

# GROUP SHORTLISTED FOR TOP COLLEGE AWARDS



**EKC Group is celebrating after being shortlisted for not one but THREE prestigious national awards.**

The Association of Colleges' Beacon Awards are seen as The Oscars of Further and Higher Education Colleges, with only the best across the country being shortlisted – or 'commended' across their 12 categories.

This year, the Association of Colleges (AoC) named EKC Group in three of these shortlists.

The awards which EKC Group has been 'Commended' in are:

- **The Nous Group Award for Education for Sustainable Development**
- **The AoC Award for Excellence in Governance**
- **The Edge Award for Excellence in Real World Learning**

With the AoC's website listing 273 member Colleges, the announcement was met with jubilation across EKC Group's six Colleges.

The Group's Chief Executive Officer, Graham Razeby OBE, said: "To receive commended status in not one, but three of these prestigious awards is absolutely outstanding. It's such a wonderful celebration of the huge amount of work our team put into delivering an outstanding experience for the communities we serve, and it makes me tremendously proud of their efforts.

"I'm particularly proud of our commended status in the AoC Award for Excellence in Governance category, because I know what unsung heroes our governors are. They guide our organisation and do an incredible job to ensure we remain absolutely focused on delivering a brilliant experience for everyone in our Group. As volunteers, they richly deserve the plaudits from this commendation."

At the AoC Conference in Birmingham earlier this month, the Group was named as a finalist in both The Edge Group Award and The Nous Group Award. The final results will be announced next year.

# ALUMNUS MAKES WAVES ON TV COMPETITION

**A former Canterbury College student had an excellent run in a TV woodworking competition, making it through to the final.**

Jacob Bell used skills learnt during his time at College to reach the top three in Channel 4's *Handmade: Britain's Best Woodworker*.

The 22-year-old was one of 11 people from across Great Britain selected to take part in the show's second series.

Of the experience, Jacob said: "It was weird. Although you'd imagine it'd be very distracting to stop and talk about your project, I normally narrate myself all the time anyway. Being able to do that all day, and being around people who have the same passion and who are making stuff alongside you, meant the show was just a lot of fun.

"Because of this, the competition aspect kind of faded into the background for all of us until someone had to leave.

"Because you don't think about it at all, all that tension and emotion comes down to the point where they announce who'll be leaving - so it's very intense. You start to think 'Oh, could it actually be me going this week?'"

One week saw him create a miniature workbench and tools for children, which he says is his favourite piece he's ever made.

His first experiences with the craft were at Canterbury College, where he joined the Level 1 carpentry course in 2016.

Jacob recalls: "I always had a curiosity and interest to do carpentry at school but didn't have the chance until I reached college age, which is when I thought I'd give it a go.

"I got a merit on my Level 1 Carpentry, and really enjoyed being at the College. So I decided to stay there and that I wanted to specialise, so I joined the furniture making course.

"It's a hobby as much as it's a profession, so I was trying to be as much of a sponge as possible to learn all I could. I always went to my lecturer Barry with questions and got caught up in conversation with him, and he helped me out quite a lot.

"Barry was incredibly knowledgeable about everything and very supportive. I am still in contact with him, despite me having moved to Norfolk since, and he cheered me on throughout the show."



# CIVIL ENGINEERING TRAINING CENTRE OPENS



**A hub specialising in training future leaders in the worlds of construction and civil engineering has officially launched.**

The EKC Group Civil Engineering Training Centre's November 4 launch was attended by local stakeholders and councillors, who got the chance to tour the cutting-edge facilities offered in the new site.

Located on the A28 in Hersden, the 3,000 sq. ft centre will cater for around 300 learners at any one time. Courses on offer range from construction certifications to full civil engineering apprenticeships.

Learners will benefit from outdoor 'stations' specifically designed to enhance training in subjects including bricklaying and drainage, as well as indoor training facilities.

The £1.2million centre was built in response to the national skills gap to ensure there are the right skills to deliver economic growth in the local community. The launch comes after a Construction Skills Network report, published earlier this year, suggested a quarter of a million additional construction workers will be needed to meet projected demands in the 2026 UK civil engineering sector.

The facilities were gifted to EKC Group by prolific developer Quinn Estates, who paid for the entire construction of the facilities. It is part of the S.106 obligations for its Hoplands Park development.

Graham Razez, Chief Executive Officer of EKC Group, said: "As a Group we are committed to addressing skills gaps and ensuring businesses have the talented employees they need to thrive, so we're proud to launch this fantastic new training centre today. The centre will support employers in the civil engineering sector, enabling them to access the skilled staff they need to continue to flourish and grow.

"Today marks the culmination of a lot of hard work over a number of years, and we are very appreciative of what Quinn Estates has done in delivering our new centre. It is important to recognise the massive social impact that this will have, giving young people the opportunity to build great careers in a growing sector."

Mark Quinn, CEO and Chairman, Quinn Estates, said: "We are delighted to be able to launch this fantastic new facility for East Kent, providing hundreds of students each year with the transferable skills they will need to thrive in the construction and engineering industries.

"With all the developments we create, leaving a positive community legacy is at the heart of what we do and our development in Hersden is no exception."



# STUDENT WINS PRESTIGIOUS NATIONAL BURSARY



**A Sheppey College student has won a prestigious bursary for his outstanding attainment and work ethic.**

Matthew Barnes was awarded the Peter Roberts Bursary by the Collab Group, an organisation of 29 Further Education Colleges and College groups, to put towards his business idea.

At the Thursday 13 October ceremony, Matthew was named as the winner and presented with a £2,500 cheque by Ian Pretty from the Collab Group, Mark Dawe from The Skills Network, and Sheppey College Principal Alan Salter.

Having accomplished a triple Distinction in both his Level 3 Computing and Cyber Security course, as well as his Extended Diploma in Information Technology, Matthew has already begun his BSc in Computer Games Design at Staffordshire University London.

Following the win, the 21-year-old said: "After university, I plan to set up my own indie game development company, and this money will really help procure the equipment to achieve that goal.

"I was very, very happy when I found out I'd won, because I don't think I'd be able to last at university if I didn't. It's very difficult to express it, but there was a lot of relief that I can finally go down that path."

The bursary follows a tough route through education for Matthew, who has worked hard to get back into education after a number of setbacks.

He said: "After I left secondary school, I went through the A Level system originally. I got to the age of 19 and stayed behind a year, but the school said 'Enough is enough. You can't complete the course' – my mental health had become so bad that I just wasn't attending.

"Covid then happened and I decided that I needed to move on from what happened there and decided to come here.

"The College has given me such a boost to my attitude, I'm so much more confident in communicating with people than I was. I'm not looking down anymore and I learnt a lot of practical skills I now use at university."

It is for his undergraduate degree that he will use the money to purchase a high-end computer, allowing him to run essential but hardware-taxing applications such as Unreal Engine 5.

Speaking about his aims for the future, Matthew said: "I will focus more on PC or console games, because currently making games for Virtual or Augmented Reality platforms require more specific and complex knowledge.

"It was actually while here at Sheppey College that I came up with the idea. I decided one of the main things I wanted to do for myself is to create. I've never really had an outlet where I can say to someone else 'I've made this, have a look.'

"I've never had that confidence to say that to people, and I want to work on that in university and build and build my ideas into finished products."

# INSPIRATIONAL SPORTSWOMAN MEETS STUDENTS



**In celebration of Black History Month 2022, Canterbury College students got the chance to talk to inspirational sportswoman Maggie Alphonsi MBE.**

The former rugby union player, who played for Saracens W.R.F.C. and England, chatted with Sports and ESOL students about striving for success and her own fantastic achievements.

Named Sunday Times Sportswoman of the Year in 2010, the athlete opened up about issues in her childhood and how she had difficulty with male sports fans during her illustrious sporting career.

The World Rugby Hall of Famer then told students to set life goals and to remain resilient in pursuing them.

Bethany Lacey, President of the Canterbury College Students' Union, said: "It was an honour to have Maggie come in and talk to us, she is an inspirational person to many of us. It was amazing to hear how she has overcome setbacks in life and has reached so many of her personal goals.

"I felt very inspired after meeting her and now see failure from a different perspective - it's something you can embrace and learn from."

