

Queen Elizabeth Sixth Form College

Report for the Student Committee of Governors October 2011

Students have been involved in a wide range of activities since the last report in April. Some activities have been arranged by subject areas; others have been organised by students themselves. Individual and group achievements have been celebrated and community links have been developed.

Student Association

- Prior to their final A Level exams, students from QE celebrated the end of their studies with a Leavers' Masquerade Party at Blackwell Grange Hotel. Students and staff partied the night away, the students enjoying some well-deserved relaxation after two years of intensive academic study. The evening featured a chocolate fountain and a photographer as well as live music provided by College band, the Queen Bees. The event was organised by the Student Association Executive and was a huge success.



- The new Student Association Executive took part in a team building session organized by Beccy Stannard, Student Services Co-ordinator, in order to develop communication and trust, as well as to provide an opportunity for new members to get to know each other. The Executive were also presented with their new Student Association Executive t-shirts.

- During A2 Fortnight in June, the new Student Association Executive had lunch with the Principal and other members of Senior Management in order for everyone to introduce themselves and their roles to each other. Students were given their new college name badges, as well as being congratulated on their successful appointment to the Executive.



- The first major task for the new Student Association Executive was to help out at Bridging week, where their main role was to help prospective students get a feel for the College and to offer a friendly face if any advice or help was needed. They greeted new students bright and early and supported them on their first day. Members of the Executive gave a series of presentations in the Main Hall to new students, describing the work that the Executive does and discussed the opportunities that there are for students to get involved in college life.
- Through the course of Bridging week the Student Association raised money for the charity 'The Rays of Sunshine.' This is a charity that supports children aged 3-18 who are living with serious life-threatening illnesses in the UK. Money was raised via various ways such as a raffle, tombola and a cake sale. These fundraising activities proceeded all week, raising a final amount of £115.

- The Student Association continued with their fundraising on 30th September when they organised another charity day, for their chosen charity of the term; 'Heel and Toe,' an organisation that helps and offers therapy to children who are suffering from Cerebral Palsy and Dyspraxia. The theme of the day was 'Funny Feet Friday,' in which the college was encouraged to wear 'funny feet' in order to show their support. These ranged from slippers to odd pairs of shoes. A cake sale was also organised over break and £105.90 was raised.
- The Student Association Executive took part in the organisation of Freshers' Fair; an event designed to promote the College's Supplementary Programme and various community projects. It was a brilliant opportunity for the Student Association Executive to promote themselves and their roles. The event was successful with students signing up for a range of extracurricular courses and activities. They encouraged students to participate in their monthly meetings and upcoming charity events. They also asked students for suggestions and ideas for college events and charities. The Student Association Executive also promoted the 'NUS Extra Card', which provides discount in local shops for students.
- The first Student Association meeting of the year was held towards the end of September. It was a huge success with an excellent attendance from tutor representatives. The Executive ran through their main plans for the near future as well as highlighting their successes so far. Response from the student representatives was good with plenty of ideas and feedback.



Creative Arts

- In May, the Durham Alumni Big Band performed a special concert in the Main Hall. The band was made up of former members of the Durham County Youth Band Band, some of whom came to QE several years ago. The concert was extremely well attended and enjoyed by all.
- The last concert of the year was the Leavers' Concert in May, which featured a number of soloists as well as the Big Band, Choir and Orchestra. It was an opportunity to say goodbye to the second year students as they prepare for life after QE, as well as being Head of Music Ken Smith's last concert before retirement after 23 years at the College. Again the concert was a huge success with all performers (and staff!) playing at their very best.
- This year sees the Big Band continuing to go from strength to strength with a new injection of first year students to bolster the ranks. New for this year is Rock Choir which, in its early stages, proves to be very popular with well over thirty students taking part in rehearsals. The College Orchestra is now being run by two second year Music students who are looking to gain arranging and conducting experience in preparation for their applications to Music colleges.
- The final exhibition by the twenty-eight students on the BTEC Diploma in Foundation Studies in Art & Design was staged in June. The students produced personal final major projects in their chosen future specialist pathway. This year the exhibition represented projects in Fine Art, Textile and Surface Pattern Design, Fashion Design, Fashion Styling and Promotion, Costume Design, Illustration, Photography, Interior Architecture, Decorative Arts and Architecture. Fine Artist, Aidan Atkin, created a stunning large-scale installation that was patiently constructed from multiples of manipulated white paper napkins which formed a delicate, yet impressive structure within the exhibition space. Aiden's

work investigated transforming ordinary materials into beautiful and unexpected pieces. Fashion designer, Shona Northey used research from a study visit to New York to create a dramatic collection and installation based on aspects of industrial clothing and scrap metal, inspired by photographs of the workers who constructed the Empire State Building in the 1930's.



- Fashion stylist, Emily Long invited visitors to walk into the room installation she created which was inspired by the story of Dorian Grey. It depicted a derelict attic and used distressed props and digital projection to successfully capture an evocative mood for the setting of a fashion shoot for a magazine. Textile designer, Rebekah Hutchinson produced professional designs for wallpapers and fabrics based on the architecture and natural environment of her favourite places around Durham and the River Wear. Rebekah also designed the posters and invitations for this exhibition. The event was a stunning showcase of emerging creative talent. It is the first stage of an exciting journey towards each of them achieving their ultimate ambition of becoming a successful artist or designer working in the creative industries. The exhibition was very well-attended and prompted a lot of interesting conversations.
- A2 Graphics and AS Photography students made the annual visit to Whitby to take photographs and to collect visual imagery to develop as part of their coursework. This year they enjoyed sunny weather which altogether helped to make it a very enjoyable day.
- In September, Art Foundation students spent an exciting day visiting the new Hepworth Wakefield Gallery. They enjoyed exploring the Barbara Hepworth archive and exhibits, and drawing in the Eva Rothchild contemporary sculpture exhibition. They then travelled onto the Yorkshire Sculpture Park, where they were very enthusiastic to study Spanish sculptor Jaume Plensa's inspiring sculptures and installations. They were able to make drawings, take photographs and make written notes.

English, Media & Drama

- During A2 fortnight, 27 English Literature students travelled by train to see a fantastic production of "Dr Faustus", the examined set text for A2 study, at the Globe Theatre. As usual the students were impeccably well behaved and this performance has already enhanced their studies.
- In September, 36 A2 English Literature students watched a production of "Othello", the examined set text for A2 study, at The Crucible in Sheffield.
- Intertextuals continues to be held every Friday lunchtime and, so far this academic year, English Literature students have looked at the poetry of George Herbert and dipped into Milton's 'Paradise Lost'.
- In September, 35 2nd Year A level Drama and Theatre Studies students travelled to the ARK in Stockton for a new theatrical experience. NTLive is a series of live transmissions of theatre shows at the National Theatre in London. The students weren't sure what to expect but it turned out to be a little like live cinema as they laughed and clapped as if at the theatre whilst looking at a screen. Odd

but ultimately very enjoyable. The show the students watched was an adaptation of one of their set texts, Goldoni's *Commedia* inspired "A Servant of Two Masters". This production had been transported to 1963 Brighton complete with skiffle band and fabulously dated costumes. The students commented that this was truly one of the funniest pieces of theatre they had ever seen, with a witty script and wonderfully physical comic performances.

Enrichment


- There are approximately 125 students participating in the Extended Project Programme this academic year. In September a team from Durham University attended the College to guide the students on research and referencing. This was an invaluable opportunity, as the success of a project very much relies on quality research. The students had the opportunity to speak personally to the team from Durham University at the end of the session, those who did made some very valuable contacts who promised to forward relevant information to them, or they were given the names of other staff at Durham University who they may be able to contact. The students' projects this year cover a wide range of interests and subject areas, all of which have been selected by them personally to try to complement their university or career aspirations. A few sample titles from the current academic cohort include:
 - Should we legalise euthanasia?
 - Homosexuality - Nature or Nurture?
 - To what extent did the Vietnam War effect American foreign policy?
 - As the students progress with their project they will refine the title. Last year's cohort included the following titles:
 - To what extent were the foreign policies of Philip II the cause of the decline of the Spanish Empire from the year 1590 to years after his death in 1640?
 - To what extent is a hydrogen economy the solution to our energy problems?
 - How has the development of Manhattan been affected by the changing economy and demographics since 1900?
 - To what extent did the 2010 Prime Ministerial Debates affect the result of the 2010 UK General Election?
 - Haemochromatosis – The case for mass screening and potential links to the high mortality rates in Scotland due to liver and heart disease.
- The student who prepared the last project contacted the Haemochromatosis Society as part of her research and they asked to review her project once she had completed it. Her project clearly provided a fantastic opportunity for her to network, which is something we encourage the students to do. One of the students this year is investigating whether sentencing policy reflects its aims and has emailed the Home Secretary for an opinion; it will be interesting to see whether she receives a response.
- Last academic year, towards the end of their project, the students presented their findings to an audience of staff and other students and discussed their journey in participating in Extended Project. This allowed them to demonstrate their understanding of the subject matter and experiences in preparation, of which there are generally many highs and challenges!

Humanities

- Fifteen A2 Modern students visited Eden Camp in Yorkshire in April. They saw a number of sites connected with the period they were studying (World War II) and the trip was a great success.

- Two History students have been selected to visit Auschwitz concentration camp as part of the Lessons from Auschwitz Project 2011. The two students are Liam McCavanagh and Alex Cumiskey. They will travel to Poland in October and will be reporting back on their visit after the event.
- A couple of QE History students have been working closely with Lisa Kwok from Darlington Groundworks on the Darlington Oral History Project. They are helping to compile a history of the Darlington Denes area, have attended meetings over the summer and have helped to interview residents of the Denes area. They will be preparing displays of their findings to be shown at various places in the town early next year and will also be making a History Club presentation in College next spring.
- The April meeting of the History Club was entitled 'Venice: Canals, Committees and Casanova' and was delivered by Linda Chadd. The next meeting is due to take place later on October and will involve a guest speaker from Northumbria University.

Modern Foreign Languages

- Three QE A Level French students, Jess Holmes, Nicole Goodwin and Claire Nicholson, all succeeded in getting offers to study for a French degree in Paris. They will study full time at the prestigious University of London Institute in Paris, a stone's throw from the Eiffel Tower. All three are very excited about the prospect of living, studying and working in France. The students did exceptionally well to secure these places, as not only did they have to have an excellent application, but they also had to be interviewed in Paris.
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- Two former students, Sarah Pentith and Hannah Briggs, who are currently studying French at university and have just returned from their third year abroad, came in to College to give all of the French students a mock oral exam. Students found the experience to be valuable, if "a bit scary"! In June, Rose-Anne Michel, an 18 year old student from Grenoble, came to do a month's work experience at the College. She is studying for the 'bac commercial', so her secretarial skills were much appreciated by the department! The College's Francophone Assistant this year is Jessica Morneau, who is actually from Quebec. It is the first time the College has had a Canadian Assistant and she has an amazing accent! It is always a really positive experience for students to have native speakers to practise with, especially in the lead up to the oral exams.
 - Tallent Automotive in Newton Aycliffe approached the College to request Spanish language training as they are now Spanish-owned. Ximena Gaddass and Beverley Palmer are currently delivering training on-site to three groups of employees and managers who want to be able to converse with their Spanish colleagues when conducting business over the phone or in person.
 - During the Spring Term, A Level German students benefited from a 6 week work placement undertaken at the College by Inga van Gemmeren from Oberhausen, Germany. Training to be a teacher, Inga helped students to improve their spoken German. She is studying English and Geography at the University of Duisburg-Essen and found her work experience in England extremely valuable. Inga is the fifth student the College has had from the University of Duisburg-Essen. Inga proved herself to be a real asset to the German Department and the students really enjoyed having the extra speaking practice with a native speaker. Inga came to the College at the best possible time as the

students were keen to have extra speaking practice before their German oral exams at the end of March. Inga was followed by another student on work experience from the University of Duisburg – Essen. Christine Brunk enjoyed a 4 week work placement at College where she also helped A Level students to improve their German. Also training to be a teacher, Christine is studying English and Sport and found her work experience in England extremely rewarding. During her placement, as well as helping in German lessons and with conversation, Christine organised QE's first ever German Film Festival and ran a lunchtime German club. Extremely conscientious, she proved to be a real asset to the German department.

- For the fourth year in a row students at QE have won awards for their commitment to the study of the German language. Hazel Alderson, Matthias Reichel and Rebecca Winlo were presented with Youthbridge Awards - a cheque and a certificate - for their interest, enthusiasm and ability in German. Youthbridge is a charitable initiative of the British-German Association and provides support for making the learning of German in British schools more relevant, interesting and fun. The College is very proud to be part of the scheme and were delighted to once again be able to reward three of its students for their dedication to the German language. Hazel, Matthias and Rebecca are exceptionally hardworking and are extremely talented linguists. They are most definitely worthy winners. Hazel intends to study Architecture at university, Matthias will have a gap year in Germany and Rebecca plans to do a degree in History and Politics with the ultimate aim of working in Germany.



- 14 students and 2 members of staff from the Otto-Pankok Schule in Mülheim an der Ruhr, Darlington's twin town in Germany, spent two days in the German Department at College. They spent time working with AS and A level German students and worked on various projects covering a variety of AS and A level topics such as environment, immigration, German films and media. The visit culminated in group presentations in German followed by a German-English feast provided by the students including homemade cooking and specialities from Germany. Live music was also provided by first year student Aidan Harbottle who wrote a German song especially for the event, entitled Freunde und Familie, which he performed on his guitar.



- Erich Bittmann, Head of English and Sport at Otto-Pankok Schule, has been bringing German students to Darlington for 21 years and this is the sixth time that the Otto-Pankok Schule has visited QE. All of the students, from QE and from Germany, were extremely enthusiastic and highly motivated about the visit. The students first had contact before the summer holidays, writing to each other on email and Facebook and were really excited about meeting each other. All students proved themselves to be excellent ambassadors for their school/college and for their country. The events have been extremely enjoyable and all students have benefited in a tremendous way. Students and staff are already looking forward to next year's meeting.


Science

- 35 AS Geology students practised their field skills in preparation for their exam in May. The first trip was to the coast at Tynemouth where dips and strikes of the outcrops were measured. This was

followed by a subsequent visit to Roseberry Topping and the Cleveland Dyke to examine the field relationship of an igneous intrusion.

- 65 A2 Geography students took part in a three day residential visit to the Lake District which took place on two occasions in September and October. Accommodation was at Wasdale Youth Hostel, where the staff and students had sole use of this delightful location. Students were involved in data collection in a local river system and on the sand dunes in preparation for their Skills examination in January. They also looked at CBD functions in Cockermouth and Keswick. In the evenings the students were introduced to some statistical techniques in order to analyse the data.
- QE Chemistry students have retained their title as 'Teesside Champions' of the Schools Analyst Competition. It is the second year running a team from the College have won this prestigious regional event organised by the Analytical Division of the Royal Society of Chemistry. Emma Clark, Tom Gray and Jake Hutton represented the College completing a series of practical determinations based on chemistry problems relevant to industrial and social needs. The students were judged on their safety, teamwork, understanding and accuracy and were complimented by the organisers for their excellence in the calculations aspect of the challenge.

Sport

- QE Girls' Futsal Team won the British Colleges Sport North East Competition. The girls' effort, hard work and commitment to improve their skills and knowledge have been excellent. As North East Champions they went on to play at the National Finals in Birmingham in June. QE was one of the first colleges in the North East to adopt Futsal as our small sided game. This is backed by the FA as the best way of improving young players and their technical football ability. The girls' success this year follows the QE boys' team finishing 3rd at National Finals last year and shows the impact the game is having in the College. Futsal is one of the fastest growing sports in the country and our students, both girls and boys have really taken to it.
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- QE's first ever Triathlon team competed in the Darlington Rotary Club Triathlon at Branksome School in May and won the competition! It was a magnificent achievement and the team of Sam Wood (Running), David Hookway (Swimming) and Taylor Cardus (Cycling) were over the moon with the result. Taylor, David and Sam put in a lot of effort and their hard work really paid off - they recorded great individual times. It was an enjoyable day and all three are now looking to try a Triathlon as an individual competitor in the three disciplines.
 - Charlotte Arrowsmith and Claire Temple have become National Coach Scholars and became part of this new, exclusive scheme after a rigorous selection procedure. Their achievement is absolutely outstanding as there are only 22 Coach Scholars nationwide. British Colleges Sport, in partnership with the Football Association, recently launched the National Coach Scholarship Programme to identify and support the development of young, promising coaches in Further Education. The launch day in Bridgwater welcomed the 22 scholars into the innovative programme and included theory and practical training sessions with two of the top coach educators in the country, Steve Rutter (FA Coach Education Manager) and Andy Poole (FA Regional Coach Development Manager, West Midlands). The volunteer coaching that Charlotte and Claire do every week at Darlington Spraire Lads and Lasses FC was central

to their selection. They have now been paired with Mark Scott, a Coach Mentor from the England Colleges Football Staff. Mark, who also teaches PE at QE, will provide Charlotte and Claire with regular and specialised support to further their development as coaches. This is coupled with a coach bursary for the scholars to complete their FA Youth Award Module 1. Both Charlotte and Claire are delighted to have been selected and are really looking forward to developing their coaching skills, working with the best coaches in the country and completing their Youth Awards. Volunteering at QE is very strong and the College encourages and supports students to volunteer both inside College and within the wider community.

- Students, coaches, staff, friends and family joined one another in the Main Hall to celebrate the College's massive success in sport over the last year. The evening celebrated the success of individuals, teams and the selfless contribution made to sport by so many who volunteer, who are so generous in giving up their time to inspire others to participate and obtain the benefits of being involved in sport. The awards were presented by former QE student and leading sports volunteer Hannah Marshall. Many students see Hannah as a role model, as she highlights how QE can be a springboard for students to propel themselves into sport, and go on to achieve great things. For their all-round sporting prowess, Nat Poole and David Hookway were named Sportsmen of the Year with Charlotte Arrowsmith winning the accolade of Sportswoman of the Year. Other key awards were presented to Kristian Bover for his vast contribution to sport in the community, to Matt Gatiss for service to sport and to Anna Brassell for her work within the Student Management Team. The evening was a complete success and thoroughly enjoyed by all who attended. A large number of our students participate in a wide range of sports at all levels, and there is no doubt that sport at QE is thriving.



Miscellaneous

- At the end of July, 18 students and 2 members of staff left Newcastle airport for a three week expedition to Namibia in South West Africa. The expedition was the outcome of two years of fund-raising for the students who were excited to take part in this life changing experience. In conjunction with World Challenge, a youth development organisation, the students embarked on community and conservation projects and also had the chance to see and enjoy a very different cultural experience. On arrival, the students took part in a trek down the Skeleton Coast, followed by a short visit to the Etosha National Park to experience a safari. The group then travelled to Waterberg National Park, an area high up on the Waterberg Plateau. Whilst camping in the Park, the students worked with local rangers renovating waterholes for the animals and overhauling a camp site that had been unused for two years. The students cleared overgrown vegetation, rebuilt roads and provided signage to the camp site. The camp site was left in a usable condition ready for August and now provides a sustainable source of income for the Park. Moving on from Waterberg the group travelled to Spitzkoppe, a very small village with one tiny shop, a church and a small number of houses. The village also has a school with 165 full time boarders, numbers increasing to 215 on a daily basis with pupils walking to the school. The region is very poor with an average rainfall of 0mm a month. The lack of water proved a challenge to QE students, being unable to wash on a daily basis and with toilet



facilities being limited. At Spitzkoppe the group was greeted by a crowd of 160 children all wanting to touch and hold hands, a definite culture shock. Whilst staying in the school the students painted the dormitories which were incredibly basic, built an adventure climbing frame and swings in the playground as well as painting a large number of games on walls. The QE students also organised sports afternoons for the children who clearly loved and enjoyed any interaction with them. Just before returning home, the group moved to the coast and enjoyed an afternoon sand-surfing with some students reaching speeds of 76kph; other students went on a dolphin and seal cruise. The expedition was rounded off with a celebratory meal in a local restaurant with some trying the local game meat, a definite improvement on some of the food enjoyed along the way! The students worked superbly well as a group and were fantastic ambassadors for the College. It was definitely a life changing experience. The staff and students would like to thank everyone who supported them, without whom the expedition could not have happened.

- Tom Chappell and Sam Jones – students at QE - have won bursaries of £1000 per term for each of the three years they will study Engineering at university. The bursaries were set up by Rothmans to promote Engineering in Darlington after the closure of their factory in 2004 and competition for the awards is intense.



- It was really pleasing that Sam and Tom secured places on the Engineering Skills Project as the long summer placements they had at Cummins, Mech-Tool, CTC Marine and Henry Williams provided superb practical experience to enhance their Engineering Degree courses. In the Autumn, Sam is going to Sheffield University to study Mechanical Engineering and Tom is off to Cambridge University for General Engineering. As neither of their courses provides a sandwich year in industry, the opportunity to complete a period of paid relevant work was invaluable. They did extremely well and we wish them great success in the future.
- A variety of activities have been organised to support students' progression to destinations of their choice. In April, the Higher Education Convention at Spennymoor was extremely well-attended by first year students who spoke to representatives from a large number of universities, brought back prospectuses and amassed the usual array of "goodies". Students also benefited from a programme of speakers from universities and employment during the College's HE/Careers fortnight in June. Students chose the session most pertinent to them and there was no limit on the number of talks they could attend. Towards the end of June, a large number of first year students and their parents attended one of three Higher Education and Finance Information Evenings. These sessions included input from College staff about applying to Higher Education and from Student Finance Officers at Teesside University.
- A number of ex QE students have returned to College to share their experiences with current students. During A2 fortnight 5 ex students, at various stages of their medical training, came in to run a question and answer panel session. Romeela Rana-Rahman has just graduated from Newcastle Medical School and taken up her first post at Sunderland Royal Hospital; James Murray is about to start his fourth year at Aberdeen; Anna Birtles is starting her third year at Leeds whilst Joanne Bowers is entering her second year at Sheffield. Johanna Kellett- Wright has just completed a Gap Year working and travelling and is about to embark on her first year at Newcastle Medical School. James intends to return early in the New Year to give pre - Medical degree training sessions to students who have received offers and to give advice to first year students who are considering applying to Medical School.

- In October, for the second year running, Gemma Campbell was welcomed back to College. She is currently in her third year of the Ernst & Young sponsored degree in Accounting, Auditing and Finance at Lancaster University. This is an example of a "hybrid" degree which is based both at Lancaster and across branches of Ernst & Young and it offers students 18 months of placements and seven out of ten examinations of the Chartered Accountancy Institute of Scotland. Gemma is spending her third year at the London City branch where she is dealing with corporate customers based in Canary Wharf. She gave an excellent presentation on the various schemes Ernst & Young offer for school & college leavers and was very well received by the students who attended.
- At the end of the summer term, residential visits to Oxford and Cambridge Universities were organised for students interested in applying to these prestigious institutions. The students were able to visit a range of Colleges and participated in activities arranged by the universities. As well as enjoying themselves immensely, the students benefited from gaining invaluable insight into life and study at the two universities. Follow up debriefing sessions were held in College before the summer holiday when the potential applicants received guidance from ex QE students who are currently studying at Oxbridge and talked to staff about wider reading to be completed over the summer holidays. Following the successful Open Day visits, applications to UNIQ (Oxford) and Sutton Trust (Cambridge) Summer Schools, in addition to subject specific events organised by departments (e.g. Law conferences at Cambridge), the College has 26 applications this year for 2012 entry. For the first time in many years, there is equal balance between Oxford and Cambridge applications. QE continues to maintain good relationships, applications and successes with particular Colleges including St. Anne's and Wadham in Oxford and Churchill, Homerton, Sidney Sussex, Girton and Selwyn at Cambridge.
- Students who have applied to study at Oxbridge this academic year have already benefited from regular support sessions and individual guidance interviews.
- Eight students from QE have embarked on their degree studies at the Universities of Oxford and Cambridge. The students received conditional offers for places at England's top universities earlier in the year and achieved outstanding A Level results this summer which enabled them to take up their places.
- Two have gone to Oxford: Clare Storey to read German & Philosophy and Anna Stephens to study French. The other six - Tom Chappell, Charlotte Howell, Rebecca Auster, Owen Cundy, Ross Lindsay and Laura Raine - have gone to Cambridge. Tom will study Engineering, Charlotte's place is for Economics and Rebecca's degree will be in Law; Owen and Ross will both study Natural Sciences and Laura's place is for Veterinary Science. Once again QE has produced its annual success in enabling outstanding young people to gain entry to Oxford and Cambridge and the College continues to achieve a better offer to applications ratio than the national average. The breadth of subjects they are going to study highlights the strength of a sixth form college education. For so many to progress to these prestigious universities is an accolade for both the students and the whole College. The students' A Level results were terrific. Indeed, Owen attained 5 A* grades and Ross achieved 4 A*s putting them amongst the highest achieving students in the country. All of the students are very excited about taking up their Oxbridge places and have great futures ahead of them.



- For the majority of second year students, this term is dominated by the UCAS application process and Personal Statement drop-in sessions have been held on Tuesday and Thursday lunchtimes to enable students to benefit from extra help from the College's Higher Education Advisors and UCAS Applications Co-ordinator. This is in addition to the assistance they receive from their tutors and subject teachers.

- In September, Serena Rana-Rahman and Samantha Osbiston, earned recognition for their many achievements by winning prestigious Passport Pride Awards. The Awards, organised by Teesside University, were presented to students who have demonstrated exceptional commitment to their studies and who have overcome significant challenges in their lives. Winning students were initially nominated by their colleges and, after being shortlisted and interviewed by Teesside University, were presented with their trophy and £100 at a lavish awards ceremony. Colleges across the North-East nominated students so Serena and Samantha did extremely well to win the awards. Serena is a truly inspirational student. She is registered as a carer for her mother who, for the past 10 years, has been in a wheelchair. Whilst acting as her mother's carer, Serena has maintained an excellent academic record and has helped other students and the College through her voluntary work. She is a QE Student Ambassador, working with pupils in the College's partner schools, encouraging them to think about further education and supporting their transition from school to college. Serena is also a member of the College's Student Association Executive with responsibility for Charities. Samantha's story is also inspiring. She joined QE in September 2010 to study a BTEC Diploma in Foundation Studies in Art and Design and this summer achieved a Merit for her work, enabling her to progress to a Fine Art Degree at Newcastle University. Sam has ASD Aspergers Syndrome, Scotpic Sensitivity Syndrome (Irlen Syndrome) and severe Dyslexia. At QE she received much help from Learning Support and worked very hard and with great enthusiasm, gradually becoming more outgoing and able to interact with her peer group. As well as working hard to fulfil all of her course requirements, Sam studied a lunchtime Italian course, played the flute in the College orchestra and sang in the College choir. In addition, she volunteered to be a course representative for the Student Association. Outside of College, Sam helps to look after her 4 younger brothers and sisters, supporting her mother who is disabled. She also finds time to train with and compete for Sedgefield 75 Swimming Club and is a 1st Dan Black Belt in Taekwondo, training 3 times a week and learning to coach. Both Serena and Sam are excellent role models and the College is very proud of their achievements. Serena is extremely modest and never sees any of the challenges she has in her life as barriers to success or reasons for not channelling her energies into helping others. Sam is an energetic and talented individual who embraces life and refuses to allow any circumstances to stop her from achieving. They are both remarkable young people and thoroughly deserve their awards.



- New accommodation for health-related drop-ins has been provided at the College, allowing these services to move from an obscure location on the ground floor to a more central location near the library. It is hoped that this move will increase the uptake. Increased work with new agencies has allowed the College to increase the number of drop-ins so that one operates each lunchtime. Topics covered include general health, sexual health, drugs/alcohol/solvent, sexuality and one-to-one support provided by NHS Health Trainers. Outside the drop-in times the room is available for agency staff to come into College to work on an individual basis, or for staff to use as an interview space.

- Chlamydia screening was carried out in the College for the first time in the new academic year in early October. Students responded positively and a record number of tests were carried out (260 on the first day alone). The team is visiting the College more than ever this year to promote good sexual health amongst students.
- Bondgate Methodist Church continues its close links with the College by opening up its Hall every Monday and Tuesday lunchtimes to QE students. Students can eat their lunch and enjoy free tea and coffee, pool and table football.
- At the end of June, the College hosted a visit of students and staff from County Garden School in China. 16 students, aged between 14 and 18, and 2 teachers from the school spent an afternoon at the College as they wanted an insight into Further Education in this country. They met with a group of our students for an informal chat and discussion about the similarities and differences in their educational experiences and they were taken on a tour of the College. The bust of Queen Elizabeth at the front of the College building and the stained glass windows in the Hall proved particularly popular, and many of the Chinese students wanted their photographs taken in front of these attractions. The students also wanted an insight into the UK's Higher Education system and the process of applying to university so the College's Higher Education Advisors gave a presentation to them. The visit was enjoyed by all, friendships were made and insights into other cultures and educational systems were gained by both sets of students and members of staff. A couple of the Chinese students informed their host families that they enjoyed their time at College so much that they want to apply to QE when they reach 16 and finish their education at their school!

Laurence Job