



WINTER 2019

Business World Beckons!

This year, our LEAP Creative group will be collaborating with a group of students from Enactus Aston on an enterprise project where they will design, make and sell a range of things with profits being used to support local charities as well as their own activities.

After initial introductions and ideas, the group decided their first project would be to support the Royal British Legion and Remembrance Day. They designed poppy themed merchandise including badges, mugs and bags which they sold to fellow students and staff, raising nearly £80.

Next, they made Christmas crackers featuring jokes and disability facts as a way to raise awareness about the different disabilities they have. Some were used at our Dinner in the Dark fundraising event, and again they were sold to students, staff and families with Enactus Aston students also taking external orders. After Christmas the production line will be busy creating gift ideas for Spring and Summer occasions and researching other groups they can support with their work.

Enactus is a global initiative connecting



72,000 like-minded individuals from over 1,700 universities in 36 different countries, to use enterprise to transform lives and shape a better, more sustainable world. Enactus Aston, based at Aston University, works with different charities and groups across the city to bring this ethos to Birmingham. We are really excited to be part of such an amazing project and look forward to working with the group over the next few months.

A Word from Bev



We've welcomed a lot of new faces this term both staff and students and currently have 297 students, 27 of whom are residential; there are 29 Supported Living clients and over 400 staff. It makes life at QAC interesting, often challenging and yet we thrive, all committed to finding the right way to meet everyone's diverse needs and expectations.

Our dedicated employment satellite site called 'Pinewood' is now up and running as a base for QAC's Supported Internship and employment focused programmes. Umberslade Garden Centre is providing an increased academic base for students, as well as valuable work experience opportunities, and the professional kitchen is now in place in the QAC Community Café. We have the very impressive climbing wall installed which is well used, and the new sensory hub will be in place very soon. There has been a lot of behind the scenes work undertaken on strategic developments, estates, IT systems, financial plans and audits, data and quality assurance, business service developments and more... most of which occurs unseen but all are none the less completely essential to our continued success.

We have welcomed many volunteers and visitors to QAC and we greatly appreciate your interest and enthusiasm for our College, which has been shown in many ways. A big thank you to everyone who plays an important part in the QAC journey, your dedication to our students, clients and our amazing College.

Have a Festive Christmas and a wonderful 2020!

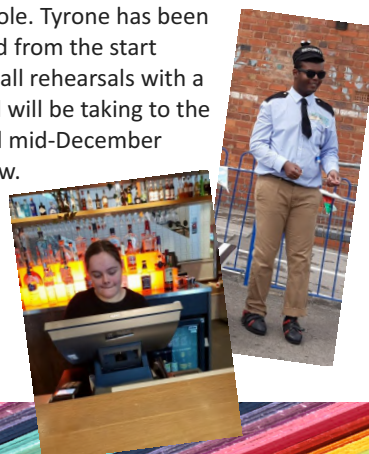
Bev Jessop
Principal & Chief Executive

IP Superstars

Our Independence Plus service provides clients with the means and skills to live independently/semi independently, in a community based and supportive environment, and this can include employment opportunities.

Following a work placement last year, client Emily gained paid employment at The Birmingham Rep. Although she works two regular shifts a week, she often gets offered overtime due to her hard work, splitting time between working as a barista in the bar and an usher in the main theatre. Emily's love of music and theatre makes this the perfect role for her, and she has quickly become one of

QAC has worked with theatre group Spectra for a number of years so when they held auditions for some paid acting work, client Tyrone was very keen to be involved. He went to auditions in July, wowing the producers to secure a role. Tyrone has been committed from the start attending all rehearsals with a smile, and will be taking to the stage until mid-December in the show.



Highlights



Pirate Day



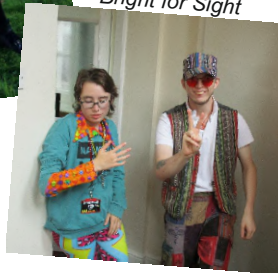
Alcohol Awareness



Children in Need Fundraising



Spooky Halloween



Bright for Sight



Christmas Fair Crafts



Athletics Training

SEPTEMBER

To welcome the new academic year, we hosted International Talk like a Pirate Day with students and staff talking and dressing like pirates, telling pirate jokes and practising pirate like 'oo-ahs'!

European Day of Languages celebrates European languages and cultures, and to get involved students were encouraged to choose a European country and learn new words and something about its culture. It was also a day to greet each other using European greetings, so 'bonjour', 'hola' and 'ciao' could be heard around campus all day.

OCTOBER

Bright 4 Sight is about raising awareness and understanding of vision, sight loss and blindness. There were lots of bright outfits worn (with prizes awarded) and plenty of informative, interactive sessions on sight loss and assistive technology. Our friends from UCB's Theatre Make Up course were also on-hand to create some bright festival themed facepaint designs.

Dean Miller from British Athletics 'Street 2 Stadium' hosted an athletics session for Sport students, designed to develop skills in track and field events including javelin, long jump and sprints. Everyone had fun competing in a range of mini competitions, putting each other through their paces, impressing Dean so much he will be back again in the Spring.

Oakwood, Thornton and IP students and clients organised a spooky Halloween Party to support Dance for Dignity. Everyone worked hard to decorate the room and then enjoyed dance and costume competitions, balloon modelling, amazing food and Thornton's DJ Liam who was on the decks for the very first time!

As part of their café sessions PFL Black did some market research, gathering ideas from staff and

students. They then created a new menu including breakfast smoothies, green energy drinks, flatbread pizzas and a number of delicious cakes to keep customers happy.

NOVEMBER

QAC students assisted researchers at Aston University with a case study looking into how differences in sensory brainwaves of teenagers with autism can assist in earlier diagnosis. The research focused on teenagers (aged between 14-20) with and without a diagnosis of ASD, means QAC students were perfectly placed to be able to support this vital and ground-breaking research. A link to the full findings can be found on our website.

The White Ribbon Association came to College as part of Alcohol Awareness Week to talk to students about what alcohol is, how much is too much, attitudes to alcohol and how to stay safe on a night out. Students then got to wear 'drunk goggles' as they tried specific tasks such as identifying a key and opening a lock and using an ATM machine with a cash card and pin number.

Students supported this year's Children in Need with our annual Pudsey Penny Trail taking over the main hall, Pudsey cafés and a huge bric-a-brac sale taking place. Everyone worked really hard in their groups and raised over £500 which is fantastic.

Artistic talents were on show as the Art Group put forward designs for our corporate Christmas card. There were some great entries and judges had a difficult decision to make, but well done to Bethany who was crowned the winner. After enjoying it so much, the group then decided to make birthday cards for each other, spreading even more happiness.

Our PCFA Team attended West Bromwich FC ground for their annual awards ceremony celebrating disability football including blind,

PAN, amputee and powerchair. It was a great evening with students meeting West Brom players Jake Livermore and Romaine Sawyers who presented the awards, with QAC's very own Luke Taylor winning the Manager's Award for his dedication to his team.

Festive fun was in store for the PFL and LEAP Christmas Fair with groups working hard to sell all the festive items they had been busy making since half term, with plenty of winter woollies and festive jumpers on show too!

DECEMBER

After visiting earlier in the year, Craig Pinkney returned to give a fantastic workshop on bullying, drugs, gangs and better choices to students, with lots of interactive discussion. Craig was recently voted 'Most Inspirational Person' at the MBCC Awards and after seeing him with our students, we couldn't agree more, so well done Craig!

Sport students decided to give something back this winter by organising a food collection to support those in need. They researched what food items were needed and put collection boxes around college for people to donate before inviting Trussell Trust Smethwick Foodbank to College to collect everything people had donated.

There were plenty of festive performances in the run up to Christmas with Performing Arts impressing audiences with their version of Little Shop of Horrors, QAC Collective getting musical and PFL entertaining with their annual show. Well done to all involved, you're all fantastic!

Spotlight

Budding Entrepreneurs Impress

As part of their Employability sessions students took part in an enterprise based competition where they had to come up with an idea for a sustainable enterprise that they could run for the duration of the year, then pitch it to a panel of 'investors'.

To secure investment they had to explain what their business idea was, how they were going to make it happen and forecast how much profit they thought they would make. They also had to show they had taken into account the different roles students could play in the business team.

Successful projects were then awarded a £50 initial investment to get started. One of the conditions of the award was that they keep investors up to date with progress and activities, working towards a presentation ceremony at the end of the year where the team that makes the most profit will win a prize! We look forward to seeing the ideas become a reality over the next few months.

Eco Warriors

Through the Dragons Den initiative, our Community Department was lucky enough to obtain funds to develop our very own Eco Group, focussing on conservation and sustainability issues. Over the course of this academic year the group – involving students from across College – will explore topics including waste and recycling, energy and water consumption, fairtrade and animal conservation.

The group's first meeting also involved members of Sandwell Litterwatch and discussed our future goals and all things recycling, inspiring them to collect everyone's empty crisp packets for local recycling.

There is already a lot of enthusiasm in the group which is great, and we look forward to making lots of things happen over the next few months including raising funds to adopt a vulnerable animal, a local litter pick and increasing recycling across campus.

Reaching New Heights

In September we were really excited to introduce our newest onsite facility – an indoor climbing wall, taking pride of place in our sports hall. Sessions are led by a member of staff who is a qualified Climbing Wall Instructor and the wall, almost 8 metres high with over 20 different climbing routes, has already proved popular with students.

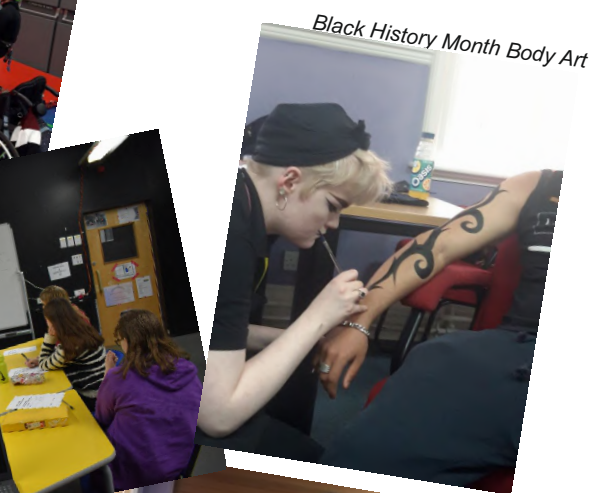
'Outdoor Club' have been regulars on it since it was installed and it has also proved popular with other groups from across College who have timetabled sessions on the wall, with students enjoying the challenge of getting to a higher point than on their last try, some even reaching the top! The wall offers a great opportunity for students to try something new and something they may not have thought they could do and is a great way to develop skills, confidence and fitness levels.

Staff have also enjoyed sessions on the wall, with many realising it's not as easy as it may look, and they look forward to more staff sessions in the New Year.

Climbing Wall Challenges



Budding Entrepreneurs



Black History Month Body Art



QAC Eco Group

Black History Celebrations

October is Black History Month and we had lots happening to celebrate. We invited Mykal Wassifa Brown MBE and his team to come and talk to students about the history of Wassifa Showcase in Birmingham, the influential black artists that they have worked with and the impact their work has had on the black community and young people in Birmingham. As part of the session students looked at old school record players, listened to authentic reggae music and took turns on the decks.

Dance Club welcomed ACE Dance and Music to one of their enrichment sessions, where they – along with some other students – were treated to a session on African and Caribbean dance techniques. Accompanied by an African drummer, the group practiced different African dance techniques, having great fun.

Students also had the opportunity to have some tribal face and body art designs done before their dance session, courtesy of students from UCB's Theatre Make Up course who joined us.

Spotlight

Positive Results for QAC

As always, we wanted to share some fantastic data highlights from our 2018-19 year with you.

Student Retention & Attendance

We achieved our target, with 96% of enrolled students being retained, and student attendance levels were at 98% present and authorised absence.

Student Satisfaction

With agreement in excess of 93% for all surveys, we exceeded our target. As well as student surveys, we also seek feedback from the Student Council which has continued work well and has gone from strength to strength.

Student Outcomes

Overall Achievement is at 91.4% (a 2% dip on previous year) and timely achievement is 91% (the same as last year).

Employer Feedback

The annual Employer survey took place during the summer term with employers who had provided work placement opportunities for QAC students during the year. 100% of employers were happy with their interaction with QAC (88% rated outstanding or good) Employers commented: *"Communication has been strong from beginning and throughout placement and I have enjoyed the placement of the student within my business"* and *"it has been rewarding watching her confidence grow"*.

Parent/Guardian Satisfaction

The annual Parent/Guardian survey reported high satisfaction at 92% agreement, which is 2% above the College target of 90%. Parents agreed that staff treat their son/daughter fairly (98%) and encourage their son/daughter to become more independent (98%). They also agreed that their son/daughter was happy, safe and making good progress. Parents commented *"the broad curriculum, attitudes about disability and high expectations and staff are lovely"* and *"staff are all amazing...Brilliant, Brilliant, Brilliant!"*

Leaders in Diversity

The College continues on its journey to become a 'Leader in Diversity' (the prestigious and hard to gain accreditation). The award will recognise and value the College's commitment to FREDIE (Fairness, Respect, Equality, Diversity, Inclusion and Engagement). This standard isn't just about what we do for our students; it recognises what we do for each other and how we positively influence the community outside of QAC.

Crafty Minds and Green Fingers

September saw the introduction of our new 'PFL Green' group, which is a transition group for students who are in their last year at QAC. The group spend part of their week at College working on different activities including crafts and life skills, with English and Maths being embedded into sessions.

The rest of the week is spent at our Umberslade Nurseries site, providing practical opportunities to put together all the skills they have developed during their previous years in PFL, including horticulture and gardening skills, retail, customer service and hospitality.

The programme also offers an important element of outdoor learning which has been supported by The Finnis Scott Foundation whose donation has enabled them to buy a range of gardening equipment and iPads to record their work and activities as they take place.



Outdoor Learning with PFL Green



Books, Books and More Books

Our Learning Resource Centre (LRC) is one of the busiest student hubs on campus, both during lessons and break times. It not only provides computers for students to use for their studies but also a wide range of books, DVDs and other resources for them to enjoy.

The LRC Team are always keen to keep up to date with demand and thanks to some funding from Birmingham Royal Institution for the Blind (brib) earlier in the year, were able to purchase a large number of audio books for the LRC. Students were really excited to see the updated collection, featuring lots of new fiction and non-fiction titles.

Thanks to a Dragons' Den award they were also able to take a group of students to Peters book supplier in Birmingham City Centre where they got to wander the aisles and browse thousands of books. The group had a great time and were spoilt for choice, as they worked together to choose a great selection of new books from different genres and subjects to take back to College.



New LRC Resources

Events

Fundraising

Despite the odd cloud or two, conditions were perfect for this year's annual skydive meaning most of our brave Team QAC jumpers were able to take part on the same day. Nerves and excitement were obvious as the group, who were all QAC members of staff gathered for their briefing session before waiting their turn to take to the skies for their jumps. Everyone really enjoyed the experience of jumping and supporting colleagues, raising over £800 towards our sensory cabin project. Well Done to all involved!

Our Dinner in the Dark event returned to Macdonald Burlington Hotel in November, with diners experiencing what it might be like to experience a night out with no sight. It was a great evening taking diners out of their comfort zone as they were plunged into darkness to enjoy a two course meal and after dinner activities as their senses adjusted to the environment.

Santa Claus was in town, along with the amazing Birmingham, Lichfield, Solihull & Sutton Coldfield Rock Choir, to join the fun of our Christmas Craft & Gift Fayre. They were joined by lots of visitors at what was our biggest Christmas Fayre yet with over 40 stalls offering a range of handmade crafts and quality gifts, including artwork, cards, knitted items and personalised gifts as well as some of our very own student groups' hard work. It was a great day, raising over £1000 towards our seasonal fundraising.

QAC Maintenance Team legend Stuart has secured a place in the 2020 Virgin Money London Marathon, through his running club Knowle & Dorridge Running Club. Although a keen runner, Stuart hasn't done a full marathon in a while so is excited to be representing his club and QAC this time around. We will be following his journey on our website and social media over the next few months as he prepares, trains for and finally competes in the race in April.

Dinner in the Dark



Sky's the limit!



Festive Frolics



Disability Awareness

Corporate & Community

In September a big team of employees from ITP Birmingham branch helped our Maintenance Team with some heavy labour including removing slabs and fencing and dismantling a rickety shed. The group don't always see each other that often so it was a great team building day and helped us get some manual work done in the process.

Thanks to an introduction from our friends at LoveBrum, Umberslade welcomed a team from Wesleyan who were put to work with a range of clearing, gardening and painting tasks to help get the site ready for the new academic year and students' return.

We hosted a corporate disability awareness day in October, where representatives from OCS Group UK, West Brom Building Society, Equiniti and DWP took part in various activities raising awareness about vision impairment and other disabilities. It was a great opportunity for them to look at their own communication styles and think about how they and their colleagues could better support and engage customers who may have disabilities.

Our annual PFL / LEAP Christmas Fayre saw DWP employees don their festive jumpers and Christmas hats to support students on their stalls, and more importantly help with the clearing away afterwards. Staff from Zurich Birmingham office also got into the festive spirit as they helped Umberslade get ready for Christmas with decorations and merchandising across the shop and tea room.

A huge thank you to teams at Hanson Gardens, Prongcroft, Granite Workwear, Globus Gloves, Glitzcraft, Simply Crackers, Shells Online and Interior Landscaping Products who have kindly donated things for students to use in their various activities. We would also like to thank all the companies who have kindly donated prizes to our competitions, raffles and sales helping us raise valuable funds for College.

A big well done & thank you to everyone who has supported us this year, whether you've donated, volunteered or taken part in an event, we really appreciate it!

If you would like to know more about how you can get involved in supporting us, please contact fundraising@qac.ac.uk



ITP Volunteers



Product Donations

Life at Pinewood

This September we were excited to open our new off campus satellite site, Pinewood Centre, which is located in nearby Woodgate Valley.

The site is home to our Supported Internship programme and will be where specific Employment Pathways programmes are delivered. The site offers a high quality and focused stepping-stone into the world of work, being more business-like than educational in its feel.

Although for some it was a difficult transition away from the familiarity of the QAC main campus, our Supported Interns are enjoying the facilities and benefits that Pinewood offers.

The curriculum includes English, Maths, Employability, Customer Services and Business Administration and our Supported Interns are learning valuable skills for the next step in their journey towards independence and employment.

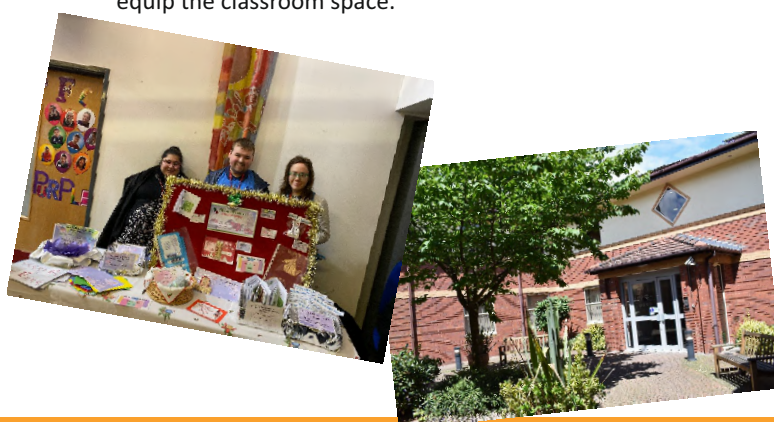
The group is also working together on projects that incorporate all aspects of the curriculum including creating festive treats and gifts to sell with profits going towards an end of year trip.

The SIs have been working on their Maths and English skills, researching products to purchase, using decision making and maths skills to price the gifts to ensure some profit.

In Business Administration, Customer Services and Employability, the SIs are learning about marketing and using creative digital skills to advertise products to our customers. We aim to sell our goods at Pinewood, to very friendly Mencap staff, and on main campus.

Business Administration students have decided to create their own termly internal newsletter, and going forward, all our SIs will gain experience of running a small shop and participate in call centre activities as the curriculum continues to develop.

We would like to take this opportunity to say thank you to The Clothworkers' Foundation for supporting our Pinewood development by awarding us a grant to help transform and equip the classroom space.



We provide a specialist service transcribing documents into alternative formats (Braille, large print, audio) for people with a visual impairment. The team are also able to offer advice and consultancy.

For more information www.allformats.org.uk or call 0121 428 5018



QAC Sight Village exhibitions are UK events showcasing technology, support and services for people who are blind or visually impaired and those experiencing age related sight problems. Events are free to attend and take place across the UK.

For more information visit www.qacsightvillage.org.uk or call 0121 428 5041

Wales (Cardiff)
22 April

Central (Solihull)
14 / 15 July

North-East (Leeds)
30 September

South-East (London)
3 / 4 November



Autism Central showcases a range of products and services available for people with Autism, with workshops and seminars throughout the day. Entry is free.

More information, including dates and venue will be available on our website in the next few months.

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For more information about what is happening at QAC and how you can get involved you can visit www.qac.ac.uk or follow us on social media



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