

Edinburgh Napier students become Special Constables

Five Edinburgh Napier students are ready to support Police Scotland in its Covid-19 response after becoming the first individuals to qualify in the country as Special Constables through a new on-campus training programme.

The students – Larissa Engelmann, Campbell Cunningham, Annelise Hoey, Sumaiyah Shafique and Amy Murphy – who all study within the University's School of Applied Sciences – have been training as Special Constables since January and have completed 136 hours of training while studying at Edinburgh Napier.

The project to bring the Special Constable training in-house was led by Edinburgh Napier's Dr Andrew Wooff, who worked with Police Scotland to adapt the training to allow it to be built into the students' timetable.

Regular Special training requires three full weeks at the Scottish Police College at Tulliallan or every weekend for 12 weeks. The in-house training saw the students undertake their training every Wednesday at Edinburgh Napier's Sighthill campus, allowing them all to continue their studies and work part-time as they trained.

The training also included a visit to Tulliallan for officer safety training alongside giving the students a chance to meet other probationers and to learn about the discipline required

to be a member of Police Scotland.

The programme was devised because of a growing demand from students to get involved as Special Constables, with the five students now ready to go out onto the front line and join Police Scotland community teams in working across their areas. The students will be available to help Police Scotland with its Covid-19 response, alongside offering support during periods where officers may be self-isolating because of the virus.

Dr Andrew Wooff, Lecturer in Criminology at Edinburgh Napier University, is delighted to see the first cohort of the training pass out as qualified Special Constables.

He said: "We are delighted that Edinburgh Napier could be the first to use this new on-campus training module so that our students could train to become Special Constables as they continue their studies at the University.

"Our main priority when devising – and carrying out – the on-campus training was maintaining the high Police Scotland standard while supporting students to become Special Constables. Their time at Tulliallan also gave them an insight into the discipline and standard required by a member of Police Scotland. The training is rigorous and will hopefully facilitate the successful candidates in pursuing a rewarding career with Police Scotland.

"The feedback from both the students and Police Scotland has been great and we're really proud to see them out on the frontline already, supporting the Force in its community operations. Planning for the next cohort is already underway and we've had more than 50 individuals express an interest so far. We feel this type of flexible training benefits our students greatly and we look forward to playing our part in strengthening Police Scotland's Special Constabulary in the coming months."

Assistant Chief Constable John Hawkins said: "Police Scotland is extremely grateful to all five students for the time and effort they have already dedicated to their roles as Special Constables, from juggling their studies alongside training to now deploying on the frontline. Special Constables have always been a vital and valued feature of policing in Scotland, however during this extraordinary time the significance of their role is greater than ever and we have been humbled by the response of our volunteers.

"Our thanks also goes to Dr Andrew Wooff at Edinburgh Napier for committing his time to working with Police Scotland to adapt the training to allow it to be built into the students' timetable.

"While Police Scotland undoubtedly benefits from the experience our volunteers bring, we also hope the opportunity is unlike any other where you gain confidence, new skills and get the chance to help people in need. I wish our new recruits the very best for their future on the beat."

PhD student Larissa Engelmann recently completed her first shifts as a Special Constable.

She said: "I decided to become a Special Constable to explore other ways of giving back to the community as I've already been involved in a lot of different volunteering opportunities within Edinburgh and beyond.

"The training – even though it was over three months, rather than three weeks – was still very intense. We had to learn a lot of legislation too but nevertheless it was really enjoyable. We had really great police officers who helped us with the training – and we had a lot of fun as well.

"I've had my first shifts at the weekend and although it was quiet, it was great to see some of what we have learned in

training in practice and develop our own way of working in Police Scotland as a Special Constable.”

The Special Constable role is diverse, demanding and rewarding. Special Constables could be doing anything from policing a football match to assisting at a road accident. Special Constables also police major sporting and public events and provide an excellent bridge between the Police Service and the public, representing both the community within the police service and the police service within local communities.

More details on Police Scotland’s Special Constabulary can be found [here](#).

For Edinburgh Napier students interested in becoming a Special Constable, they can contact Andrew Wooff on a.wooff@napier.ac.uk