



Report on Level of Learner Interest for Progression  
onto a Part-Time HNC in Sports Coaching and  
Development at Halesowen College

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INVESTOR IN PEOPLE

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# 1 Introduction and Purpose

- 1.1 This report presents the findings from a short project to identify learner interest, motivations and aspirations for progression onto a part-time HNC in Sports Coaching and Development Course at Halesowen College.
- 1.2 Two student cohorts were identified by the College as the focus of the report: First year BTEC Sports students and AS Level Students. The College had identified a concern that some of these students may lack the confidence, aspiration or financial means to move on to full-time higher learning. It was also felt that some students might prefer to seek employment after College, and others might experience difficulty in securing an offer for a place in higher education, particularly at a time of increasing competition for University places. It was felt that this might result in inflation in entry grade requirements in some cases.
- 1.3 The report was commissioned to assist Halesowen College with their plans for developing an HNC sports course, which would give Halesowen College learners flexible, part-time progression options into either higher education or employment. An outline of the HNC progression options is included in **Appendix 1**.

# 2 Methodology

- 2.1 In consultation with the Herefordshire and Worcestershire LLN and Halesowen College a questionnaire was devised and given to all AS Level and first year BTEC National students present on a particular day selected. The questionnaires were completed anonymously. This resulted in **88** questionnaires being completed and returned for analysis. The questionnaire is presented in **Appendix 2**.
- 2.2 Subsequently 2 focus groups were arranged. A topic guide was produced to assist with facilitating the groups. A semi-structured format was used, to allow direct exploration of issues and the flexibility to delve into other relevant topics that emerged during the discussions. Group 1 consisted of **5** AS level students; Group 2 consisted of **7** first year BTEC sports

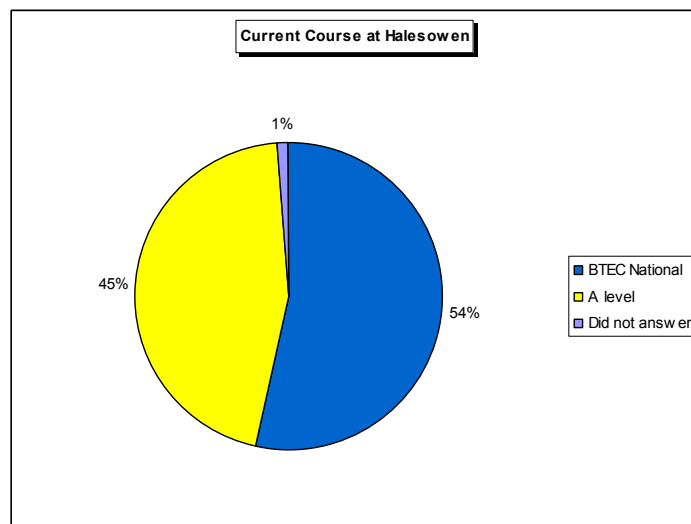
students. The focus group topic guide is presented in **Appendix 3**.  
Transcript notes are presented in **Appendix 4**.

2.3 The following results are based primarily on the survey and focus group. However we have sought to integrate insights where appropriate.

### 3 Demography of Respondents

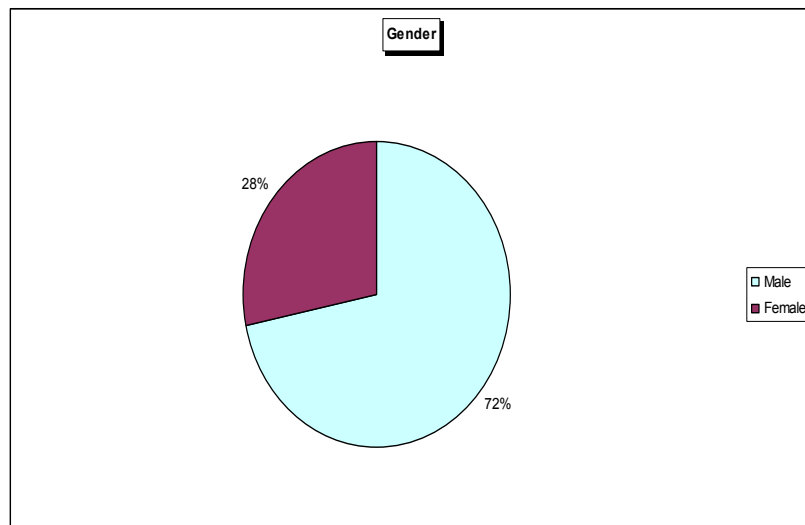
3.1 Please note that the total number of respondents for each section do not always equal the total number of students responding. This is mainly due to respondents giving more than one answer to questions, which has influenced the reporting of statistics. Readers should bear in mind that the data of ALL answers have been considered, even when originated from the same respondent.

3.2 A total of **88** completed surveys were analysed. This comprised **47** BTEC (54%) and **40** AS Level (45%) students. One student did not identify their course. (1%)



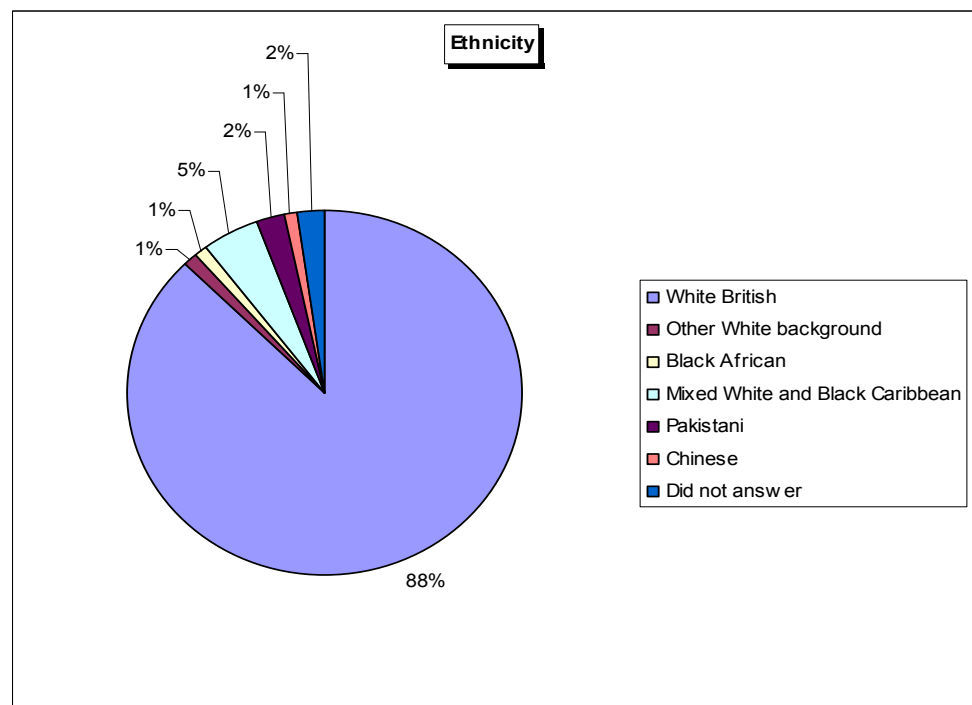
**Graph 1: Current Course of Study at Halesowen College**

3.3 **72%** of respondents were male and **28%** were female



**Graph 2: Gender of respondents**

3.4 The majority of respondents classified themselves as 'White British' (88%), with a small minority making up other ethnic backgrounds.



**Graph 3: Ethnicity of respondents**

## 4 Numbers interested in studying a Sports HNC at Halesowen College

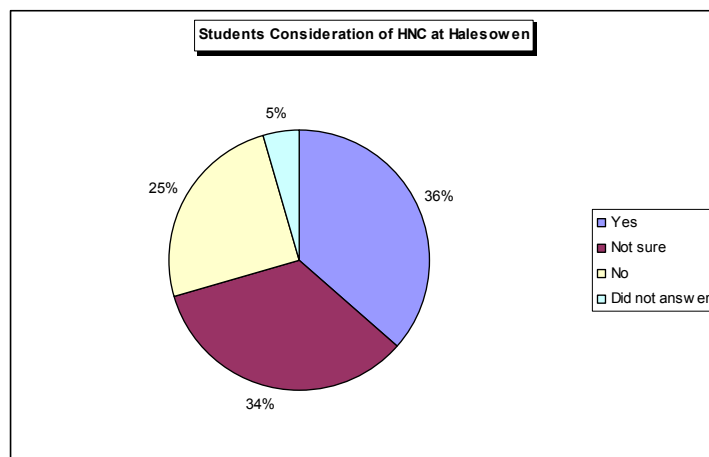
4.1 **36%** of respondents indicated positive interest in staying on to study for a Sports HNC, **34%** of respondents were unsure and **25%** would not consider this option. In terms of actual student numbers within the survey this equates to:

32 students would consider studying for an HNC

30 are unsure

22 would not consider it

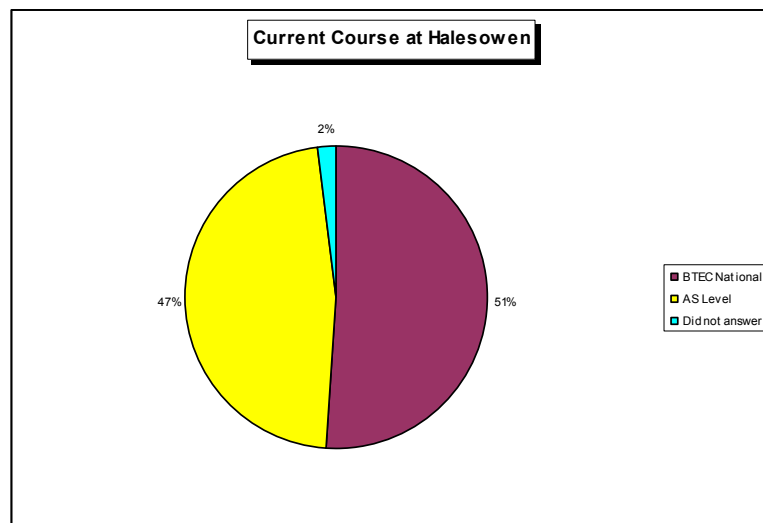
This suggests that there is a viable cohort of students who might apply for a Sports HNC course at Halesowen College, if offered.



**Graph 4: Students interested in HNC Course**

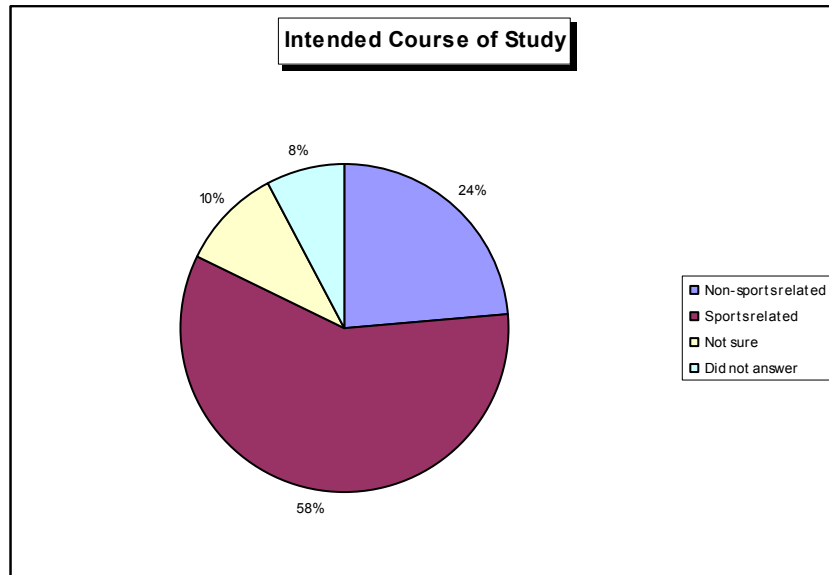
## 5 Students Interested in Moving on to University/ College

5.1 A total of **51** students expressed an interest in attending university or college upon completion of their studies at Halesowen College. Of these, **51%** (26 students) were BTEC National students and **47%** (24 students) were AS Level students. This suggests that around half of all students across both cohorts are already considering continuing their studies to a higher level.



**Graph 5: All Students Interested in Pursuing University/College by Current Course**

5.2 Of the 51 students who expressed an interest in pursuing College or University after leaving their current course, the majority (**58%**) reported an interest in a sports-related field (graph 5).

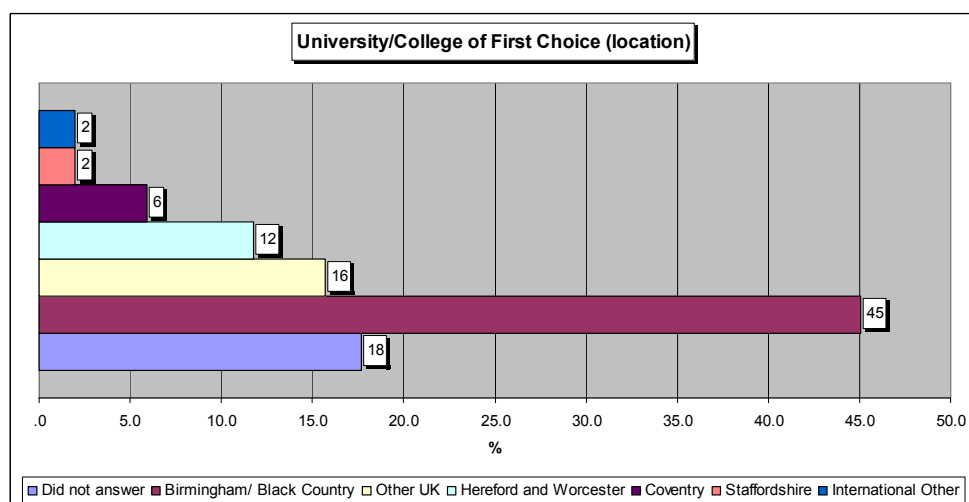


**Graph 5: Intended Course of Study at College or University**

5.3 There were differences between the two cohorts in relation to level of interest in sports and non-sports related studies, with **70%** of BTEC students interested in sports compared to **41%** of AS level students. This would be expected, given the sports specific nature of the BTEC course.

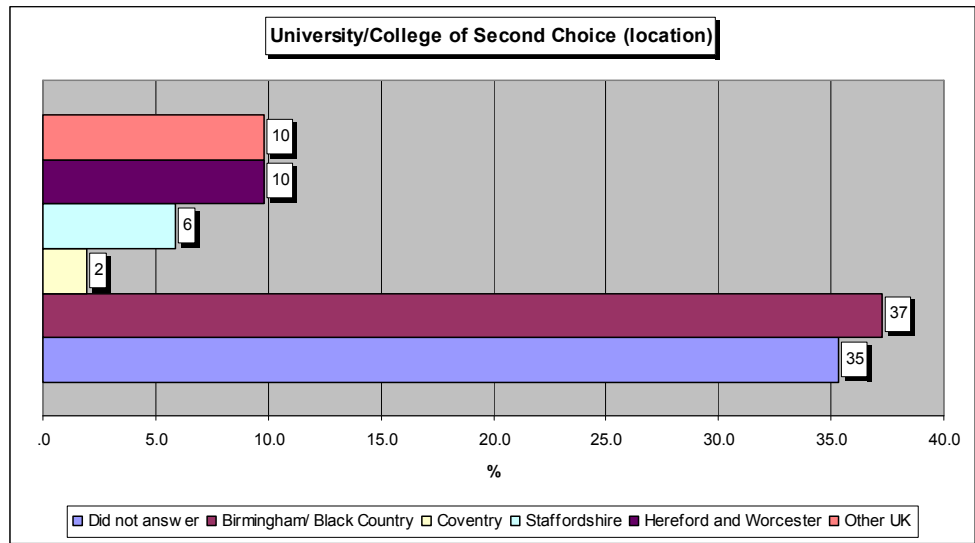
The non-sports areas of interest reported by AS students included Biology, Business, Criminology, English, German, Graphic Communication, History, Law, Politics and Finance

5.4 When asked ‘Which university or college would be your first choice?’ just less than half (**45%**) cited their first choice as being located within the Birmingham/Black Country area. Smaller, but significant numbers of students (**20%**) cited institutions in the Midlands areas of Herefordshire, Worcestershire, Coventry and Staffordshire as their first choice. This suggests that the majority of the students surveyed (**65%**) would prefer to study at an institution close to home as their first choice, rather than move away.



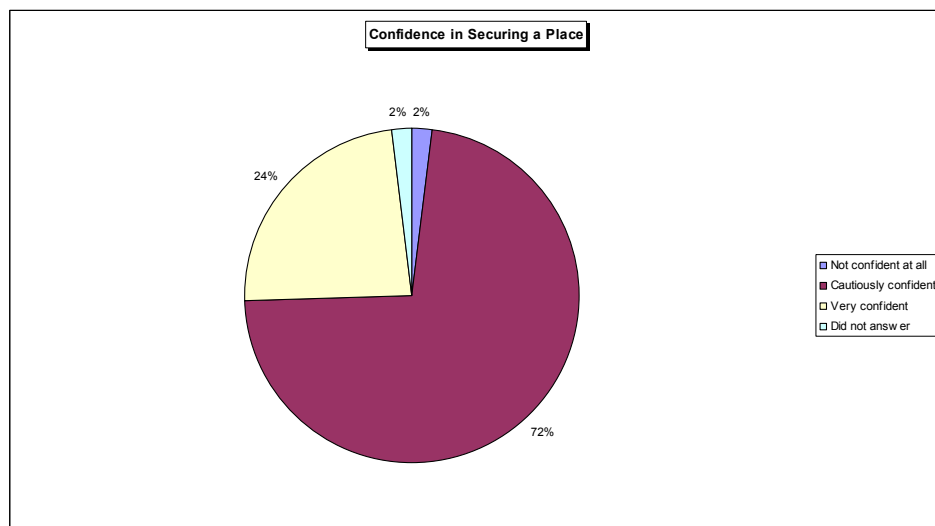
**Graph 6: Location of First Choice University/College**

5.5 When asked about location for their second choice of location for study, just over half (**55%**) indicated that they would again prefer to study close to home. **37%** would choose Birmingham/Black Country and **18%** would choose the wider Midlands regions. (**35%** of students did not answer this question, perhaps suggesting that some students did not have a second option).



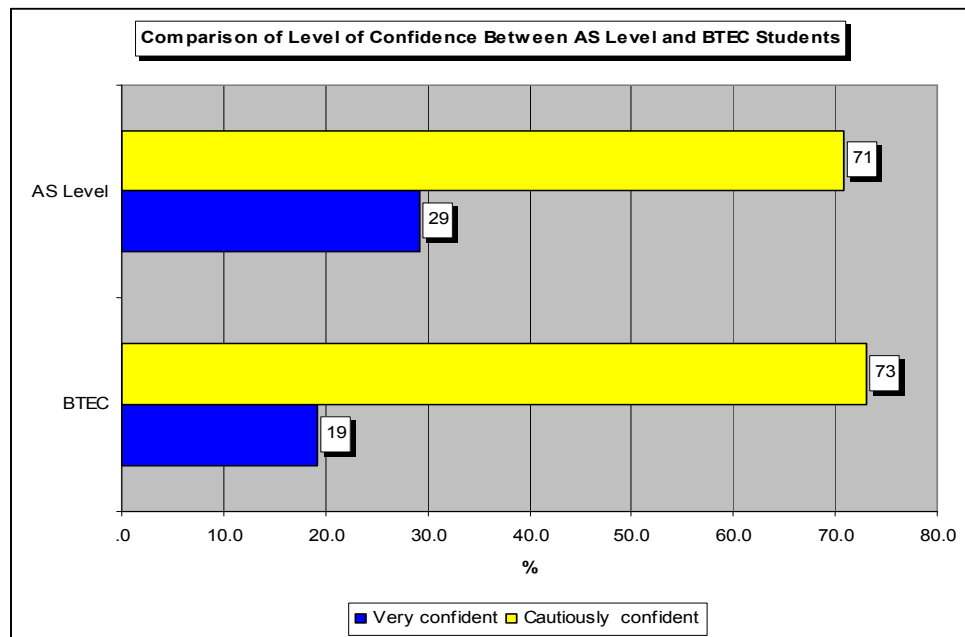
**Graph 7: University/College of Second Choice (based on location)**

5.6 Of those students who are intending to apply for a University/College course, the overwhelming majority (**96%**) reported that they were either 'cautiously confident' (**72%**) or 'very confident' (**24%**) about securing a place in higher education. Should there be an impact on application success rates due to increased competition for places in 2011, there could be a number of disappointed students seeking alternative options, amongst these cohorts of learners.



**Graph 8: Student Confidence in Securing a Place in University/College**

5.7 The AS level cohort were a little more likely to be 'very confident' (**29%**) than the BTEC students (**19%**)



**Graph 9: Comparison of Confidence levels for securing a university/college place**

## 6 Students Interested in Leaving Education

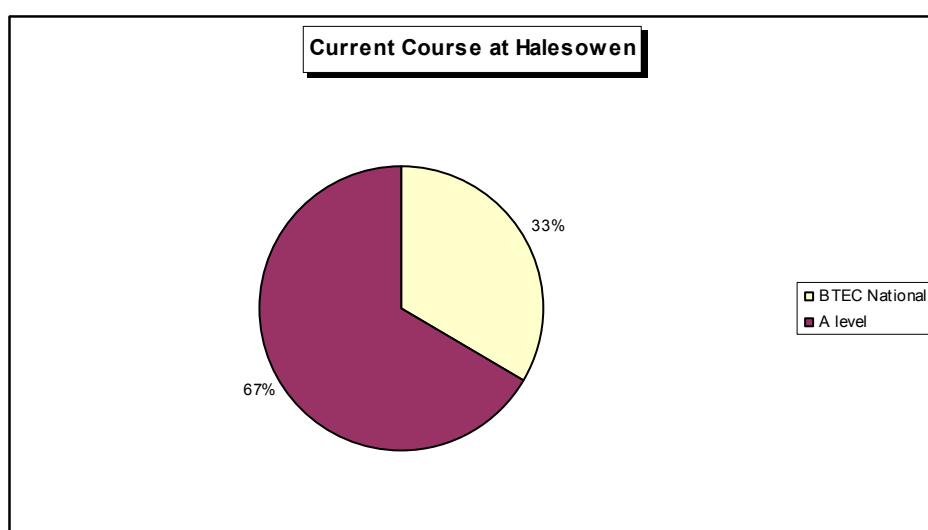
6.1 Only **9** students indicated that they wanted to leave education for good after completing their current course at Halesowen College. One third (**3** students) were from the BTEC cohort and two thirds (**6** students) were from the AS cohort.

6.2 The reasons these 9 students gave for not continuing their education included:

- *Length of course too long;*
- *Cost;*
- *Career prospects;*
- *Don't think I am smart enough;*
- *Don't like it;*
- *Had enough*

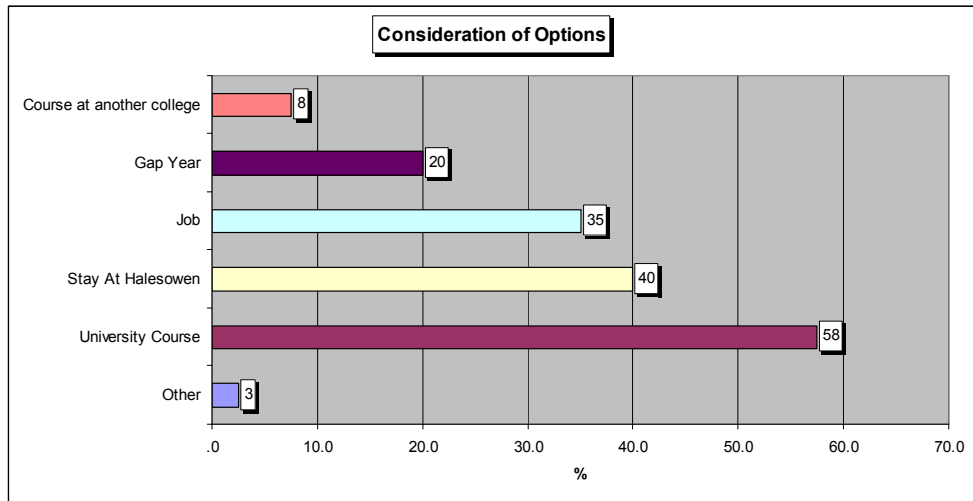
## 7 Students Undecided about what to do next

- 7.1 A total of **40** students stated that they were 'undecided' about what to do after they complete their current Halesowen College course. **21** were AS level students and **19** were BTEC students, suggesting little difference in numbers between the 2 cohorts.



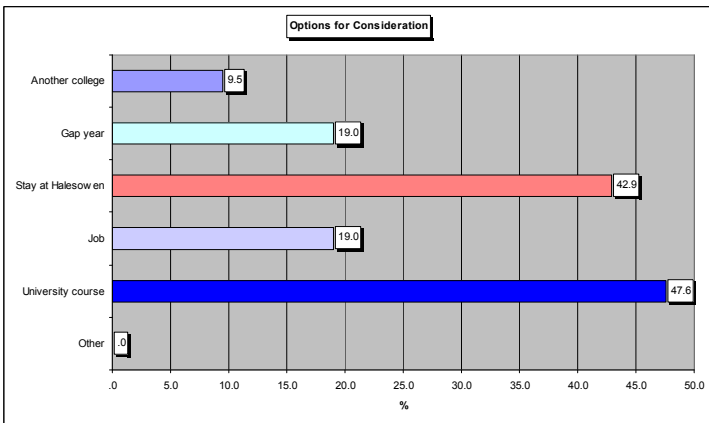
**Graph 9: Students Undecided about their future, by current course**

- 7.2 Those students who were undecided were asked about a range of options which they might be prepared to consider. Over half (**58%**) would consider moving on to a University/College course. **40%** would consider staying on at Halesowen College, **35%** might want to seek employment and **20%** might consider a gap year. This suggests that significant numbers of the undecided students might be interested in applying for the HNC sports course. (Please note that each respondent were invited to tick more than one box. Many did so, indicating that the undecided were currently thinking about a range of potential options).

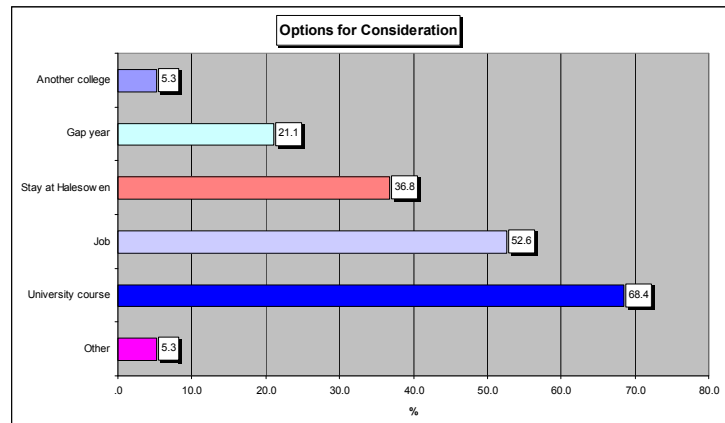


**Graph 10: Potential next step options (all undecided students)**

7.3 Both AS and BTEC 'undecided' cohorts cited moving on to University/College as the most popular option. However AS students favoured staying on at College more than finding a job and the BTEC students favoured finding a job more than staying on at College. In this respect, the HNC option is likely to appeal to both groups for different reasons, because of the flexible progression opportunities the HNC offers.

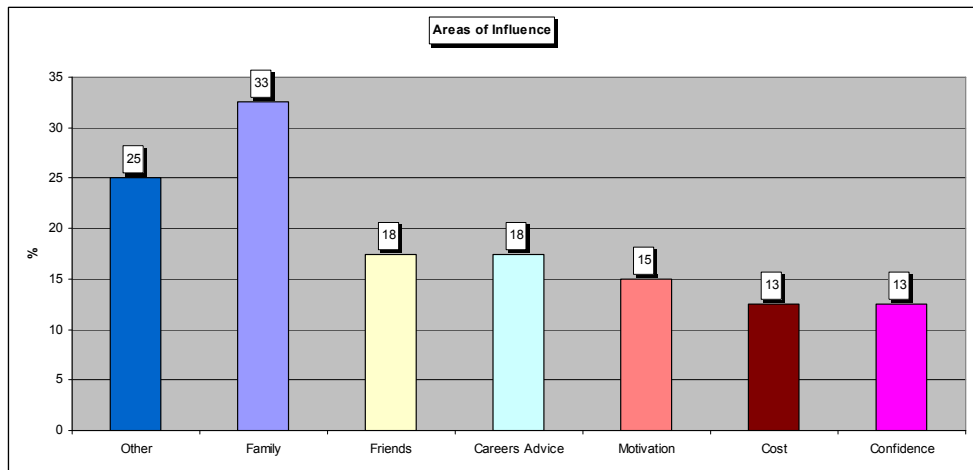


**Graph 17: Potential next step options (AS cohort)**



**Graph 18: Potential next step options (BTEC cohort)**

7.4 The 'undecided' students were asked about what influences their decision-making. The main theme to emerge was family (33%), although a range of other influences were also cited.

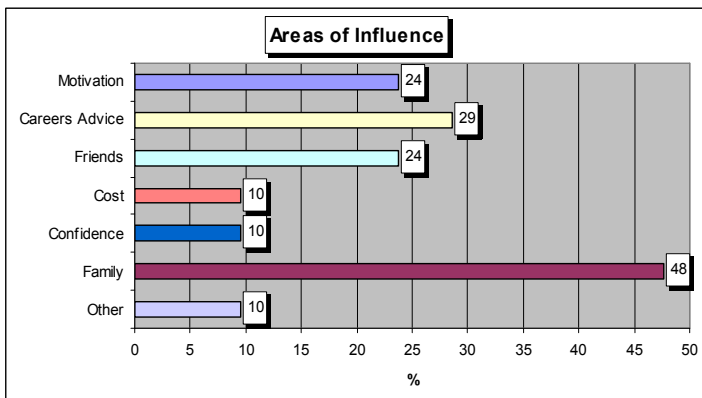


**Graph 11: Reported Influences in Decision-Making on Future Plans (undecided students)**

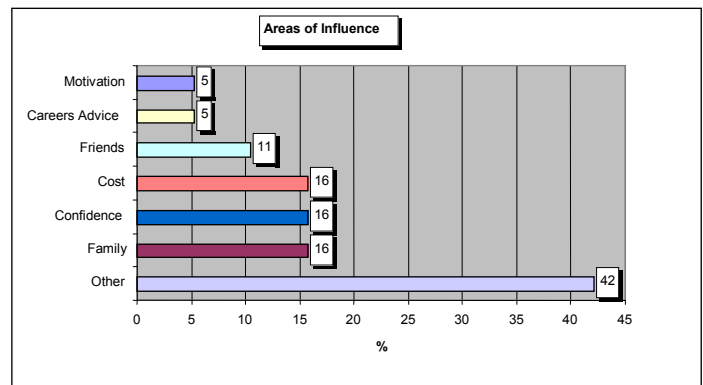
7.5 Although we identified the most common responses, ‘other’ still accounted for **25%** of answers. Examples of these ‘other’ themes that were influencing decision making were:

- *not knowing what to do next*
- *not ready for a job yet*
- *the need to get a qualification*
- *college work*

7.6 There were differences between the BTEC and AS level cohorts in relation to decision making influences (Graphs 12 and 13 below). Family was the most likely influence for AS students, whereas ‘other’ was the most likely influence for BTEC students.



**Graph 12: Areas of influence AS cohort**



**Graph 13: Areas of influence BTEC cohort**

## 8 Focus Groups

### 8.1 Background/Methodology

- 8.1.1 In this section we report on the outcomes of two focus groups, which were run with a total of **12** students. The students were selected by Halesowen College and were asked to attend the sessions. **5** AS level students attended the first session and **7** BTEC students attended the second session. Each session lasted approximately 45 minutes.
- 8.2.3 The purpose of the focus group was to explore the issues presented within the survey. In addition, it became apparent that learners had a variety of levels of understanding about what was meant by HNC, Foundation Degree and Bachelor Degree. For this reason, a short introduction was given. This enabled students to ask questions and explore any additional issues which had not necessarily been captured in the survey.
- 8.2.4 The focus groups were facilitated by the consultant from Stratagia and Viv Wakeman. Students were reassured that the interviews were confidential and that they were free to discuss their views without fear of any judgements being made. A copy of the topic guide used for the focus groups is reproduced in **Appendix 3**. A full transcript of the group discussions is reproduced in **Appendix 4**.

### 8.2 AS Level Cohort

- 8.2.1 The group consisted of **5** students, all of whom were studying sports-related A levels. **3** students stated that they were definitely interested in the HNC Sports course, **1** was not interested (aiming for PE Teacher Training) and **1** arrived after this question was asked.
- 8.2.2. The group presented themselves confidently and were very willing to participate in discussion and share their views. The students were all aiming for University, but did not appear to be at the stage of making a final decision. They felt that a part-time HNC would be a good choice for

people who were unsure of their next steps, as it allowed more options and greater flexibility of progression routes (employment or further study). The HNC course was perceived as a good choice for those who did not feel ready for university (due to lack of skills or confidence) as it provided an option that was less pressurised, less intense and less threatening. Some students liked the idea of building up a qualification in smaller, easier steps.

- 8.2.2 The group also discussed disadvantages to the HNC course, such as the length of time it would take to complete, the potential costs involved (as it takes longer to achieve) and a perceived narrow focus on sport. The question of cost was clearly an important consideration to these students and it was noted that more information about this was needed so that students could compare tuition and other costs of HNC, Foundation Degrees and Bachelor Degrees. There was also a concern that the HNC course would be less intense than university courses and may not, therefore, offer sufficient preparation for those wanting to transfer onto a degree.
- 8.2.3 In relation to staying on to study specifically at Halesowen College, the advantages were perceived as familiarity with the environment, living close to the college (thereby reducing travel costs) and having good facilities. Other disadvantages were explored, such as Universities offering better facilities than the local college and also that students might miss out on gaining new experiences and independence at University. There might also be an issue about hidden additional costs, particularly if the HNC course was offered across campuses at Halesowen College and/or the host University campus.
- 8.2.4 The AS level students explored a number of concerns about their chances of securing a place at university and were knowledgeable about recent political events. They identified issues such as the impact of the change in government and a decline in the number of available places, resulting in increased competition and higher grades being needed. Cost was also a recurring theme, with concerns being expressed about affording tuition fees and student debts. For some achieving the right balance between the right course and the right location was important.

- 8.2.5 Students identified a number of advantages of studying at university including themes associated with better quality teaching and learning, better opportunities (social life, independence and career/salary prospects). When asked about what had informed these impressions, one student identified information obtained from her father and another from films and TV programmes. When asked if anyone had attended University Open Days, none had yet done so and one was planning to do so in a few days.
- 8.2.6 In relation to career prospects, the AS level students felt that achieving good grades and personal qualities (such as personality, life experiences and ambition) were important. Practical considerations were also cited, such as competitiveness in the job market. It was felt that having a higher level qualification, especially a degree, would result in better job prospects.

### **8.3 BTEC Cohort**

- 8.3.1 The group consisted of 7 students, 6 of who said they would be interested in considering the HNC Sports Course as an option. Some of the the BTEC group appeared to be less confident than the AS level group and most appeared less knowledgeable about what university involved. This may suggest that University had not yet have been seriously considered as an option by this group. However, the students were very keen and willing to find out more and asked lots of good, relevant questions.
- 8.3.2 The BTEC students were very interested in learning more about the HNC Sports Course, particularly practicalities such as cost, how much work was involved, how long it would take to achieve the qualification and job/career prospects. For some students, this was linked to their earlier experiences. For example one student had started a First Diploma and then moved onto a National Diploma. This was perceived as an enabling experience, allowing the student to work at a slower pace and therefore stay on-course (despite having to change peer groups). Another student recognised that the HNC Sports Course might have the practical advantage of opening up,

rather than limiting, options as he thought he might prefer to work first, then apply to university later, after gaining experience.

- 8.3.2. The only perceived disadvantage of the HNC Sports Course by this group was that it was limited to Sport. However, the group was unsure about this and wanted to know more about comparisons with University courses. Although both cohorts appeared to be requiring additional advice and guidance, the BTEC group appeared to be less knowledgeable about higher education than the AS level group. The BTEC cohort appeared to have a strong underlying desire for broad, flexible pathways/options.
- 8.3.3 In relation to staying on to study specifically at Halesowen College, the advantages were perceived as familiarity with surroundings, cheaper travel expenses and benefits for those who have difficulty with change and transition. The only disadvantage discussed was the potential for missing out on new experiences.
- 8.3.4 When asked about any concerns for securing a University place, if that was an option, BTEC students felt that being prepared to have experiences outside of college and personality would help, not just getting good grades. Others felt that they might not meet the admission criteria (for e.g. GCSE Maths/Science) for University, whereas they might meet requirements for an HNC. This triggered further discussion about comparison of grades required for various courses and the UCAS application process.
- 8.3.5 The BTEC students identified some advantages to studying at university, such as the opportunities for independent living and learning, taking a big step towards leaving home, improved social life and better equipment/sports facilities.
- 8.3.6 In relation to career prospects, the BTEC students felt that personality, motivation and work-based experiences were important. When prompted about whether qualifications were important, students felt that although a Degree was a higher qualification, it was an HNC that might give better job prospects and the flexibility of choosing either work or degree on completion.

## Appendix 1: Outline of Proposed HNC Course

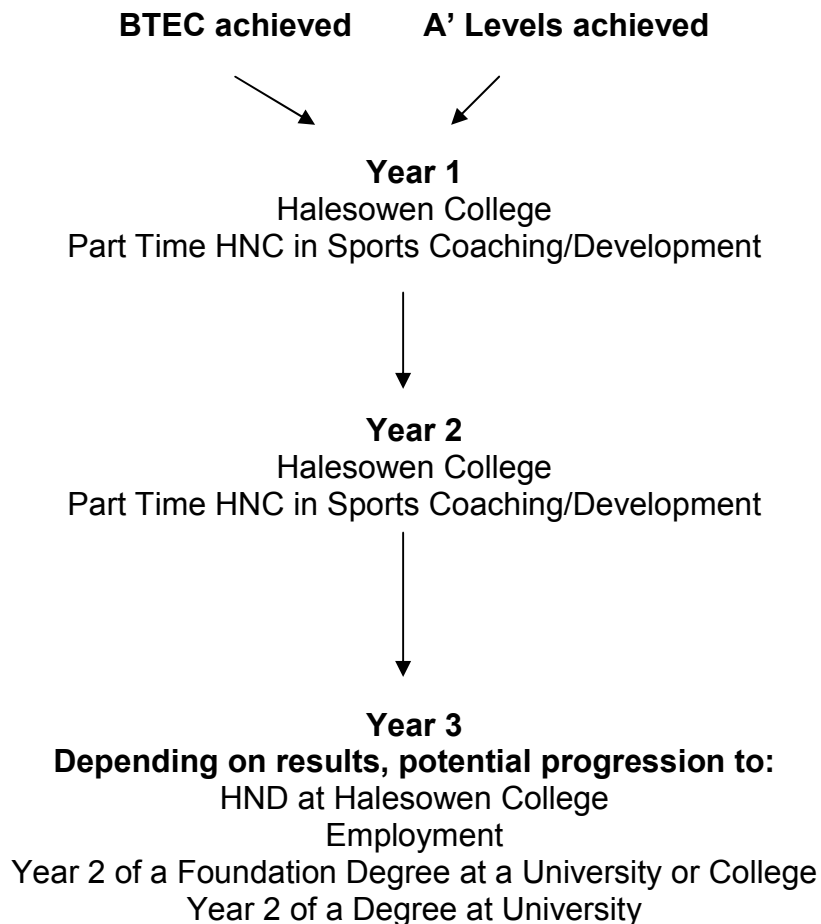
We are thinking of developing a new, higher level **HNC Sports Coaching or Sports Development Course** (part-time) here at Halesowen College for September 2011.

The course will be developed in partnership with a University and will give options to:

- obtain a highly regarded higher qualification (HNC)
- progress after 2 or 3 years onto a Degree or employment

**This means that you can obtain an HNC qualification at Halesowen College and improve your chances of progressing to either University or employment.**

Here is an overview of how it will work:



## Appendix 2: Questionnaire

### STUDENT QUESTIONNAIRE

Thank you for agreeing to fill in this short questionnaire, which will only take a few minutes to complete. Please either tick the relevant box or add your written answer. (Use the back if you need more space). All your answers are completely anonymous.

#### 1. ABOUT YOU:

a. Are you:

Male	<input type="checkbox"/>
Female	<input type="checkbox"/>

b. Your age:

c. Your Ethnicity:

White British	<input type="checkbox"/>
White Irish	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other White background:	<input type="checkbox"/>
Black African	<input type="checkbox"/>
Black Caribbean	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other Black background:	<input type="checkbox"/>
Mixed White and Black African	<input type="checkbox"/>
Mixed White and Black Caribbean	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other Mixed White and Black:	<input type="checkbox"/>
Indian	<input type="checkbox"/>
Pakistani	<input type="checkbox"/>
Bangladeshi	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other Asian:	<input type="checkbox"/>
Mixed White and Asian	<input type="checkbox"/>
Chinese	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other Ethnic Group:	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other Mixed background:	<input type="checkbox"/>

d. Your Current course at Halesowen College:

BTEC National	<input type="checkbox"/>
A' Level	<input type="checkbox"/>

The following questions are about your plans after you have finished your current course at Halesowen College:

If you have decided to go on to University or another College – go to **question 2**

If you have decided to leave education completely – go to **question 3**

If you have not decided what to do next – go to **question 4**

**2. IF YOU HAVE DECIDED TO GO TO UNIVERSITY OR ANOTHER COLLEGE after you have finished your current course, please answer these questions.**

- a. What **course** are you intending to study next as your **first** choice?
  
- b. Which University OR College would be your **first** choice?
  
- c. Why did you choose this University or College?
  
- d. If you don't get an offer at your first choice, which other Universities/Colleges would you like to attend?
  
- e. How confident are you about securing a place at University/College?

Very confident	
Cautiously confident	
Not at all confident	

- f. If there was a suitable **higher level sports course (part-time)** on offer at Halesowen College, would you consider it as a possible option?

		Please add a brief reason against the box you have ticked:
Yes		
Not Sure		
No		

Thank you for completing the questionnaire.

**3 IF YOU HAVE DECIDED TO LEAVE EDUCATION COMPLETELY after you have finished your current course, please answer these questions.**

- a. What are you hoping to do after leaving Halesowen College?
  
- b. Why have you decided **NOT** to carry on with your education?
  
- c. What, if anything, has influenced your decision?  
(For example, it might be family/friends/careers advice/confidence/motivation or something else?)
  
- d. If there was a suitable **higher level sports course (part-time)** an offer at Halesowen College, would you consider it as a possible option?

		Please add a brief reason against the box you have ticked:
Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Not Sure	<input type="checkbox"/>	
No	<input type="checkbox"/>	

Thank you for completing the questionnaire.

**4 IF YOU ARE UNDECIDED ABOUT WHAT TO DO after you have finished your current course, please answer these questions.**

- a. Would you consider any of the following options?  
(Please tick all that you might consider):

Staying on at Halesowen College	
Applying for a course at another College	
Applying for a University Course	
Finding a job	
Taking a gap year	
Other (please specify)	

- b. What, if anything, is influencing your decision?  
(For example, it might be family/friends/careers advice/confidence/motivation or something else?)

- c. When do you think you will make your decision about what to do next?

- d. If there was a suitable **higher level sports course (part-time)** an offer at Halesowen College, would you consider it as a possible option?

		Please add a brief reason against the box you have ticked:
Yes		
Not Sure		
No		

Thank you for completing the questionnaire.

### Appendix 3: Draft Topic Guide

1	What immediately comes into your mind when you think about the idea of staying on to study for a sport related HNC at Halesowen College?
2	What are the pros and cons of studying for a <b>sport related HNC</b> ?  Why/how?
3	What are the pro's and con's of <b>staying on</b> to study specifically at <b>Halesowen College</b> , rather than another college or university?  Why/how?
4	Some of you will want to study at University in the future. What are your <b>concerns about getting a place at university</b> ?  Why/how?
5	What do you see as the <b>advantages of studying at University</b> ?  Why/how?
6	Thinking about moving on to work. What can help you to increase your <b>prospects of getting a good job</b> ?

## Appendix 4: Focus Group Transcripts

Halesowen College 1<sup>st</sup> July 2010-07-01

### Group 1 – AS level Students

5 Students with A levels related, including e.g. PE, psychology and others:  
 3 definitely interested in the HNC option  
 1 not interested as aiming for PE Teacher Training Degree  
 1 arrived late and missed the first intros

#### General observation:

A confident group of students who were very willing to participate and all contribute their ideas. Gave the impression of aiming for University, but not yet at the stage of making decisions about which direction to go, so may well be interested in the HNC option, especially for anyone unsure.

After introduction any Questions? None

**Q What immediately comes into your mind when you think about the idea of staying on to study for a sport related HNC at Halesowen?**

- Good for people not confident
- **Why is that?** – cos it's doing it more slowly, not rushing for a year.
- PT an advantage cos you can work as well
- More options to decide what next – more open options
- **How does that help?** – takes pressure of making the decision wot to do
- Can build it up in chunks before making decision
- Don't want to cram it – will be less intense and less work pressure
- Good for people who might not want uni – who lack skills and confidence – can still get a job, so it's an easier step

**Q What are the disadvantages of studying for a sport related HNC (pros already come through)**

- The time it takes – 4 or 5 years could be too long.
- Some people might not want to do Sports – could be limiting
- Q from student - Do you have to pay for it? Cos if they have to pay to do HNC – it could be really expensive as it takes longer. Do they have to pay up front or at the end?
- (Viv to look into that) Suggested that it will be overall less than uni fees – and you can work, so it could result in less debt at the end.
- Q from student is it specific to sport? Yes – it narrows options to sport vocation
- As it's part time it may not be so intense and then may not be good preparation for next stage.

**Q What are the pros and cons of staying on to study specifically at Halesowen College rather than another college or university?**

Pros	Cons
Know the environment well	Could be better facilities at Uni
Closer than uni – less travelling	Distance – if it was spread across campuses, and possibly with some classes at uni – that would add to expense

Good college facilities on site	Some people might want to move away or want a new experience
Cheaper than moving away	

**Q What are the concerns about getting a place at university?**

- The number of places are decreasing, especially with a Tory govt
- Unis are asking for higher grades
- There are more applicants
- How expensive is it? Can we afford fees and debts
- The uni you want to go do may not have the course
- Need to match the right course to right location
- For some course is more important, for some place. A bit of both – the right course in a good area for me.

**Q What do you see as the advantages of studying at university?**

New experiences  
 Potential career path  
 More money for a higher level qualification  
 Help you to grow up more – get more independent t and move on  
 Social aspects  
 Good level of teaching – good lecturers

**What about the kind of teaching?** It's more complex and a higher standard than college. **Can you explain what you mean by more complex?** Style of teaching is different. Lectures – talked to for an hour, rather than handouts. More independent study.

**Where did that impression come from?** – my dad's told me about it.

**From where else do you get an impression about what uni is like?** – films and media. This influences thoughts.

**Have you visited uni yourselves yet?** Not yet – but I'm going to an open day this weekend.

**Q Thinking about moving on to work. What helps to increase your prospects of getting a good job?**

- Grades
- Personality
- Experiences you've had so far
- Ambitions
- How competitive the job market it for that job
- What about qualifications? Degree would give you better job prospects – more people recognise it. It's also at a higher level.

**Group 2 BTEC students**

7 students: 6 would be interested in considering an HNC, although some had reservations, which were discussed during the session. One arrived later in the session.

**General observations:**

A less confident group of students, but with aspirations to go to university. Everyone engaged with and interested in the discussions, but some appeared less confident about expressing their views, even with encouragement. This group asked more questions about the practicalities of how the course would work, the costs, who

would teach it, etc and about applying for University. Appeared less well-informed about university than the AS students.

**After introduction any Questions?**

Qs from students:

Is there a cost involved? Some discussion follows.

If you went to uni after doing the HNC is it the same course you'd be doing at uni?

Some discussion follows.

**Q What immediately comes into your mind when you think about the idea of staying on to study for a sport related HNC at Halesowen College?**

The time taken is an advantage – cos you can have a PT job, but a disadvantage cos it will take longer.

It could be a disadvantage cos it would be loads of work and could be too much, because it's extending how long you are studying.

**Q Any other advantages?** – yes cos you get used to doing the work. I started a 1st diploma then did a national – and if I didn't it would hit me harder. I would have given up if I'd done it the other way. Even though I wanted to stay with friends, it helped me doing it the slower route. It builds you up to deal with the expectations of the course.

**Q What are the Pro's and con's of studying for a sport related HNC?**

Q from student – what kind of jobs can you get after HNC? Viv gave some examples. Do you do work experience on an HNC? At the end of the course do you have to make a definite choice? Could you work and if you make a mistake go on to uni? Confirmed this was the case – seen as another advantage.

Pros	Cons
You can go straight to employment, easier to get employment.	Got to stick to sport, it's specific. Q from student - Is that the same at Uni? Are there different pathways at uni? (Discussion about this). Students looking for broad options – want to keep options open, rather than closing them.
Keeping options open – uni or job	

**Q What are the pro's and con's of staying on to study specifically at Halesowen College?**

Q from student - are you taught by the same teachers or new staff? Viv answered Q. Would those staff stay constant or would there be changes all the time. Viv answered.

Pros	Cons
Same surroundings – could be an advantage cos of familiarity	Same surroundings – a disadvantage if you want a change and have new experiences
Travel expenses - cheaper	
Some find it hard to make changes, or make new friends.	

**Q Some of you might want to study at University in the future. What are your concerns about getting a place at university?**

I think I do a lot outside college, so I think that will help. It depends how willing you are to do stuff.

It's about your personality, other experiences, not just grades.

I haven't got GCSE Maths or Science and I need them for Uni – so I don't think I'd get a place. (Discussion about what you do and don't need followed). If I haven't got the right entry requirements, they might let me in if I get an HNC.

What grades will I need – to get on HNC? Would it be lower than say university require? So if I passed this, it's another pathway, without getting the higher grades. So it takes longer, but you start lower. Viv answered. You take little steps.

Do you apply through UCAS? – yes.

Which University is going to be with? Not yet known – but local.

**Q Any other issues about confidence about applying for uni?** Getting good grades and writing the personal statement for UCAS. Viv answered re latter.

**Q What to do see as the advantages of studying at University?**

Independence – living and learning. Even if you live at home, you get more independence because it's another big step.

Better equipment for sport and facilities

Social life

Getting away from home

**Any Other Q?** – I've already gone back a year, cos I couldn't cope with A level, so will it be an issue if I hold back another year? Discussed pros and cons.

**Q Thinking about moving onto work. What can help you to increase your prospects of getting a good job?**

Personality

Motivation

Experience – work based

**Q What about qualifications – does that increase prospects?** Degree is higher, but HNC might be easier to get a job. It's such a competitive job market – you could do all this, get a degree and then end up working in a factory. It's a gamble. Might be easier to get a job with HNC – you could apply for job as well as uni and take which comes up. And then if the job is no good, could still go on to uni. More options.

This prompted more Q from students: With HNC is it all course work? Any exams? Do you get a chance to have re-marks? What about UCAS points – do the HNC add up? So you could add them up and get to a really high uni? General discussion about UCAS point system.

So if you got all distinctions – would HNC or degree be better? Choices discussed.