

Your guide

**Queen
Alexandra
College**
Birmingham

www.qac.ac.uk

**A national
college for people
with disabilities**



| Your guide

02

Welcome to our College...

STUDENT QUOTE /

"I really enjoy **QAC** - it's a friendly, caring, positive and fun place to be!"



Queen Alexandra College

Queen Alexandra College (QAC) is a national residential College and charity that supports a diverse range of student abilities and needs based in Birmingham.

We welcome students
who come to our
College from all over
the country – as well as
many who are
local to us.

The College has been at its current location since 1903. Our original purpose was to provide education for young people who were blind or visually impaired.

Today, in addition to supporting people who have a visual impairment, we offer support and guidance for students on the Autistic Spectrum (including individuals with Asperger's syndrome), those with moderate to severe learning difficulties, students with physical and other disabilities.

Ultimately, we have a great mix of students and provision which adds to the inclusive atmosphere of **QAC**.

There are over 300 students studying here at **QAC** but you will be pleased to know that class sizes are small and support levels are high.



To see our full Student Curriculum go to
www.qac.ac.uk

PARENTAL SURVEY /
"Staff are warm, friendly and accommodating and have always met our child's needs and addressed our concerns"

Contents

It's all about you...	4	Having fun	14
Our College	6	Your life after QAC	16
Personalised learning programmes	8	Support us	18
Your voice	10	Community Services	19
Developing independence	12	Independence Plus	19
The residential experience	13	QAC Enterprises	20
		Our values and intent	22

It's all about you...

We offer an innovative, holistic approach to learning and support. Developing the right learning programme for you is vital to ensure you achieve your long term goals; programmes are personalised and flexible.

At QAC our aim is that your learning is planned around your individual needs, interests and ambitions.

Our curriculum aims to maximise adult life, independence and work opportunities for all students.

QAC offers a broad range of study programmes that are tailored to ensure you receive the educational, therapeutic and support services that you require. Residential learning, Preparation for Life, Employment Pathways, LEAP and Vocational programmes provide opportunities to progress towards your own goals, at a pace that suits you and with exactly the level of support that you need.

Some of the opportunities available to you will include learning with others, learning through social and leisure activities and through work experience.

As well as your main programme, your personal learning experience will be developed with you and will include some of the following:

- ▶ Functional Skills (literacy, numeracy and communication) and GCSEs in English and Maths
- ▶ Access to Support Services (psychological and behavioural)
- ▶ Physiotherapy
- ▶ Rehabilitation and Travel Training
- ▶ Speech and Language Therapy
- ▶ Healthcare Support
- ▶ Occupational Therapy & Sensory Support
- ▶ Dyslexia Support
- ▶ Assistive Technology / VI Support
- ▶ Braille Tuition and BSL Support
- ▶ Relationship and Sex Education (RSE)

To see our full Student Curriculum go to www.qac.ac.uk

STUDENT QUOTE / "Staff provide me with the support I need to complete tasks to the best of my ability and progress."





Achieve your long term goals

05

PARENTAL SURVEY /

"My daughter goes into College happy and comes out of College happy and she is progressing – what more could we want?"

Call us on: 0121 803 5484 to book your visit.

PARENTAL SURVEY / "I like the fact that my son is educated in small groups."

06

A friendly and safe environment

Call us on: 0121 803 5484 to book your visit.

Our college

We have a hugely diverse student population here at **QAC**. Everyone who studies here is unique and as such has their own abilities and needs.

This makes for a really vibrant environment, where students feel valued and empowered.

The College has many specialists on site who are able to support students, including Speech and Language Therapists, Healthcare Professionals, Counsellors, Mentors and Rehabilitation and Travel Training Instructors.

Our campus is large and safe but handy for the shops in Harborne and buses into the city.

To see our full Student Curriculum go to www.qac.ac.uk

Harborne used to be a separate village near to Birmingham; local people still call it 'The Village'. There are a variety of shops, cafés, banks and a library in the centre, all just five or ten minutes walk from the College.

As **QAC** has grown, we now have new educational and learning sites. Whichever location you may attend, you will receive the same high quality experience and specialist support from staff.

Pinewood Campus

Pinewood Campus is a centre located in nearby Woodgate Valley. It provides a high quality and exciting stepping stone into the world of work and is more business-like than educational in its feel. It was purposefully designed to not feel like 'being at College' as Pinewood Campus supports students to move away from being in education to support them to become more confident with the working world.

Pinewood is where specific Employment Pathways programmes such as Supported Internships are delivered.

Umberslade Campus

Located in Selly Oak, Umberslade Campus is a rural idyll in an urban setting. **QAC** students benefit from the excellent outdoor learning opportunities and experiences that the various horticulture facilities at Umberslade Campus can provide.

Fitness Centre

Serving **QAC** students, the Fitness Centre has been designed to meet the needs of a diverse user base and has an extensive range of exercise equipment in a friendly and relaxed environment. It also serves as **QAC's** centre for physiotherapy delivery, incorporating specialist assessment areas and rehabilitation and therapy services.

What Students Like

- ▶ The friendly and safe environment
- ▶ Being treated like an adult
- ▶ Opportunities to make new friends
- ▶ The specialist support they receive
- ▶ Gaining more self-confidence
- ▶ The approachable nature of staff

STUDENT QUOTE /

"**QAC** has helped me to be more independent and learn new things. The staff are very nice and really helpful!"



Personalised learning programmes

Here at QAC we know how important it is that you find a programme that is right for you and that can help you to maximise your potential and achieve your aspirations for adult life.

We take time to work with you and your family so that we can ensure that you find a programme that is perfect for you.

To see our full Student Curriculum go to www.qac.ac.uk

Every student at QAC will have a Personal Tutor who will encourage and support you throughout your time at College.

For those students who require additional support with communication alternative methods such as Braille, Makaton, Picture Exchange Communication Systems (PECS) or symbols are used. QAC's aim is to provide a total communication environment.

Our Curriculum is designed to maximise life chances, develop independence and work skills. Students may work at Pre-Entry, Entry Level or gain vocational qualifications in a wide range of subject areas. You will find a full list of our programmes on our website at www.qac.ac.uk

Subject areas include:

- ▶ Art & Design
- ▶ Creative Media Production
- ▶ Health & Social Care
- ▶ Horticulture
- ▶ Hospitality
- ▶ Information Technology
- ▶ Motor Vehicle Studies
- ▶ Performing Arts
- ▶ Retail
- ▶ Customer Service & Business Admin
- ▶ Sport
- ▶ Trades

English, Maths and employment skills are embedded across all areas of study.

If you need a phased transition back into education following previous difficult experiences, our **Access to College** programme provides bespoke specialist support initially away from campus over 3 days.

Our **Preparation for Life (PFL)** programme is very popular and provides you with an opportunity to develop the skills that you would need to participate within your community and, where possible, the workplace. This programme is designed for students who are working at Pre-Entry to Entry level and offers a

great deal of variety. It will enable you to develop a range of practical and social skills in addition to increasing your confidence and self-esteem.

Our **Step Out** programme helps prepare students who have been in an educational setting for the majority of their life. The 3 day programme is for students who have finished their initially funded course with QAC and still have learning aims from their EHC plan which can continue to be developed and progressed towards and enable them to take a more active role in their own lives.

The **LEAP programme (Learning, Employment and Progression)** can be a stepping stone for students from PFL into a more work focused environment. An Employment Pathways study programme could also be followed which involves spending the majority of time with an employer in a real job role.

The **Powerchair Football Academy**, working in partnership with The Albion Foundation, is the first collaborative 'study programme' of its kind in the whole country. Ideal for students aspiring to be sports coaches and leaders.

The College also works in collaboration with the University of Worcester to deliver a bespoke pan-disability sport performance programme.



A young man with brown hair and glasses, wearing a maroon hoodie and a blue apron, is focused on cooking. He is standing in a kitchen, stirring a large pot of brown, chunky food (possibly a stew or soup) on a stainless steel gas stove. The kitchen has white walls, a microwave on a counter to the left, and a rack of colorful folders in the background. The overall scene is bright and clean.


STUDENT QUOTE /

"My programme has helped me decide what I want to do in the future and given me the skills to do it!"

Maximise your potential

09

Call us on: 0121 803 5484 to book your visit.



STUDENT QUOTE / "The staff at **QAC** are the best - they have helped me with my speech and to be more confident."

10

Have your voice heard

Call us on: 0121 803 5484 to book your visit.

Your voice

We are always interested to hear your thoughts on how we are doing and we like to get students involved in all aspects of College life.

You will have the opportunity to be involved in **QAC's** Student Council and even national groups such as Natspec Student Voice Parliament or the National Union of Students.

To see our full Student Curriculum go to www.qac.ac.uk

Students are invited to attend a range of meetings with staff and Governors throughout the year. We appoint Student Ambassadors each year to assist us when we are talking to potential students and to help visitors learn more about **QAC**. We also appoint Student Mentors who can support students new to the College.

If you need to talk to someone about personal issues, our confidential counselling service is available in private surroundings and you will be given the opportunity to discuss issues which are personal to you with a College counsellor.

Counsellors practise in accordance with the British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy ethical practice. They aim to help you get the best out of your time at **QAC** and to prepare for the future. All **QAC** students have free confidential access to this service, based on need.

Student Support Officers provide mentoring in small groups and in structured one to one sessions to help your social and emotional skills development by following Jigsaw, our Emotional Literacy programme. We also provide support through our sensory support service. Staff will help with your day to day College life and interaction with others.

We provide ongoing Relationship and Sex Education (RSE) to all students, this includes all aspects of sexuality, sexual health and managing relationship issues. Staff can also work with you if you need extra support, or just want to come and discuss matters in private. Peer support groups are also offered around a variety of issues such as men's group, LGBTQ, women's group and others.



Developing independence

QAC offers Rehabilitation and Travel Training
to develop your independent travel skills.

This training might be really useful for you whether you have a visual impairment or other disability and will enable you to travel with greater confidence.

To see our full Student Curriculum go to www.qac.ac.uk

Your training may begin using our own onsite travel training area '**Independence Street**'. The Team can offer you vital travel training skills including bus and rail travel, road safety, money management and communication skills to increase your confidence and independence.

The Rehabilitation Team will also provide support in your daily living skills to improve your confidence and knowledge.

The Sensory Hub is a dedicated sensory provision equipped with resources to deliver sensory related therapies as guided by our Occupational Therapist.

The goal of sensory related therapy is to explore your ability to process sensory information and how this is managed in different environments.

The Sensory Hub is well equipped with resources to support and effectively deliver a range of sensory activities. Equipment includes Soundbeam, fibre optic lighting, UV lighting as well as sensory and movement therapy items.

PARENTAL SURVEY / "Staff are amazing, very approachable and helpful. My daughter is well supported."



The residential experience

If you are thinking of studying at QAC you may wish to consider joining us as a residential student.

This is an excellent way to develop your independent living and social skills.

For many it's the first time they have ever been away from their families and it provides an excellent opportunity to experience what it is like to transition into adulthood. The ability to form relationships, organise social events, manage money, navigate travel routes, learn how to stay safe, prepare and cook meals and perform household chores are just some of the skills that our residential students develop in the 24-hour curriculum.

Your residential accommodation at QAC will match your needs, personality and your level of independence. As your independence and confidence grows you may move to new supported accommodation to help you progress.

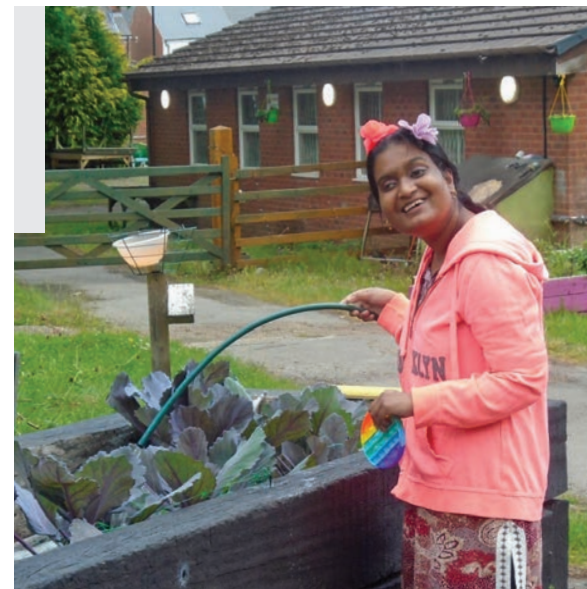
You will be supported towards your key individual targets by experienced residential teams which include sleep-in and waking night staff.

There are lots of activities that take place during evenings and weekends including quiz nights, bingo, sport clubs and movie nights to name but a few. We also visit theme parks, go shopping, visit local cinemas as well as going on weekend trips away.

► If you think that residential provision might be right for you then you can speak to us about this in more detail when you are making your application.

We also offer a specialist **respite service** and aim to develop and grow our capacity to increase the number of respite spaces. Please ask for more information.

PARENTAL SURVEY /
"The residential staff understand my son very well, they have been amazing in how they have supported him."



PARENTAL SURVEY /

"My son enjoys **QAC** and is clearly happy there, he has made some friends, which is a big step for him."

14

Enjoying your free time

Call us on: 0121 803 5484 to book your visit.



Having fun

QAC staff will work with you to co-ordinate a choice of sports, music and leisure activities. These will take place not only at **QAC** and in Birmingham but also throughout the UK.

Enjoying your free time is an important part of being at **QAC**.

To see our full Student Curriculum go to www.qac.ac.uk

As well as using our indoor Sports Hall and Fitness Centre you might choose to use our table football, pool table, air hockey and games consoles. We also offer a range of wellbeing and mindfulness activities such as yoga.

There is a good range of leisure activities in the evening and at weekends. These include swimming, ten pin bowling, cinema, ice skating, concerts, Premiership and Championship football,

climbing, music club, karaoke, residential visits, outward bound expeditions and athletics competitions.

Further afield, **QAC** students have sailed from Salcombe in Devon, conquered the peaks of Snowdonia and visited all the major theme parks. Trips to Coniston in the Lake District and Duke of Edinburgh expeditions help students expand their horizons. There are many more local and regional trips built into educational programmes.

PARENTAL SURVEY / "QAC offers a wide range of activities that my daughter enjoys and she is encouraged to become more independent regardless of her disabilities."



Your life after QAC

Whatever your ambitions in life
QAC staff will support and guide you
in the right direction when the time
comes to leave College.

Whatever your destination after **QAC**
we will help you to make
sure that the time you
have spent with us at
QAC has prepared you
for adulthood and
has a positive impact
on your future life.

To see our full Student
Curriculum go to
www.qac.ac.uk

Your study programme, the work experience you have completed and your new confidence and independence will mean that you have more choices for your future than when you arrived at **QAC**.

During your time at **QAC** you will receive support from many staff, including the Transitions Team, to help you explore your future options. Together they will help you to identify professionals and organisations that can assist you with the progression from College into the next phase of adult life.

Regular Annual Reviews will be held with you, your family, College staff and other relevant professionals. During a review, future options will be discussed such as further education, care, health, accommodation, employment and training opportunities. Following the review a person-centred plan will be created.

You might choose to move on to a general further education college or university and gain further qualifications. We will help you look at your choices and find out whether you have the right qualifications to apply.

Your Education, Health and Care (EHC) plan will be updated to reflect your needs. You might seek our help in finding a job, day care opportunities or supported accommodation in Birmingham or near to your home.

QAC has other opportunities for you to explore too, such as our Independence Plus and Step Out programmes or our growing Community Service offer.


As we say goodbye to our leavers at the end of each academic year parents and families are invited to a special event to celebrate the successes of students.

Employer Survey

- ▶ "The support provided by **QAC** for the student has been excellent and has helped the placement go smoothly."
- ▶ "The student was a great addition to our Customer Services team, both the student and members of the team benefited from the placement."

STUDENT QUOTE / "**QAC** has provided me with the opportunity to experience new things and develop skills that will help me to get a job in the future."





FORMER STUDENT QUOTE /
"I can't thank **QAC** enough
for the way they helped
me into adulthood."

Useful skills for the future

17

Call us on: 0121 803 5484 to book your visit.

PARENTAL SURVEY / "We like the commitment that the **QAC** has to all its students and the help and support that is given by all the staff."

Support Us

QAC is a registered charity.

The funds we receive from the government do not fully cover the costs of providing excellent staff, buildings and resources for our students. **For this, the College relies upon charitable support.**

We rely on **donations** from Trusts and Foundations to make a lot of our work possible. We also receive **gifts in kind** and support from volunteers and are pleased to discuss ideas from supporters for fundraising events.

We are always planning fundraising activities and would welcome your support.

For more information

please call 0121 803 5487
or email
fundraising@qac.ac.uk

Community Services / Independence Plus



Independence⁺ PLUS

As part of our 5-year strategy (2019-2024) QAC is developing a new range of services for young people with disabilities in the community.

Community Services

These will include support services to enable people to access community activities including a PA/support worker service, social and/or peer support groups, leisure activities and the development of a QAC youth centre. We will also be running holiday clubs for QAC students who want to access activities when College is closed and support for students in the morning before College and after College activities.

In the longer term we have plans for a range of specialist services including day opportunities for young people with complex needs and a community arts programme.

All of these services will operate within the QAC ethos of developing learning and independence and will be open to young people who have previously been QAC students and also people who are contacting us for the first time.

Through person-centred leisure, work experience, recreational and cultural activities, we aim to support people to not just achieve greater independence but also to create friendship groups and support networks, find new opportunities and to participate as active members of the community.

We will also be developing consultancy and training services for other organisations starting with a comprehensive offer of Relationship and Sex Education (RSE) consultancy service including training, professional coaching and 1:1 direct work with clients.

For more information regarding any of our community services please call 0121 803 5475 or email communityservices@qac.ac.uk

Independence Plus Supported Living options

Independence Plus was developed because we identified a need to sustain the independence that people were developing while at QAC.

You may have gained really useful living skills during your time at College and so it might make sense for you to continue to develop this independence at QAC as a Supported Living client living in the local Harborne community.

Clients on this programme still need support and the aim is to deliver a service that provides you with the means to live independently/semi independently into the future. Many clients are in education, voluntary work or paid employment not linked to QAC directly.

Funding is usually provided through a Direct Payment Personal Budget in conjunction with housing benefit for accommodation.

INVESTORS IN PEOPLE REPORT / "QAC has a significant positive impact on the communities in which it operates, providing support to a wide range of individuals, groups and good causes."

To see our full Student Curriculum go to www.qac.ac.uk

QAC Enterprises



All Formats Transcription Services

All Formats provide a specialist service transcribing documents into a number of alternative formats including Audio, Braille and Large Print. All Formats is a proud member of UKAAF - UK Association for Accessible Formats.



Advantage Graphite Canes

QAC is the UK distributor of Revolution Carbon Fibre Canes - used and acclaimed worldwide. These canes are lighter in weight and more durable than traditional aluminium canes. We are also able to supply coloured canes upon request.



QAC Sight Village

QAC Sight Village exhibitions are premier UK events showcasing technology, support and services for people who are blind or visually impaired and those experiencing age related sight problems.

For more information regarding any of our enterprises please visit www.qac.ac.uk/enterprises or call 0121 803 5484.



QAC Enterprises consists of a range of businesses that raise money for the College.

Conference & Training Facilities *available for hire*

Facilities for Hire

QAC offers excellent accessible amenities and a unique friendly atmosphere. Our high quality facilities, located at our Harborne campus, range from small intimate rooms for 4-8 people to larger rooms which will comfortably accommodate 150 delegates. Out of term time we also offer our Community Café and Commercial Kitchen, outdoor space at Umberslade Campus, situated in Selly Oak and Teaching Rooms.

In addition, our state-of-the-art sports hall is also available for hire evenings, weekends and out of term time.

To arrange to view the facilities or to request a booking form please call 0121 803 5310 or email info@qac.ac.uk

INVESTORS IN PEOPLE REPORT

“People are very proud to be a part of **QAC** and get a great sense of satisfaction from their roles and being able to support the needs of both students and those cared for.”



PARENTAL SURVEY /

"The inclusive environment allows the students to relax and feel welcome, safe and valued."

22

Realise your potential



MISSION STATEMENT

QAC creates challenging learning opportunities for people with visual impairment and/or other disabilities to realise their potential to work and to live independently.

Please note: QAC undertakes to provide the educational and support services detailed within this prospectus as far as reasonably practicable. It does not however, guarantee the provision of such services since circumstances beyond the control of the College may affect its ability to do so. The information given was correct at the time of going to press but may suffer amendment from time to time without prior notice, both in relation to individual courses and the facilities and services available from or provided by the College. A minimum enrolment total is required for the opening of any class. The College reserves the right to cancel/change a class, course or programme if there is a significant reduction in attendance or where the minimum enrolment total is not achieved or due to changes beyond our control.



Our values and intent

Creating challenging learning opportunities for people with visual impairment and/or other disabilities to realise their potential.

Our core values & vision

QAC makes a positive difference to the lives and learning of people with disabilities and learning difficulties, having high expectations of staff and students and being responsive, innovative and collaborative.

We incorporate the following values into our daily College life and behaviour:

- ▶ Respect
- ▶ Inclusion
- ▶ Integrity
- ▶ Collaboration
- ▶ Excellence
- ▶ Enabling

QAC is also committed to the principles of **FREDIE** (Fairness, Respect, Equality, Diversity, Inclusion and Engagement) and British Values.

Safeguarding & Prevent at QAC

We take seriously our responsibilities for safeguarding young people and vulnerable adults in our care. We have designated safeguarding leads and robust practices in place to ensure student safety. We liaise with allied professionals to ensure delivery of support to students and families when the need arises. We can send you a copy of our Safeguarding Policy on request.

Leaders in Diversity

In October 2021 **QAC** achieved the prestigious **Leaders in Diversity Award**. The award recognises organisations going above and beyond in their commitment to the **FREDIE** values. This success follows on from the College receiving the **Investors in Diversity Stage 2 Award** in July 2017.

Investors in People

The College is proud to have achieved the 'We invest in people', silver accreditation – something only 20% of the organisations assessed achieve. It means that the right principles are in place but more than that, it means that **QAC** staff, managers and leaders are making proactive efforts to make sure that everyone in the organisation feels the positive effects.

A Mindful Employer

QAC is committed to promoting an inclusive environment for staff and stakeholders. **QAC** is positive about Mental Health and shows this commitment by being signed up to the **MINDFUL EMPLOYER** and **AoC Mental Health and Wellbeing Charters**.

EDI CHARTER / All members of staff, volunteers and students of **QAC** are entitled to equality of rights and opportunities and have the same responsibility to respect and treat people with dignity regardless of their differences.



Contact Us

If you need this guide in an alternative format
(Braille, large print or audio):
Please call: 0121 803 5484 or email: info@qac.ac.uk

YOU ARE INVITED to visit **QAC**
to discover for yourself the friendly atmosphere
and great resources. You can meet students
and staff and get answers to any questions
before making an application.

Call us on: 0121 803 5484
to book your visit.

Queen Alexandra College

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Achieved.
Valid Until
October 2023



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