

# Year 9 at UTC South Durham



May 2020

**The Trustees of UTC South Durham are consulting relevant stakeholders and partners on a proposed change to its admissions arrangements. The proposal is to admit Year 9 students to the UTC from September 2021.**

The consultation period runs from 4 May 2020 to 15 June 2020.

## University Technical Colleges

UTC South Durham is a specialist technical school and 6<sup>th</sup> Form based on the Aycliffe Business Park in the south of Durham County. It is part of a network of 50 University Technical Colleges across the country. It opened in September 2016 and focuses on engineering, technology, science and maths education for those who want to move on to careers in those sectors, either via university or directly into apprenticeships or employment.

UTCs were set up as 14 to 19 schools, with the main entry point into Year 10. The logic for this was simple; at age 13 most students are making decisions about GCSE option subjects and after two years of secondary school it is a good time to decide to focus in a more specialist direction.

Several UTCs have moved away from this enrolment age and either started at Year 9 (approx. 30% of UTCs) or Year 7 (3 UTCs). The reasons usually given are about other local schools running a 3 year GCSE programme, having more time to get to know students and for them to settle in academically, and the benefits of starting a technical education earlier.

## Rationale

Currently the UTC recruits up to 150 students into Year 10 (aged 14), as well as recruiting to the 6<sup>th</sup> Form, from across a wide region including 7 local authorities. The proposal is to recruit up to 100 students (two-thirds of the intake) at age 13 (the start of Year 9) and to recruit the remaining students at age 14 (the start of Year 10).

There are significant educational advantages for students starting earlier and this has been demonstrated in several other UTCs around the country:

- Students arriving into Year 10 at the UTC have five terms before their GCSE exams and an additional three terms with us will mean that they are better prepared for this important phase of their education.
- It will allow them to build a core of key technical knowledge and skills and to sample specialist areas which are new to them before choosing option subjects.
- Students will have time to settle in to the UTC and teachers will have longer to assess their starting points and ensure a consistency of academic subject coverage before starting GCSE content.
- They will also be introduced earlier to the workplace skills and careers opportunities which mean that they are better informed and more focused when it comes to post-16 career routes.

In addition, economy of scale savings from a larger student body allows for improved provision, particularly in career related activity such as visits to companies, technical facilities and project experiences.

It is recognised that 13 might be considered to be too young by some parents for their children to move schools, particularly when travel time is more demanding. Because the UTC entry ages are not a common time to move schools, some parents and students might not be aware that it is an option for them in time to apply for Year 9. For both these reasons, an intake will be maintained at Year 10 to allow for a deferred application.

## Feasibility

An analysis of the feasibility of incorporating an additional year group has been undertaken. This has looked at how other UTCs have coped with adding Year 9 and considered the building, facilities, staff and location of UTC South Durham. Key factors are:

- Because the building is designed for 600 students, the facilities are largely in place to accommodate this year group. Classroom capacity and circulation space are suitable. There are enough lockers and the daily structure and longer working week can be maintained with additional students.
- Introducing an additional year group is likely to stretch our Engineering Hall usage and IT facilities and this will require careful planning and investment in additional IT facilities.
- The hazards of specialist equipment have been reviewed and risk assessments are in place for all machinery and activities. The Year 9 engineering curriculum will be designed to be age appropriate.
- The UTC bus routes have capacity or can be enhanced by larger buses. The routes are flexible to be able to adapt to student needs so that safe travel arrangements can be maintained.

## Proposed curriculum

Students signing up to join the UTC in Year 9 will be undertaking a focused STEM (science, technology, engineering and maths) curriculum. They and their parents will be given clear guidance about this so that they can make a good decision about whether this is right for them at this stage of their education.

In common with other year groups, students will undertake 31 hours of education each week. This 'working week' is designed to help prepare them for the working world and is needed to cover the depth of academic study, technical education and workplace experiences which are key to a UTC education.

The curriculum will be set up with a UTC focus but will maintain the breadth of education which is important at Key Stage 3. It is important to note that it will not be designed as a three year Key Stage 4 (i.e. starting GCSEs in Year 9) but that Year 9 will be seen as an important induction year to a technical education. It will therefore have the following features:

- A common range of subjects for all meaning that students will experience all the technical specialisms open to them in their option studies before making decisions about which subjects they want to choose at GCSE level (currently students entering Year 10 need to select subjects before they start and this includes subjects they have no experience of).
- Students will be allocated to sets for individual core subjects to ensure that the work is well pitched for their ability. There will be flexibility to move between groups in Year 9 so that students are very well set up for the appropriate GCSE education.
- A strong citizenship education will be delivered to students in Year 9 to ensure that they understand their responsibilities in society and can maintain a healthy, safe lifestyle.
- Careers education, which will cover all of the Gatsby Benchmarks and incorporate the key skills development, knowledge and experiences which make UTC students highly employable.
- A strong introduction to the UTCs Project Based Learning approach to education.

Subjects included in the Year 9 curriculum will be:

- English Language
- English Literature
- Maths
- Physics
- Chemistry
- Biology
- Geography
- Manufacturing Engineering
- Design Engineering
- Systems and Control Engineering
- Computer Science
- Information Technology
- Design and Technology
- Business Studies
- Spiritual, moral and cultural education, including Religious Education
- Personal, social, health and economic education
- Careers education, including visits and projects

## Proposal for Pupil Admissions Numbers (PAN)

The Pupil Admissions Number is the stated maximum number of student places each year for each age group. The proposal is to set the PAN for Year 9 at 100 students. This is to allow a good spread of students from across the region to have access to the UTC. The PAN for Year 9 is set lower than that for Year 10 so that those who don't feel ready to move at Year 9 can defer their application for a year. This might be particularly relevant for those students with further to travel and should maintain the wide geographical spread across the region.

Post 16 capacity will be kept flexible to ensure that the overall daily capacity of the building at 600 is maintained. It is recognised that some Year 12 students are undertaking 1 year courses and this is acknowledged in the spread of PAN with a lower number in Year 13. The 1 year courses are part-time and Post-16 students have a flexible timetable around their lesson commitments.

Year group	Current PAN	Proposed PAN with Year 9
9		100
10	150	150
11	150	150
12	150	150
13	150	100
<b>Total</b>	<b>600</b>	<b>650</b>