

Summer 2010



TRAINING  
QUALITY  
STANDARD

Strode College Principal Ian Bennett and Head of the Strode College Business Development Unit Graham Knight, celebrated the TQS award at a business breakfast with Tessa Munt MP and representatives from local businesses, employers, local councils and Chambers of Commerce.

## Strode recognised for high quality training

Strode College has been awarded the highly sought after Training Quality Standard (TQS), which recognises and celebrates the best organisations delivering training to businesses and employers.

To achieve the award we were required to demonstrate excellence in the service we provide to employers. TQS inspectors looked at how well we respond to the training needs of businesses and how flexible our training is to meet those needs. We were also required to show a high level of expertise and a commitment to continuing improvement.

Ian Bennett, Principal of Strode College, said: "The Training Quality Standard recognises high quality and high impact training and it is a standard that all training providers aspire to. It shows that we understand and exceed employers' needs with the service we provide. It also recognises the real commitment throughout the College to our work with businesses and our involvement with communities across Somerset. Our Business Development team and other colleagues work hard to achieve this level of service and this should be reassuring to local businesses and employers seeking training."

Emma Hubback, Chair of Street Chamber of Commerce attended a celebratory business breakfast at Strode. She said: "I am delighted to attend this celebration and add my commendation for this excellent achievement. It is great news for Street and more widely for businesses in Somerset."

Ruport Cox, Chief Executive of Somerset Chamber of Commerce said: "This is a great achievement and further adds to the excellent provision of education we enjoy across Somerset."

# Apprenticeships put you ahead

Karen Christensen knows a great hairstyle when she sees one and she knows a great college too. This is why the hairdresser, who has spent decades making the people of mid Somerset look even more stylish, uses Strode College to train her apprentices.

"I was given a fantastic opportunity to learn when I did my own apprenticeship 20 years ago" said Karen, whose eponymous salon, Karen Christensen Hair & Beauty, has made her a household name in the area.



"My boss at that time was brilliant and a hard taskmaster and that's what my success is down to. It all comes down to training."

"In an industry like this you have to give something back. I also have to get the youngsters coming in, and Strode College helps us find people who want to train in hairdressing. They even do the apprentice interviews with us at the moment."

"I think Strode is particularly good. I've used three colleges but Strode is the best. It's more like a family there. The tutors are very easy to talk to and they're honest. They feed back well to the students and we have a good working relationship with them."

Karen's own experience as an apprentice gives her an insight into the challenges her apprentices face, and she loves watching them succeed in what is a highly-competitive industry.

"Our apprentices have all been so good. Elizabeth Waters is a particularly good stylist. She did her apprenticeship to Level 3. She came as a school leaver and we supported her all the way through. She was a star, and now she's very successful and fully qualified."

Elizabeth, who went to Strode College one day a week during her apprenticeship, is very happy with the training and support she received at College as well as at the salon. "I wanted to earn money at the same time as training" she said. "I'd heard from previous apprentices that you get a lot more experience in a salon, and it's nice to be learning in a work environment. I always tell people to go for an apprenticeship. You're not guaranteed a job, but there's a higher chance of getting one."



## Apprenticeships @ Strode

We offer the following apprenticeships at various levels.

- Accounting
- Barbering
- Beauty Therapy
- Business Administration
- Customer Services
- Hairdressing
- Health & Social Care
- Hospitality
- Instructing Exercise & Fitness
- Retail
- Sales
- Sport Operational Services

For more information call the Business Development Unit on 01458 844457.

# NVQs benefit business for Mathew Clark

We have successfully completed the latest phase of our ongoing training and development work with Mathew Clark, a large national drinks supplier to the licence trade. Over 120 staff from Mathew Clark's two South West depots have achieved a Level 2 National Vocational Qualification (NVQ) by training with Strode.



All Mathew Clark staff in the South West depots were offered the opportunity to gain an NVQ. All transport staff, drivers and drivers mates completed an NVQ in Customer Service, and warehouse staff completed NVQs in Warehousing and Storage.

The company has already seen improvements in customer relations and problem solving and shown significant reductions in warehouse packing errors, stock damage and the level of failed deliveries.

The NVQ project is part of a continuing relationship with Constellation Europe, Mathew Clark's parent company. It is managed by Graeme Tucker, Strode College's Business Development Manager and Richard Venn, Programme Manager. In addition to the NVQ assessment, the training provided Richard as a personal tutor to all students, and all students and management took part in small group workshops which focused on customer service, team building and problem solving.

Peter Kozakiewicz of Mathew Clarke said: "We are delighted with the success of this project and have already seen significant and tangible benefits to our business - the training represents excellent value for money. We have been impressed with the way Strode designed a programme which met our needs and targeted specific outcomes and improvements. Also, the flexibility in how the training was delivered suited our staff, managers and business and helped us all achieve success with this project."

## Time to train

Under new legislation which came into effect on 1 April 2010, employees will, for the first time, have the right to request time to study or train. Initially this will apply to companies with over 250 employees, but from 6 April 2011 it will

apply to all organisations regardless of the size or sector. The intention of the phased approach is to give businesses time to plan and prepare for the introduction of this new right.

The aim is for training to improve the effectiveness of employees and thus overall business performance and productivity. There are recognised benefits of a coherent training programme alongside staff morale and retention, and the ever important reduction of costs. However, training does need to be relevant to the employee's role and responsibilities, so a training request can be declined if there is not a good business case.

The Skills Minister has said: "We need to empower people to speak about training opportunities and the benefits they can bring to a business' success. Many companies and organisations are very good at training their staff, but we need to ensure that all businesses are advising their staff on what is on offer. This is where a regulation like Time to Train will be able to help people. It will give them the confidence to ask about training and

skills, allowing them to take control of their own careers."

Strode College can help businesses respond to this important initiative with a variety of training options and methods. Graham Knight, Head of Business Development said: "The main thing businesses want from us when planning their training is flexibility. That is flexibility in the course and content, in when and where the training is delivered, and flexibility of pace to make sure the training suits the learner. We can do all of this and are happy to talk about other ways we can help maximise the effectiveness of employee training."

The first stage when planning training should be a discussion with one of our team in the Strode Business Development Unit. We are always available to discuss individual needs and the specific way each training programme may help your business performance. You can call us on 01458 844498, or email [gknight@strode-college.ac.uk](mailto:gknight@strode-college.ac.uk). If you would like to find out more about the legislation visit [www.direct.gov.uk/timetotrain](http://www.direct.gov.uk/timetotrain)



# Know what to do!

Our colleagues, friends and family could benefit enormously from prompt and effective first aid in a medical emergency.

The Stroke Association is currently running a nationwide publicity campaign because casualties suffering from a stroke are not being dealt with promptly enough to receive crucial treatment.

Effective CPR is vital in the chain of survival for a casualty whose heart is in fibrillation and every minute counts!



In October last year the Health and Safety Executive introduced some significant changes to first aid in the workplace.

- They are now regulating a new one day course 'Emergency First Aid at Work'.
- Changes have been made to the provision of first aid information for the employer.
- The 'First Aid at Work' course has been reduced from four to three days to help businesses.
- A three hour 'Annual Refresher' course is now recommended to help first aiders maintain and improve their skills.

If you would like more information on how Strode College can help your business comply with these new first aid requirements, please contact Gill Anderson on 01458 844844.



## What is the best training?

I am often asked "What is the best course you do at Strode?" The answer is not a simple one. There is a most popular course, there is the one we deliver most often, and there is the one we consistently get the best feedback about. But they are all different.

The simplest answer is that the best course is the one that benefits you or your business the most. It all depends on what you are looking for and what you want to achieve. There are clear links between training and performance. The right course, diligently completed, can improve quality, profitability and service and add to customer satisfaction and retention. But if it is not the right course at the right time then the impact quickly diminishes.

Adding to the confusion is the huge range of information available about training and cost options. If you put 'sales training' into your computer search engine you will find 163,000,000 options and 'service training' brings 427,000,000. Don't even try a 'customer service' search!

Delivery at a local level is crucial. There is no substitute for being able to speak to your tutor face to face. You need to be able to work at the correct pace, at the right time of day, with regular checks on progress and tutorials to encourage you. Also, for many gaining a qualification is a primary goal and you need to find a cost effective way to do this.

Many college courses are now delivered in the workplace with face to face support. All are tailored to the student and the business. All business courses are flexible and reflect individual needs. Some may be fully subsidised subject to certain criteria. If you want to know the best course for you, talk to us about what you want to achieve. Whether it is Customer Service or Sales Skills, Management or Marketing Skills, Finance or Supervisory Skills, or any of the wide range of courses we can offer, I am sure we will be able to help find the best course for you.



**Graham Knight**  
Head of Business Development