

Cheshire colleges recognised for excellence

LSC accredits 22 colleges and training providers with new standard at celebratory reception, including two colleges in Cheshire

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The Learning and Skills Council (LSC) has celebrated the achievements of 22 providers in delivering high quality training to employers, including Reaseheath and West Cheshire colleges in Cheshire. At an event in London these providers were recognised as being amongst the first to achieve this new voluntary accreditation.

The new standard highlights excellence in the two areas that employers have told us are most important to them:

- provider responsiveness to employer needs and
- provider excellence in a particular vocational area.

David Lammy MP, Skills Minister, said: "Training is essential to any successful enterprise and we are determined to make high quality skills training accessible for all. The new standard highlights excellence in provider responsiveness and will be a mark that employers can trust."

A key development of the standard from previous accreditation schemes is that it is not attached to public funding or investment and will be open to both publicly and privately funded organisations providing higher and further education. In addition, accreditation is verified by employers, meaning that the criteria for achieving the standard reflects their needs.

Liz Davis, Director of Area for the LSC in Cheshire and Warrington, said: “It is fantastic that Reaseheath and West Cheshire colleges have been acknowledged for their achievement building on their successes as Beacon colleges. This is good news for employers as the further education sector is improving its offer and responding more effectively to the needs of businesses.

“There are numerous benefits of this new standard to both employers and providers such as raising the quality of training, while encouraging employers to invest more in training. I hope this motivates others to follow suit and work towards achieving the new standard.”

The standard has been extremely well-received to date by the sector and a further four training providers have recently received accreditation taking the total to 26 having achieved the new standard. These are likely to be joined by further training providers over the coming months as more continue to apply and be assessed.

To date, more than 50 training providers having applied for the standard including colleges, universities, commercial and publicly funded training organisations, and several large employers. Feedback from training providers involved in the testing phase of the standard has also been very positive. Almost all reported that the process of going through the standard had sharpened their approach to working with employers and demonstrated to them where they need to make changes to better meet the needs of employers.

West Cheshire College Principal, Sara Mogel commented: “We are delighted to be one of the first Colleges in the UK to secure this important and prestigious new standard and to receive an additional specific accreditation for the work we do in engineering. We look forward to building on these achievements by working in partnership with employers to develop the skills that are needed to help protect and enhance the region’s competitiveness.”

Reaseheath College Principal, Meredydd David adds: "Achieving the new standard is a wonderful endorsement of our responsiveness, quality of customer care and the quality of the training programmes that we deliver at Reaseheath College and I would like to congratulate all colleagues who have contributed to this."

- ENDS -

Notes to editors

Recognised training providers attending the event are:

- Basingstoke College of Technology
- DC Training & Development Services Ltd
- Hadlow College
- Hospitality Training Partnership (HTP)
- London College of Beauty Therapy
- Newbury College
- Newham College
- Reaseheath College
- South Devon College
- Sutton Coldfield College
- Thatcham Training
- Uxbridge College
- Chichester College
- Cornwall College
- Happy Computers
- Leeds College of Building
- NETA Training Group
- Newcastle College
- City of Sunderland College
- West Suffolk College
- Norwich City College
- West Cheshire College

Further accredited training providers:

- Derby College
- Lewisham College
- Tameside College
- Wakefield College

CoVEs and the new standard:

CoVEs increase the provider's capacity to deliver vocational or sector based training. They often involve a partnership between LSC funded providers. The CoVE Programme will run until 2010.

The new standard however, is a voluntary quality mark available to any type of provider. It complements the Framework for Excellence (FFE), the LSC's new compulsory, annual, quality assessment, as it contains an assessment of employer responsiveness.

The new standard will feed into National Skills Academies as they will work with providers who have achieved the new standard as their delivery partners.

Learning and Skills Council:

The LSC exists to make England better skilled and more competitive. We are responsible for ensuring the availability of high-quality education and training for everyone. We have a single goal: to improve the skills of England's young people and adults to world class standards. Our vision is that young people and adults in England have knowledge and skills matching the best in the world and are part of a truly competitive workforce. We work nationally, regionally and locally to deliver this ambition on behalf of learners and employers.

Skills campaign:

In July 2007, the LSC and the Department for Innovation, Universities and Skills (DIUS) launched the skills campaign. The campaign - Our future. It's in our hands - urges people to take control of their future by investing in skills. It is the most ambitious marketing and communications campaign of its kind, and over a three to five year period aims to bring about the cultural change needed to improve the attitudes and aspirations of employers and individuals to learning and skills across England.

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