

Stevenson College student wins award

Former Stevenson College Edinburgh student Kris Watson was honoured at the Scotland's Colleges Awards 2010 dinner winning the "Student Award". This is the first time that a student has been recognised at the ceremony making this an even more outstanding achievement.

This was not Kris' first awards ceremony experience, earlier this month he was also highly commended at the SQA Star Awards as 'College Candidate of the Year'.

In 2008, shortly after he joined the Access to Biological Sciences course at Stevenson College Kris was diagnosed with Asperger's syndrome. However, after a discussion with his medical consultant, it was agreed that it would be beneficial to his progression to remain at the College, where studying was familiar to him, for a further year rather than progress to University. Faced with a situation that would have disheartened many young people, Kris decided to see this as an opportunity, immersing himself in a long-standing project aimed at improving the educational experience of autistic students.

Kris then went on to host several staff development seminars with staff at Stevenson. In these sessions he provided insight into his experience as a student with high functioning autism, but also potential challenges and issues other students could face. Kris participated in the 'See-Me' anti-stigma campaign to promote awareness of mental health issues and introduced a weekly support group for students with Asperger's syndrome, both of which are still running at the college.

Kris said, "Although autism isn't a mental health problem, I was interested in using the experiences I have had to put

mental health difficulties into perspective and promote the ethos of "I'm a person, not a disability or a diagnosis"

Since leaving Stevenson, Kris has now achieved his dream of studying Forensic Anthropology at Dundee University.

Brian Lister OBE, Principal and Chief Executive of Stevenson College Edinburgh said, "We are delighted that Kris has been recognised with this award. We have so many talented students at the College, who overcome significant learning difficulties in order to achieve their qualifications and who go above and beyond what is expected of the average student. It is important that these successes are celebrated. Kris's achievement will not only help raise awareness of the syndrome but let others with Aspergers see what they can achieve – that this condition does not have to hold them back. As a college we are committed to the continuous development of the support we offer our students, and this industry award recognises such dedication."