

University Technical College consultation question and answers

What is being proposed?

Solihull Council, the University of Warwick and major employers are looking into the possibility of creating a University Technical College (UTC) specialising in Engineering in Solihull.

A UTC is a school for students aged 14 to 19 which specialises in Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths studies and is sponsored by a university. It offers full time courses which combine practical and academic studies. Employers are involved from the start in shaping the curriculum.

The core of the curriculum will be the types of problems that employers face every day. In solving the problems students will acquire the knowledge they need to pass nationally recognised qualifications as well as a range of other skills that employers value – for example, the ability to solve problems, communicate effectively and work in teams.

Why specialise in Engineering?

The West Midlands has a rich engineering history and the region has a number of innovative businesses and employers that the UTC aims to work with. The recent announcement by Jaguar Land Rover to create more engineering jobs in Solihull highlights the job opportunities for young people who specialise in science, technology, engineering and maths

Who is the Sponsor of the Solihull UTC?

The lead Sponsor of the proposed UTC is The University of Warwick Manufacturing Group (WMG), who currently sponsor WMG Academy for Young Engineers opening in Coventry.

What involvement do the employers have?

A number of key employers including Jaguar Land Rover, National Grid and Prodrive are leading in developing the curriculum. Students will take part in a range of employer led projects where students will gain the skills they need to access further and higher education or an apprenticeship or full time employment.

Who is Solihull UTC aimed at?

The Solihull UTC would be aimed at students who

- have an interest in solving problems using science, technology, engineering and maths
- enjoy learning practically as well as academically
- are committed to an enjoyable, interesting and practical education which they know is preparing them for the workplace.

Where would the Solihull UTC be located?

It would be our intention to develop purpose built accommodation located in North Solihull, within easy reach of the major transport links in Chelmsley Wood and Marston Green.

Would my child be able to go to the UTC?

The UTC will publish admissions criteria, in the same way other schools in Solihull already do and all applications will be considered against this admissions criteria. Successful applicants would start in Year 10 or Year 12 depending on their age.

Will the UTC select students according to ability?

The UTC will operate a non-selective admissions policy. The curriculum would comprise of academic and vocational courses, with individual support to maximise the potential of all students.

Do you need certain grades to get in?

No, not for Year 10 admission. For year 12 admission some entry level qualifications may be required for some courses.

My child has special educational needs? How will these needs be catered for?

The UTC will ensure that pupils with special educational needs are admitted on an equal basis with others in accordance with its admissions policy. The UTC will include children with special educational needs throughout the curriculum.

Will free school meals continue to be available?

Yes, free school meals will be available to pupils who are entitled.

Are there fees to attend?

No, the UTC is part of government-funded education and is funded in the same way as an Academy with control over its own finances.

Will students have to wear uniform?

The ethos behind the UTC is to provide a business like environment in which students can practice and apply their skills and knowledge. As with any business we wish to have an identity and brand and a business like dress code will form a strong part of this.

How will students be transported to the UTC?

The preferred location is within walking distance of Marston Green Station, which is on the main line between Birmingham and Coventry. The area is also well served by bus routes.

Is 14 too young to make a choice like this?

No. UTC students will receive a broad education including English, maths and science combined with practical and technical qualifications recognised by employers and universities. They will also develop business and financial literacy. The skills they learn and the qualifications they receive are transferable to other colleges and universities and are recognised by employers, because the curriculum is designed with employers.

Does my child have to start at 14 or can they start at 16?

Students will be able to start at age 14 or 16. They can apply for a place at the UTC in Year 9 to start in Year 10 or Year 11 to start in Year 12, as they do for other schools and colleges in Solihull. In the first two years all the students starting in Year 12 will be from outside of the UTC however, eventually it is expected that the majority of Year 12 places will be taken up by students already attending Solihull UTC.

What Qualifications would Solihull UTC offer?

The Solihull UTC will offer a range of nationally recognised qualifications including GCSEs, A levels and vocationally related qualifications. Most students will study a variety of these. The UTC will make sure that every leaver has a GCSE in English and in maths.

What will the curriculum be?

The core of the curriculum will be the types of problems that employers face every day. In solving the problems students will acquire the knowledge they need to pass nationally recognised qualifications as well as a range of other skills that employers value – for example, the ability to solve problems, communicate effectively and work in teams.

The curriculum will focus on Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths, (STEM) where the engineering element is the practical and creative problem solving element around which the others will work. Appropriate elements of physics, chemistry, biology, technology and maths will be taught so that students understand the theory well enough to be able to apply it in practice.

Each individual student will have their own Personal Learning Plan that is built around their aspirations and passion for a particular area of STEM. This might vary from a student who wants to progress to an apprenticeship and requires strong application of knowledge and understanding skills to a student whose

focus is more on the academic elements of the sciences and want to progress after school to university, All will develop critical employment and life skills, such as being able to work as part of a team, strong communication skills, creative problem solving skills, leadership skills, entrepreneurial awareness, understanding the structure of business, etc.

Our 'Stage not Age' progression ethos means that all students will be able to progress through the various levels of each subject at a speed that challenges them and draws them on, but never leaves them behind.

What are the advantages of a student going to a UTC instead of staying on at their current school?

The UTC curriculum will be designed with employers to ensure that students have the skills and knowledge that employers value as well as a range of nationally recognised qualifications.

Why is it important for students to learn work-related skills?

In a recent Employers' Skills survey, they said what they wanted employees who could work in teams and communicate effectively as well a knowledge of science, technology, engineering and maths that they could apply to solve problems. The UTC will tailor the curriculum to the needs of the local labour market.

Will the UTC offer Apprenticeships?

The UTC will have a number of pathways to employment, work based study and higher education. Such diversity will embrace apprenticeship opportunities, again maximising the opportunities open to the students.

What if my child wants to go to University?

The UTC will offer qualifications which will provide sufficient UCAS points for students wishing to move on to university.

Will the UTC simply draw students from existing Solihull schools?

The ethos of the Solihull UTC is to act as a regional hub for students of all abilities and backgrounds, with a leaning towards engineering and science. The proposed location is well served by public transport and accessible from a wide area encompassing Birmingham, Solihull, Coventry and Warwickshire. The UTC will be marketed across the whole region drawing pupils from the wider area.

Will the UTC work in partnership with other schools?

The UTC will add to the already high quality educational opportunities available to students across the region. The UTC will be able to offer areas of

expertise and resources that may not be available in all schools. Similarly, the UTC hopes that it can draw from the expertise of other schools offering reciprocal arrangements that may draw upon wider expertise in music, art and sport and broader enrichment activities.

I am really interested in this proposal how can I find out more?

This proposal is in the very early stages of development and is subject to Government approval. If the project proceeds we will be in a position to provide you with lots more information. You will be asked on the survey if you would like to receive updates on the project, we can send you more information by email as the project develops.

When it becomes time to apply for places you will have the opportunity to visit the UTC and get detailed information through a prospectus.