

# Northern Ireland Further Education Colleges

There are six regional Further Education colleges in Northern Ireland delivering a range of curriculum programmes and training that addresses every level of training from leisure courses and entry level accredited programmes to post-graduate study with opportunities for progression.

The Further Education colleges are the main providers of vocational and technical education and training in NI. The sector plays a central role in raising levels of literacy and numeracy and in up-skilling and re-skilling the population through a broad range of courses leading to qualifications.

Courses and services on offer at each of the regional colleges include:

- Two Year Foundation Degrees;
- Higher National Certificates and Diplomas;
- Higher Education Degrees;
- BTEC First Diploma, Diploma and Extended Diplomas;
- Apprenticeship and Training programmes;
- Professional and technical training;
- Bespoke training for businesses; and
- Essential Skills – Numeracy, Literacy, ICT.

6 regional colleges

89% retention rate

Provide learning to over

90,000 students

employ 4,100 expert lecturers

157,000 enrolments annually

£340m investment over the past ten years in modern college estate and industry standard facilities

87% achievement rate

70% of learners go to employment on completing their course

45% of learners from the most deprived wards in Northern Ireland

30% of the UK Worldskills Team in Germany 2013

£260m turnover

400 community outreach centres

18% of all the Higher Education students in Northern Ireland

Collectively operate across

40 campuses

Collectively operate across

## Belfast Met ICT Academies Bridge Skills Gap for Growing ICT Sector



The growing demand for software skills to support Northern Ireland's burgeoning ICT sector has prompted Belfast Met to develop, in partnership with

DEL, a new style curriculum which is reaping benefits for expanding local businesses and learners of all ages from varying academic backgrounds.

An example of this focus are the ICT Academies developed by DEL's Assured Skills initiative which includes a Data Analytics Training Academy for professional services firm Deloitte, an ICT Software Testers Academy, a Cloud Academy for nine indigenous ICT companies and a new Software Professionals Course.

These collaborations help businesses recruit for critical but hard-to-fill IT posts, giving individuals access to industry recognised qualifications and the opportunity of employment, whilst supporting a key growth sector where demand still outstrips supply.

In addition a public/private ICT Apprenticeship programme has seen in excess of 70 individuals recruited as apprentices and taking up various software development and infrastructure roles in the local ICT sector.

By working in partnership with the Department and employers the success of the apprenticeship and the academies reflects the important economic contribution that further education colleges make to the local economy.



Employment and Learning Minister, Dr Stephen Farry, hosted an awards ceremony for graduates from the Deloitte Analytics Training Academy (DATA). The Academy at Belfast Met has trained 17 graduates with the skills and accredited qualifications identified by Deloitte for new job opportunities in their Belfast office. Also pictured at the event are Belfast Met Principal and Chief Executive Marie-Thérèse McGivern, Garry Carpenter, Deloitte and Deloitte DATA student Julie Hanson.

## Northern Regional College and Manchester United Soccer Schools launch football excellence programme



As an extension of its partnership with Warrington Collegiate, Manchester United

Soccer Schools is incorporating its coaching curriculum alongside a BTEC football excellence course at Northern Regional College, Ballymena. Building on the success of the Manchester United Soccer Schools (MUSS) programmes across the UK, Europe, the US, Africa and Asia and the development of coaches within these projects, a two-year BTEC course has been designed which will give students the skills they need to coach young players in the UK and around the world.

The course which began in September 2013 is aimed at 16-24 year olds. It will help students prepare, manage, deliver and evaluate the MUSS coaching programme for participants of all ages, nationalities and abilities. The personal skills and coaching development

gained throughout the course and work experience prepares students to apply for coaching positions at MUSS and supports their progression to further education and other employment.

The coaching curriculum is based on a continuation of the training techniques of the Manchester United First Team and Academy which provide the fun and challenging coaching experiences for young players of all abilities.

The world's most successful club-endorsed coaching programme delivers the world's largest residential training course in the UK, and as well as operating year-round programmes out of permanent facilities in Hong Kong and China, also regularly sends teams of coaches throughout the world to deliver courses.



Northern Regional College and Manchester United Soccer Schools have launched a BTEC football excellence and coaching programme at the Ballymena Farm Lodge campus. Blowing the whistle on the new course are Manchester United Academy Manager and former centre forward Brian McClair and new students Kyle Crawford and Rodney Brown.

## Business Innovation at North West Regional College



As part of the sector's commitment to drive economic

growth through its InnovateUS programme, North West Regional College continues to deliver practical skills training and business support which makes a real impact to small and medium enterprises in the North West region.

Free business support and consultancy is currently available from the College to companies with less than 50 employees in industries such as Engineering, Renewable & sustainable technologies, Digital Media and much more.

Gallagher's Fresh Food Centre in Strabane, recently experienced a remarkable 200%

increase in sales of a specialist product thanks to the free up-skilling delivered by NWRC Food Technical Consultant, Chef Brian McDermott via DEL's Employer Support Programme. Brian worked with Gallagher's on innovative product development over 30 hours through the InnovateUs project, in-keeping with Gallagher's brand of providing the best of artisan local fresh foods.

Seamus Gallagher explained "Innovation is key to our business, to keep the shopping experience exciting for the consumer and to establish brand loyalty. We were delighted to avail of NWRC's vast expertise, which has helped us create five new oven-ready products resulting in a 200% increase in the sales of our breaded products which in turn is helping secure jobs and the future of the business."



NWRC Food Technical Consultant Brian McDermott, InnovateUS with celebrity chef Neven Maguire and Head of School for Hospitality and Catering at a recent Upskilling event for butchers to enable them to add value to their product ranges.

## SERC moves with the times...



As the housing market begins to show green shoots of recovery, South Eastern Regional College (SERC), through the Department's Skills Solution Service is delighted to become the first in Northern Ireland College to offer a specialist property management qualification which is set to help estate agents gain professional skills and expertise. And, local estate agent Templeton Robinson are already benefiting from the course saying that it has 'improved customer service, business performance, and staff motivation.' SERC Principal and Chief Executive Ken Webb had this to say; "We recognise that companies of all types are facing challenges as a result of changing consumer demand and a more knowledge-savvy consumer market.

SERC believes that skills development is a central part of any business strategy to ensure it remains competitive in the marketplace. Companies like Templeton Robinson demand bespoke programmes to meet their specific needs and we have the expertise and flexibility to deliver this."

Templeton Robinson Director Jonathan Steen explains: "Investment in skills development is critical for enhancing our commitment to customer service and building a competitive edge. The bespoke course was designed to advance the knowledge and capabilities of our sales team."

Templeton Robinson received a 75% discount off the cost of the training, with funding provided by the Department for Employment and Learning's customised training programme.



SERC is the first college in the province to offer a diploma in the sale of residential property and is delighted to collaborate with local estate agent Templeton Robinson to deliver the course.

Pictured are SERC Principal and Chief Executive Mr Ken Webb, Templeton Robinson Director Jonathan Steen and SERC Sales Manager Jo-Ann Crossley.

## Leading pharmaceutical company launches SRC Apprenticeship Programme



Norbrook Laboratories Ltd, one of the world's leading pharmaceutical companies has

launched the Norbrook Apprenticeship Programme with Southern Regional College. The veterinary and animal health medicines specialists announced an expansion of its workforce with a commitment to employ a further 400 new staff over the next two years.

The launch of the Norbrook Laboratories Apprenticeship Programme in Laboratory Science is an important element of the company's planned expansion programme. With approximately 22,000 young people unemployed in Northern Ireland, the launch of the Level 2 and Level 3 apprenticeship programme is seen as an important development in addressing the lack of real job opportunities for school leavers.

Norbrook is further collaborating with Southern Regional College and University of Ulster to develop a higher Level 5 apprenticeship in Life and Chemical Sciences to commence in 2014, offering an alternative pathway for post-18 school leavers.

At a launch event Minister Farry paid tribute to Norbrook SRC and UU for progressing the first pilot of Higher Level Apprenticeships in NI which will provide high level jobs within the local economy.

"It is an example of how our Further Education colleges can work in partnership with the Department for Employment and Learning, local business and industry. The development of science related apprenticeships is important for the future of our young people and for the local economy. It will enable young people to progress through the skills ladder and to obtain degree level qualifications through employment."



Dr Lillian Cromie, Director of Science, Norbrook, Dr Stephen Farry, Minister for the Department for Employment and Learning, Derek Rodgers, Operations Director, Norbrook, Brian Doran, Chief Executive, Southern Regional College.

## South West College recognised among the best in the UK for STEM education



As a top science and technology educator, South West College is the only Northern

Ireland College to secure STEM Assured status from the National Engineering Foundation (NEF). Presented to a select group each year, the STEM Assured standard recognises institutions with advanced capability to support the needs of business and industry through specialist teaching and training in Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths.

At a celebration event to mark the College's achievement, Prof Sa'ad Medhat, Chief Executive at the National Engineering Foundation said: "There is phenomenal enthusiasm, commitment and resources dedicated towards the advancement of the

STEM agenda in South West College. It has made a serious investment that will have genuine impact on the local economy. That is the drive behind this enormous achievement."

STEM Assurance is a UK-wide quality standard recognised by the UK Commission for Employment & Skills (UKCES) and The National Apprenticeship Service (NAS). The award reflects a College's determination to be at the forefront of STEM provision and meet the needs of local and regional employers.

South West College has claimed three UK Beacon Awards, including the President's Award for its work with employers and schools promoting STEM subjects and a gold International Green Award for its work in sustainable technologies.



Professor Sa'ad Medhat, NEF: The innovation Institute; Titan the robot, Dr Stephen Farry DEL Minister and Michael McAlister, Head of Curriculum and Business Development SWC.

The Further Education sector is a key driver for economic development and growth in Northern Ireland. The six regional colleges drive an economically relevant curriculum to ensure that learners are employable, the existing workforce is up-skilled to meet the needs of employers and businesses are supported to grow and innovate.

The Department for Employment and Learning (DEL) is responsible for a number of funded training initiatives that address the skills needs of businesses across Northern Ireland with the six regional colleges providing skills training on programmes such as InnovateUs, Connected and Assured Skills.

DEL's Skills Solutions Service takes the lead in providing a link between the Department and companies on skills matters. This proactive service supports Northern Ireland employers with a learning and skills service that identifies and helps meet the training needs of their businesses by sourcing and putting in place the most appropriate skills training and development solution to meet those needs, and advising on the DEL funding packages that are available. Trained professional Skills Solutions advisers are active across Northern Ireland offering customised training solutions to employers and information, advice and guidance on the full range of skills and training programmes available from the Department. To speak to a Skills Solutions adviser telephone: 028 9090 5251 or email: [skillsolutions@delni.gov.uk](mailto:skillsolutions@delni.gov.uk)

## Skills Solutions Service

## Foundation Degrees

Foundation Degrees are higher education qualifications mainly delivered in the regional colleges; they combine academic study with on-the-job experience. This mix can help boost career prospects and skills, while benefitting employers and their business. Foundation Degrees are available in a wide range of subject areas and can be studied on a full and part-time basis. For more information on foundation degrees go to [www.nidirect.gov.uk/foundation-degree-courses](http://www.nidirect.gov.uk/foundation-degree-courses)

## InnovateUs

The six regional further education colleges through the InnovateUs free employer support programmes are offering practical support to assist in developing new products and processes in six areas- Life and Health Sciences, ICT, Creative and Digital Media, Advanced Engineering and Manufacturing, Renewable Energy and Sustainable Technologies, Food, Drink and Tourism.

The programme is helping small to medium enterprises with fewer than 50 employees to develop employees' professional skills, innovate their existing business and plan for the future. The free, DEL funded employer support programme is improving competitiveness and boosting business performance through skills enhancement and mentoring.

## Connected

Connected is an exciting initiative that introduces the six Further Education Colleges, Queen's University, Belfast and University of Ulster to help businesses and the wider community to improve their performance by providing access to a broad portfolio of knowledge and technology support services.

Funded by DEL, Connected makes available academic expertise and resources that can bring measurable benefits to business. It aims to develop interaction and stimulate innovation to benefit Northern Ireland companies and the Northern Ireland economy by encouraging, easing and increasing potential knowledge exchange links between academia and industry, particularly small and medium-sized enterprises. For more information go to [www.connected.ni.org](http://www.connected.ni.org)

## Assured Skills

Working with Invest Northern Ireland, the Assured Skills programme aims to bring to bear DEL's responsibilities to make the best possible offer of support to companies thinking of investing in Northern Ireland, or to local companies who are expanding their operations.

To date a range of programmes have been delivered by the further education sector to address the skills needs of inwardly investing or expanding businesses. These include ICT Software Testers' Academy (SERC, Belfast Met), Data Analytics Training Academy and Cloud Computing Academy (Belfast Met) and the Software Professionals Course (Belfast Met, SERC).

Belfast Metropolitan College



Northern Regional College



North West Regional College



South Eastern Regional College



Southern Regional College



South West College

