

# Award for East Lothian Hospitality and Tourism Academy



A pioneering project that gives school students the chance to experience college, university and the hospitality industry has been honoured with a prestigious UK-wide Times Educational Supplement Further Education Award.

Edinburgh College won the University HE Access Widening Participation category for its part in the East Lothian Hospitality and Tourism Academy – a partnership between the college, Queen Margaret University (QMU) and East Lothian Council. The college was one of only two Scottish winners at the awards, with Forth Valley College's Richard Reid winning Most Innovative Teacher of the Year.

The academy, which was launched in 2012, impressed the judges for the way it smooths the transition between school, college and university, addressing a target of the Scottish Government. The project for 16-18-year-olds aims to open up opportunities for those who might not have considered themselves suited for further or higher education.

In its first year, the academy recruited 34 S5 and S6 pupils from East Lothian schools and gave them the chance to take part in a two-year programme of practical work experience and theory at Edinburgh College and QMU, leading to industry-recognised qualifications. Following this initial two-year programme, students can move on to a related course at the college or university, or to a job in the sector. Thirty of the first group of students completed HNC and employability modules, with 18 going on to study the full HNC in 2013-14 while still at school, four progressing to Edinburgh College

to study the SVQ2 Professional Cookery, and eight moving into employment.

Employers supporting the academy include Marriott, Novotel, Macdonald Hotels and Resorts, Jurys Inn, Mercure, Prestonfield, Best Western and Fraser Suites Edinburgh.

Awards judges said: "This is a solid project based on strong partnerships with the higher education sector and major businesses." They said they were impressed by the range of powerful testimonials from the college's industry partners.

Ray McCowan, Edinburgh College vice principal, said: "We are thrilled to have received recognition for our academy. The Times Educational Supplement FE award reinforces the reasons why we set up the academy in the first place, to meet the needs of young people and inspire them to learn and study in a way that suits them and that will ultimately benefit industry. The award is testament to the great work the college, QMU, East Lothian Council and our employer partners have been doing. The contributions from employers since the beginning have been invaluable in providing insight into the industry, making the project truly distinctive."

Sixteen-year-old Musselburgh Grammar pupil Lauren Cain is just one of the academy's success stories. Over the last year, she has addressed 100 guests at the academy's reception in the Scottish Parliament; spent time working at Novotel; competed in the national ScotHot hospitality championships; and taken classes at both Edinburgh College and QMU.

Lauren said: "The academy is definitely giving me ideas about what I might choose to do in the future. I know that because of my time at the academy I've got options that I wouldn't have had had I not taken part."

The success of the project has led to a £4.6million award from the Scottish Funding Council to develop academies in other subjects. Three new academies launched in August 2013, giving

pupils from more schools in the Lothians and Borders the opportunity to learn about careers in the creative industries; food science and nutrition; and health and social care.

Photography caption: L-R Comedian Jo Brand, Ray McCowan, Edinburgh College vice principal and Andy Westwood, chief executive of GuildHE.