

EKC GROUP LAUNCHES NEW A LEVEL PROVISION IN CANTERBURY



EKC Group has launched its new EKC Sixth Form College, with 24 A Level subjects for students to choose from.

With specialist subjects including Sociology, Criminology, Classics and Law, learners across Kent will have a wider breadth of choice with the College compared to other Sixth Form destinations.

As well as creative subjects like Graphic Design, Textiles and Photography, students will have the chance to be tutored in STEM subjects with courses in the individual sciences as well as Maths and Further Maths.

Another way to boost UCAS points will be the Extended Project Qualification (EPQ), which will be on offer alongside the new raft of A Levels.

Completing an EPQ allows learners to explore subjects of interest to them, enhancing research skills and referencing ahead of their possible transition to higher education.

Using Canterbury College's top-class facilities, the EKC Sixth Form College will bridge the gap between secondary and university education.

Open to students from September 2022, learners will benefit from Canterbury College's already strong industry

links which will create opportunities for outstanding work experience placements, industry talks and visits.

The College will also support employability, sharpening CV writing skills and delivering excellent careers guidance, and will aid students in completing their UCAS applications.

Those aged 16 and above will be able to be educated in an exclusively 16+ provision, not only experiencing independence but also being surrounded by similarly-aged peers.

Graham Razey OBE, Chief Executive Officer of EKC Group, said: "I began my career teaching A Levels, so I'm really excited to be returning to these roots with our opening of the EKC Sixth Form College. It aims to empower learners across the communities we serve to access an even greater choice of A Level subjects.

"Our new EKC Sixth Form College will be solely focused on providing top class academic education to those aged 16 and above. This means our students will have an experience that will be a cohesive bridge between secondary and university education, ensuring they're well prepared to progress to the destination of their choice when they complete their studies with us."

ASHFORD COLLEGE EXTENSION GIVEN GOVERNMENT FUND BACKING



The plan to build a major extension to Ashford College has advanced after being given Government support.

EKC Group's bid for investment through the national Post-16 Capacity Fund has resulted in a financial injection into its Phase 2 project at the Elwick Road Campus.

It was the only Kent-based project to be successful in receiving part of the £83m Fund, which is aimed at increasing capacity for a growing cohort of students entering Sixth Form and College age.

The work will see a new multi-storey building constructed which will house additional facilities for Information Technology, Engineering and Business courses.

Efforts to submit a planning application request will now begin.



EKC Group Chief Executive Officer Graham Razey OBE welcomed the news, saying: "There's a real and pressing need for additional high quality technical and vocational education places within the community served by our Ashford College.

"This fund is enabling providers like ourselves to futureproof provision, and grow it in line with local need. It will ensure

that the many thousands of young people we and others can train due to this fund, are able to 'Level Up' with new opportunities available to develop outstanding skills that meet local employers' needs.

"Our College Group has a mission to play a leading part in enhancing the social and economic prosperity within the communities we serve, and this fund will enable us to do this for even more people."

Altogether, the upgrade will allow an about 250 additional students to study with Ashford College.

The 'Engineering Hub' will aim to promote access to the field for females and underrepresented groups, and is set to focus on how engineering can create solutions to climate change and decarbonisation.

Ashford Borough Council Leader Cllr Gerry Clarkson noted: "This is excellent news for the college, current and future students, and the wider borough as it will enable the next phase of the development of Ashford College to come forward, which is one of the Council's priorities in our Corporate Plan.

"This announcement means the delivery of the multi-million extension on the Elwick Road site to support Engineering, Business and IT curriculum provision and expands the capacity of the college to meet the increased demand for educational provision in Ashford."

Mr Razey was very grateful for the overwhelming local support the College has received from people and groups across the borough.

He said: "This project wouldn't have been possible without the wonderful support we've had from all of the key stakeholders across the Ashford Borough, from the council to the local MP Damian Green, to the wonderful employers here.

"This work is absolutely a result of their fantastic partnership work with us and we're delighted this has come to fruition – we're very much looking forward to seeing this vision become a reality."

EKC GROUP LAYS OUT VISION FOR GREENER FUTURE



EKC Group has announced plans to become “the greener place to learn and work” and will seek to achieve carbon net zero across the organisation by 2040.

In line with this drive to deliver an organisation that places sustainability at its heart, the Group has unveiled its new Sustainability Strategy. This exciting strategy sets out a clear roadmap to achieving its ambitious milestones on the pathway to becoming a carbon net zero organisation.

The strategy lays out a range of objectives that will be fulfilled within the next three years, with the longer-term pathway to achieving net zero set to evolve further throughout the next decade.

Amongst the raft of changes included within the Sustainability Strategy, there are some key initiatives such as a reduction in business travel and paper usage which will help drive down the carbon footprint of the Group substantially. Alongside this, the Group will be employing a full-time Sustainability Officer, whilst working to embed sustainable practice across every curriculum area within the Group.

The strategy also seeks to enhance biodiversity across the Group's estate, with a clear goal of protecting and enhancing areas for wildlife. The Group has already seen significant success in this area, having created new colonies of swifts at its Broadstairs College and receiving multiple external awards for its work in these areas.

The Group's efforts are made with the intention of becoming community leaders in sustainability, training students and

staff members to be environmentally-conscious both in class and at home. By instilling these values into our learners, those who work and study with the EKC Group can become green pioneers in future workplaces and live sustainable lives which minimises their individual impact on our earth.

Students have played a huge part in progressing this agenda



after initially asking the Group to consider how it could reduce its impact on the environment. They continue to have a role in the ongoing sustainability push through a new internal Climate Change Working Group, which consists of governors, staff and students.

The Climate Change Working Group will be periodically consulted on ways of improving the Colleges' environmental credentials, including how we could use initiatives and funds with which to push the green agenda as EKC Group aims to become carbon net zero by 2040.

EKC INTOWORK CELEBRATES NEW OPENING IN ASHFORD



A Kent MP was on hand to usher in a new EKC IntoWork centre, allowing the further spread of employability skills and knowledge across East Kent.

The Business Unit's seventh centre, based in Pluto House on Ashford's Station Road, was officially launched at an event on Friday, November 5, with an address made by Damian Green MP.

In operation since 2010, EKC IntoWork has helped thousands of adults and teenagers to progress into working life after periods of unemployment.

As well as CV writing and interview technique, job brokers and educators teach English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) and work with prisoners re-entering the workplace.

Hayley Barden, Principal of EKC IntoWork, said: "We're very proud of our new employability centre, it's good to have the provision in Ashford to develop and support borough residents in their employment.

"We're all about retraining people to boost the available workforce across East Kent, and this Ashford centre will help us achieve that."

Ashford MP Damian Green said: "I'm delighted to welcome the official opening of this centre, and I'm sure it will do great things for those Ashford residents who need help to become employed.

"Since the reopening after the pandemic, many employers in Ashford tell me that there is a shortage of staff.

"However, in reality, there are people out there who can fill these jobs and employability centres like this one are exactly the right way to reintroduce people to the workplace."

Graham Razey OBE, Chief Executive Officer of EKC Group and Mr Green also thanked organisations that had aided in the establishment of the new EKC IntoWork centre, including Ashford Borough Council and the Department for Work and Pensions.



EKC GROUP NAMED IN TRAILBLAZING CHAMBER OF COMMERCE PARTNERSHIP



The EKC Group will be part of a Chamber of Commerce and Further Education partnership, which has been appointed as one of eight national trailblazers by the Government.

The news follows a successful joint bid which will help businesses across Kent and Medway to flourish as new skills are unlocked and skills gaps are filled.

EKC Group worked on the bid with Kent Invicta Chamber of Commerce, alongside MidKent College and North Kent College.

The partnership bid secured £5.6m for Kent's further education colleges to implement a pilot Strategic Development Fund and bring forward new courses tailored to the needs of business.

Under the Skills Accelerator Programme, the further education colleges will focus on three key sectors: agriculture, construction and engineering, with a shared thread of decarbonisation.

The remaining funding will create a Local Skills Improvement Programme (LSIP) with the Chamber of Commerce by working with Kent companies and other business groups to identify immediate skills needs and solutions.

Jo James, Chief Executive of Kent Invicta Chamber of Commerce, said: "The LSIP will help businesses shape the curriculum delivered by the local further education colleges.

"It will ensure the county's skills priorities are aligned and that the workforce has the skills needed to enable businesses here in Kent to grow.

"This partnership will strengthen the relationship between business and education, ensuring Kent's students learn the most appropriate skills for the county and increasing their employability."

The LSIP will build upon the longstanding work between the chamber and the further education colleges, including the Kickstart training programme for 16 to 24-year-olds.

Graham Razy, Chief Executive Officer of EKC Group, said: "As a Group we are committed to working in partnership with employers across our area, and have done so very successfully in the past.

"This Skills Accelerator Programme will ensure our colleges deliver increased innovation, productivity and resilience in the Kent and Medway economy, whilst also making a significant contribution to local and national sustainability goals for the future."

The focus on decarbonisation will ensure the colleges drive efforts to equip the workforce with the knowledge, skills and technological innovation to reduce the environmental impact of industry and play a key role in the area's economic development.

As part of the LSIP programme, Kent Invicta will be hosting a series of skills workshops and events in conjunction with the further education colleges across the county.



EKC STAFF TRIUMPH AT EUROPEAN TOUGH MUDDER

A trio of staff members from Canterbury College's Sports and Uniformed Public Services department have proved a shining example to their students, after smashing a hellish 12-hour obstacle course.



Chris Axon, Callan Thompson and Nathan Hollingsworth – who has since left the College to become a firefighter - all competed in Europe's Toughest Mudder, ably supported by two other Sport and UPS colleagues, Hazel Lindsay and Sarah Griffiths.

They were the four-person team that covered the most distance in the 12 hours and have, as a result, qualified to tackle the World's Toughest Mudder in America.

Among the obstacles they faced on each 6-mile lap was an ice bath, a three-storey-high climbing net and a gauntlet of electrified wires.

When asked how they found Europe's Toughest Mudder, Chris said: "We actually booked it before the pandemic, but it was delayed by about 18 months.

"We thought it would be a good idea at the time, but 10 hours in you start to question your decision."

However he noted that he'd "definitely recommend" the experience and is raring to go to the American event, but said a fundraising campaign may be needed.

The World's Toughest Mudder is an even more gruelling 24 hours long, and in a desert environment where it is both extreme heat and extreme cold throughout the day and night.

Finally Chris added: "I want to say a huge thanks to Sarah Griffiths and Hazel Lindsay, we wouldn't have been able to do it without them. Their support as our 'pit crew' was absolutely key to the team's success!"

CANTERBURY COLLEGE CELEBRATES TEACHER OF THE YEAR SUCCESS

Two lecturers from Canterbury College have been recognised in the prestigious Kent Teacher of the Year Awards.

Media Lecturer Patrick Raraty-Squires was deemed the district and county-wide HE/FE Academic of the Year, showcasing the level of knowledge Canterbury College students can access during their lessons.

He said: "It has been an honour to experience the resilience of colleagues and learners through what has been such a difficult period. To then receive these awards is very humbling."

Meanwhile Chrissy Broadbridge of the Canterbury School of Visual Arts at Canterbury College won the district FE/HE Support Staff Member of the Year.

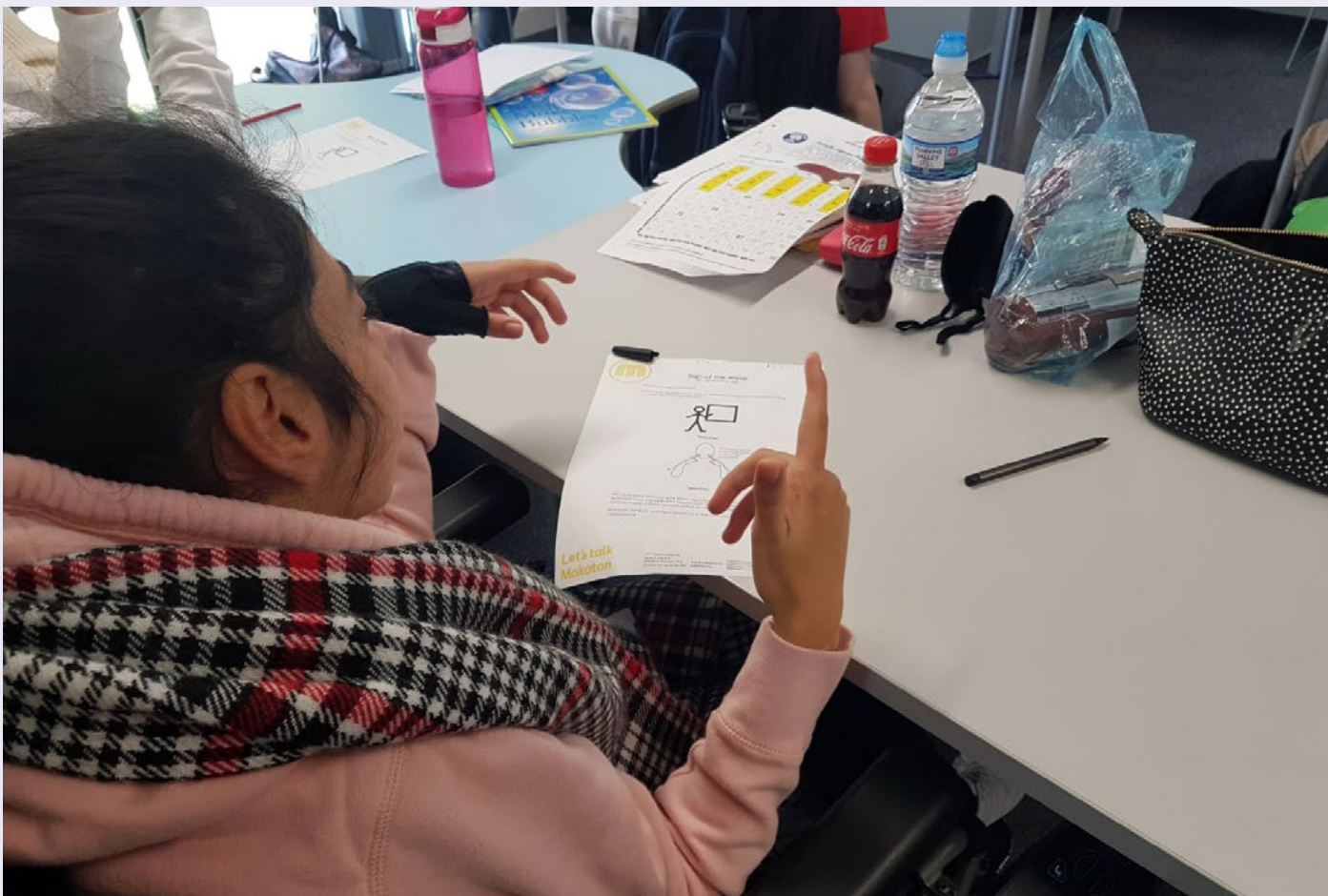
She said: "I'm incredibly honoured to have won this award, and super proud of what was achieved by the students in such a trying year.

"To have all our hard work acknowledged by others has been fantastic."

Applauding the award haul, College Principal Victoria Copp-Crawley said: "Chrissy and Patrick are fantastic practitioners and have provided exceptional learning opportunities for students throughout such a challenging year.

"The support and confidence they have given to students has resulted in exceptional standards of work, with students gaining first choice offers at university and many gaining employment."

FOLKESTONE NAMED KENT'S ONLY 'MAKATON FRIENDLY' COLLEGE



An EKC Group College has been given an award for its promotion of an alternative method of communication.

Folkestone College is now listed as 'Makaton friendly' by the Makaton charity, which oversees the use of the language based on symbols and hand gestures.

This makes Folkestone the only College to be recognised as such in Kent.

The College's Supported Learning department had to wait until the worst of the Covid pandemic was over before they could officially receive their certificate from Makaton, however the wait has been worth it according to staff.

Ruth Batchelor, the Programme Director for Supported Learning, has been instrumental in seeing the project through.

She said: "It's an incredibly important tool that allows greater communication both inside and outside the classroom.

"Many of our Supported Learning students have a foundational knowledge of Makaton, as it's often used in schools that they've come to us from.

"It's not too difficult to teach, because if you're speaking and signing in lessons they can pick up common phrases."

When asked what they thought of the Makaton system, students said they liked it, that it was easy and that it helped them communicate at home.

Outside of the Supported Learning centre, the symbols can be seen on signs in the reception, as well as on the name badges of staff members.

Nikki Townsend, Head of Supported Learning, said: "We're very excited to have 'Makaton friendly' status – I think Makaton is essential for the students.

"To see it used in the wider college as well makes them feel more a part of the wider student body, and with symbols around the campus it also teaches learners who aren't one of our Supported Learning students about Makaton."

Now, staff across the EKC Group's six Colleges are being encouraged to get involved and give it a go.

Each week, members of the Senior Leadership Team are producing videos to demonstrate the Makaton charity's 'sign of the week'.

AFGHANS HELPED TO FIND THEIR FOOTING IN ENGLAND



Photo by Scott Graham on Unsplash

An early success of IntoWork's new Ashford site was the successful training of 10 Afghans recently forced out of their countries by war.

Even prior to launch, job brokers and trainers were supporting the men on their journey to becoming HGV drivers.

EKC IntoWork was approached by the Home Office, Ashford Borough Council and the Department for Work and Pensions to help with their transition into English life. IntoWork assisted them – alongside a Zimbabwean man – in a two-week preliminary stage before they were given practical HGV training by Mitie.

Alongside more logistics-orientated education, learners were taught a range of methods to improve their chances of employment here including British CV do's and don'ts as well as interview technique.

When asked how they found EKC IntoWork's provision, one of the men – who can't be named for safety reasons – said: "It's very good, we've got lots of new information about how we can work here and our employment capabilities.

"I now feel like there are lots of doors open to me, and we've also been taught which doors to knock on.

"By coming here to EKC IntoWork, we are meeting new people and getting very useful advice which will help us take on more opportunities."

EKC IntoWork's Richard Hoshea, who has been working with the Level 1 Logistics learners, said: "They are the first group to do this qualification with us and it's the first time they've studied for a qualification in England.

"So it's a massive achievement for them, and they've shown how motivated they are to learn. They learn quickly and it's obvious they want to make a difference."

Ashford Borough Council Leader Cllr Gerry Clarkson said: "On behalf of the Council our heartfelt thanks goes out to everyone who has responded so warmly and positively to welcome our Afghan families to Ashford.

"This includes the excellent work being done by EKC IntoWork, who are helping to train some of them to become HGV drivers."

We often talk about ourselves as a caring borough and it's at times like this that we realise just how important that is as we help these people come to terms with the traumatic events they have lived through, and integrate them into our community."