new video answering questions we receive from students. This is primarily used as an engagement tool for potential students, but around busy periods in the application cycle Kat uses this feature as well.



▪ STATISTICS

- **2014 UCAS report**
- 80.6% of students were accepted on to HE programmes, the national average was 73%
- 25% decrease of learners went into clearing. 7% national increase
- In 2015 we had record number of students apply to university 734

■ SUMMARY

- We are not going to be able to get truly independent learners but we need to encourage their independence in their research and applications to support their transition to higher education
- We take students out of their comfort zone to raise their aspirations and introduce them to the wide range of possibilities that exist in HE
- Ultimately we are a support service and exist to encourage the learner in whatever way they need it

CONTACT



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