

Edinburgh College drives initiative to widen university access

Students signing up to newly-funded Edinburgh College associate degree courses will have a guaranteed place at one of four top Scottish universities in a new initiative to widen access to university.

Edinburgh College, in partnership with Aberdeen, Edinburgh Napier, Queen Margaret and Heriot-Watt universities, will play a crucial role in the initiative and has secured places for 145 associate degree students who will start their courses this August 2013.

The students will spend two years at Edinburgh College studying to HND level followed by a guaranteed place at the relevant university for the final two years to achieve their degree.

The choice of courses includes engineering, computing and hospitality & tourism. These subjects were chosen to align to sector areas of national and regional importance, as well as being among Edinburgh College's key curriculum strengths.

The associate degree courses have been made possible with additional finance from the Scottish Funding Council (SFC) to support colleges and universities to work together to widen access to university. The associate degree programmes will increase the number of college students studying for guaranteed progression to university degrees.

Universities were required to bid for funding in conjunction with colleges for a total of 850 places across Scotland, with the colleges then funded by the relevant university for the first two years. This is a positive step forward for Edinburgh

College and its partner universities.

Edinburgh College Vice Principal Ray McCowan says: “We have the highest number of places in Scotland so far for this programme and are delighted to be working with our university partners on this brand new approach to more students successfully accessing higher education.

“Our associate degree students will be highly employable as the two years spent with us here at the college are very hands-on, combining knowledge and study with essential practical skills for their chosen career. Many students will benefit from beginning to study for their degree here with us in a college environment.

“A key benefit of college is combining skills and work experience to produce job-ready students. This, along with their degree level knowledge, will produce highly skilled graduates who can move straight into employment in key areas of national importance to the Scottish economy.”

Dr Ian Smith, Head of School of Engineering and the Built Environment at Edinburgh Napier University commented: “The new associate degree courses at Edinburgh College provide a new route for students to progress to a partner university following completion of their HND course. Edinburgh Napier University is delighted to be partnering with Edinburgh College in this initiative and we look forward to welcoming the college’s progressing students to Edinburgh Napier to further their studies to Honours Bachelor level. As one of the UK leading universities for Graduate Employability, this partnership offers Edinburgh College students a well-structured route from Year 1 to Honours degree and on to graduate employment.”

Professor Alan Gilloran, Deputy Principal at Queen Margaret University, said: “I am delighted that Queen Margaret University is working in partnership with Edinburgh College to

provide an innovative opportunity for students to study on our Associate Degree programme in International Hospitality & Tourism Management. Through close collaborative working, the academic teams at Queen Margaret University and Edinburgh College are ensuring that an excellent student experience will be provided for those people who choose to take the first two years of their study in the college environment before transferring to university for their final two years. This initiative will smooth the transition from college to university for those enrolled on the programme. I look forward to welcoming the first cohort of students.”

Laurence Howells, interim chief executive at the Scottish Funding Council, said: “This is a really exciting investment for us. It’s the perfect illustration of colleges and universities joining forces to provide something new and valuable for widening access, student opportunity and skills for jobs and growth in the economy.”

Information on the courses is available now on Edinburgh College website.

Photography caption: (L–R) Edinburgh College Electrical Engineering students Steph Smith, Robyn Wilson and Adrian Siwek at the Solar Meadow site at Midlothian Campus.

For further information on the associate degree courses visit: <http://www.edinburghcollege.ac.uk>.

Submitted by [Samantha McKay-Challen](#)

