

# fe+ news

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FE+ News is the voice of FE+ aimed at informing partners and stakeholders about developments within the further education sector. This first edition looks at the region's Centres of Vocational Excellence.....

## What is FE+?

FE+ is the name given to an innovative partnership involving the six further education colleges in the Tees Valley. It is a collaborative approach to developing and delivering high quality education and training. Working closely together means that colleges in the Tees Valley FE sector have a greater opportunity to influence important regional and sub-regional developments.



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## Welcome to the Region's Centres of Vocational Excellence



CoVEs are specialist areas of training provision within further education colleges. They are characterised by close links between colleges, business partners and other employment interests and communities. They aim to produce appropriately qualified and skilled workers with excellent employment and career prospects which meet the needs of the economy.

CoVEs focus on enhancing the skills and careers of those already in work, the employability of new entrants to the labour market, and the employment prospects of those seeking work (including self-employment). They enable providers to develop, maintain and deliver high quality, specialist provision across a range of new and traditional occupations. They are innovative in delivering learning that develops both specialist and related general skills.

CoVEs work closely with business and industry to deliver industry-relevant and economically important provision of a high standard.

CoVEs are central to the Learning and Skills Council's task of improving skills for employment and national competitiveness. They are primarily focused on delivering skills at level 3 to enable the development, maintenance and delivery of high quality, specialist provision. Available across a range of vocational areas, their success is outlined in the following articles.....



"CoVE status is exactly the kind of hallmark of quality which is important to employers. We know that students will emerge who are well-grounded in vocational skills and training, and are best-equipped to do the jobs our industries demand."

David Kelly, Managing Director, Newsquest (North East) Ltd

# Region's only specialist College of Art and Design

Cleveland College of Art & Design is the region's only specialist college of art and design, one of only a handful in the country. It's mission statement is to provide specialist further and higher education programmes in art and design and related areas as a centre for vocational excellence.

Art colleges are the breeding ground for future designers and manufacturers whether through stained glass or set design, jewellery or filmmaking, ceramics or multimedia, fashion, textiles, television or the more traditional fine art pursuits of drawing and painting and sculpture. With a range of provision that encompasses the school leaver, the undergraduate and those continuing their education at all ages, CCAD is well placed to significantly contribute to the £26 billion industry that is design.

Further education courses utilise a range of industrial advisory committees, comprising representatives from the local industry and commerce, to ensure that the design briefs that students work to are employer-related and relevant to the student's area of study. Our higher education programmes, both Foundation and Honours degrees, work directly with local and national companies to set "live" briefs appropriate to the area of specialism, and in addition attend trade shows where students are expected to sell their design work to industry representatives alongside practising artists and designers in a competitive environment. Graduating students also display their work nationally at such events as New Designers and Fresh Art held in the Business Design Centre in London each year.

CCAD graduates have amongst many other things created Bob the Builder and helped design the Peugeot 307 and, as many designers observe, if it doesn't grow it's got to be designed and CCAD is cultivating those designers.



Strong industry links enable College's cutting-edge to get sharper

With a long tradition of engineering excellence, Hartlepool College of Further Education is keeping up its reputation – through a new Centre of Vocational Excellence in Technical and Design Engineering.

Launched in September last year, the £1.2 million state-of-the-art facilities were designed and developed in consultation with big industry names like Heerema, Huntsman Tioxide and Aker Kvaerner. Featuring intelligent systems, a 3D design suite, business improvement suite and paperfree portfolio systems, the Centre enables learners to gain the high-level skills demanded by companies across the region.

One exceptional student who has been reaping the rewards of the hi-tech resources at Hartlepool College is Steven Rooney. Steven, 21 from Hartlepool, is one of only three students in the North East to have been presented an award in the City & Guilds Medal of Excellence scheme, and the only engineer in the region to have received *highly commended* status.

Glenda Horne, Customer Relationship Manager at City & Guilds explains that less than 100 medals and certificates were awarded nationwide this year. "The awards are designed to encourage and recognise outstanding students like Steven. His progress and achievement have been exceptional", she says.

Steven has studied at the College for the past four years, this year completing the Higher National Diploma in Engineering. Having finished his apprenticeship with Heerema recently, he has now been appointed to the permanent post of Junior Welding Engineer at the Hartlepool-based company. "My training has given me the best of all worlds", says Steven, "qualifications, industrial theory, and practical experience. I couldn't have asked for a better start."

Human Resource Manager at Heerema, Tony Windebank says, "Throughout his apprenticeship Steven has shown great enthusiasm and has worked very hard. We are not surprised by his achievements and we have no doubt he will be successful in his new position with the Company."

With an impressive range of achievements under his belt, including the prestigious award of Hartlepool College Student of the Year 2003 (Fabrication & Welding), ambitious Steven is now setting his sights on new study goals for the future. Next year, he intends to progress to a degree programme in Engineering.

For further information about the Centre of Vocational Excellence contact Student Services at Hartlepool College on (01429) 295000 or log onto [www.hartlepoolfe.ac.uk](http://www.hartlepoolfe.ac.uk).

# Read all about it – A Story of Excellence

Darlington College hit the headlines two years ago with the establishment of its first Centre of Vocational Excellence.

The CoVE in Digital Media (Design and Production) is the first of its kind in the region and came as a result of strong industry links with the newspaper and broadcasting media and the design world.

The CoVE, housed in the College Media Design Centre, boasts a futuristic array of equipment, envied by the industry it serves. The digital television studio was opened in 2003 by the then Director General of the BBC, Greg Dyke, who said it was “as good, if not better” than the BBC’s own facilities.

It also has digital radio studios and banks of bang up-to-date Apple Macs to ensure that it can provide services and training for modern businesses as well as trainees. Facilities and expertise are hired out, so trainees can get “real” work experience – and real jobs as a direct result. Hundreds of employees and trainees have benefited from CoVE generated programmes and courses.

The department works with regional and national newspaper groups, magazines TV and radio companies and other media professionals – including Newsquest, the largest regional newspaper group in the country, the Ross Parry Agency, one of the industry’s best known news and photography agencies, and design professionals at Jaguar cars.

The work the department has done with Newsquest helped them towards a BEACON Award for Delivering Business Excellence in 2002 and a North East Regional Training Award in 2003. Trainees on the programme have won newspaper industry awards for their work in such areas as shorthand, writing skills and media law, and design trainees have also won awards for designing such concepts as logos, invitations and cards.

The college is also a partner with the University of Teesside in the New Technologies Institute, which funds developments in digital media for upskilling industry, as well as for intelligent systems in engineering and for e-commerce.

Many trainees go on to work or to higher education – the college has recently validated a number of Foundation Degrees, including ones in Journalism and Multi Media.



(Top) Greg Dyke officially opens the CoVE television studios.

(Above) The facilities and expertise are state-of-the-art.



For further information contact the CoVE Manager, Eric Walsh, at [ewalsh@darlington.ac.uk](mailto:ewalsh@darlington.ac.uk)

As one of only two Centres of Vocational Excellence for Performing Arts in the country, Stockton Riverside College is looking to build upon its outstanding reputation in this field through the creation of the MAP Theatre Company to provide a range of benefits to businesses across the Tees Valley.

The college’s Performing Arts Centre has forged a partnership with Stockton’s leading arts venue, ARC, which will provide a base for the MAP Theatre Company, and in return reap rewards from the skills being taught at the centre. The company is being established as a community business and will expose trainees to industrial standards and entrepreneurial practices. As a training-based organisation, MAP will combine modern apprentices with other performing artists and will take its productions on tour.

Director of ARC, Kevin Parker, expressed his support for the college’s Centre of Vocational Excellence: “Performing Arts is a very specialist area, however, the skills being offered by the centre will benefit students in a wide range of sectors. The arrangement will also allow employers like ourselves to have a greater involvement in

## College MAPs out its future for training in Performing Arts

the courses that will be delivered to students, which will combat any future skills shortage and keep talented young people in this region.”

A host of opportunities are now being made available at ARC through the involvement of Stockton Riverside College’s Performing Arts Centre. These include courses in performance, cultural administration, technical theatre, stage design, costume, media presentation, public relations and running an arts business.

Centre of Vocational Excellence status has resulted in a major emphasis being placed on partnership working, in particular with the Arts Council of England, local authorities and regeneration agencies. The centre is also developing a community strategy for Stockton International Riverside Festival and a bid to create the Centre for International Street Theatre in Stockton.



The college’s vision is to establish the Centre of Vocational Excellence as a permanent regionally-acknowledged base to provide qualified staff at all levels trained to excellent standards. As a venue, ARC will be constantly full of learners and activity, set to become a ‘finishing school’ for a performing arts workforce for the 21st Century.

Over the past 12 months employers in the North East's process and manufacturing sector have been able to take advantage of a new Centre of Vocational Excellence (CoVE) when planning their future training and staff development.

The joint Redcar & Cleveland College and TTE Management and Technical Training Centre of Specialised Engineering for the Process and Manufacturing Industries is based at Edison House at South Bank, Middlesbrough. It is a prime example of a close partnership that has been developed over the past nine years.

Nick James, Director of Strategy and Communication at the Learning and Skills Council said: "Establishing a Centre of Vocational Excellence in such an individual situation sends out a strong message to engineering and manufacturing businesses in the region that education is adapting to the specific needs of their industry sector. Centres of Vocational Excellence are an important and vital component for further education in the North East and will provide respected qualifications and a highly skilled workforce."

The partnership stretches even further, where a group of American students have crossed the Atlantic to take advantage of Redcar & Cleveland College's unique facilities.

Three students from Cleveland Community College in Tennessee have travelled to the North East to study for City & Guilds in Auto CAD (Computer Assisted Design). Gwen Brice, 49, John Wagoner, 40, and Verneitta Womack, 40, are all from industry and are studying part-time. The course is part of a seven year partnership between the two colleges.



## Excellent engineering partnerships both home and away!

Each year the North East based college takes a group of students to Tennessee to enhance their learning experience.

The US students sat a set of 2D and 3D drafting exams, which were designed by Redcar & Cleveland College tutor Bob Carrick and verified by City & Guilds. The qualification is well respected in America and earning a City & Guilds qualification can lead to a promotion.

During their 10-day stay in the UK, which is part sponsored by US Home Electricals Manufacturer, Maytag, the students also had the opportunity to take in some sightseeing. They enjoyed whistle stop visits to Edinburgh, Alnwick, Newcastle, Whitby, York and London.

Denise King, Associate Professor at

Cleveland State Community College and Chair of International Studies Committee, said: "Our relationship with Redcar & Cleveland College has been beneficial for both institutions with students taking the opportunity to broaden their learning experiences and gain new qualifications. We have enjoyed the college's hospitality and the tutor's expertise, which has helped our students gain their certificates."

Neil Walker, the Redcar & Cleveland College Lecturer who helped arrange the visit, said: "The visit of the Americans demonstrates the quality of the training we offer in the North East. We are very proud of the engineering facilities at Redcar & Cleveland College and, in partnership with TTE Management and Technical Training, we offer some of the best academic and vocational training for industry in the country."

**The Centre of Vocational Excellence for Catering and Hospitality at Middlesbrough College offers a wide range of courses; as well as a new Foundation Degree in catering and hospitality in conjunction with Teesside University, which starts in September.**

In a special ceremony to officially mark the CoVE status, key figures from the college and the LSC were invited to sample tapas, canapés and seafood prepared by the students. Middlesbrough College principal John Hogg said: 'Many kids when they first come here can't even boil an egg but in less than a year they are presenting wonderful food like this.'

The catering and hospitality department has forged links with specialist restaurants and hotels throughout the country, ensuring students are kept up to date with the latest trends. Students regularly take trips to New York, Ireland and Spain to enhance their cultural understanding,

and this year four students have won 18 months work placement with Big Cedar Lodge USA. The catering department also came to the rescue of the UK navy earlier in the year after an accident to the HMS Marlborough's chefs gave two students the chance to step in and work on the ship.

Head of Faculty, Chris Mann said: 'There is a huge shortage of skilled caterers out there and we train students from here to be capable enough to fill that gap.'

Some of our students went to work in New York last year, and we have some in Cambrills in Spain right now and some of our lecturing chefs are heading to Tuscany for a specialised course this summer.' Funding from the LSC has paid for improvements to the current facilities, including a restaurant and bistro that are open to students and the general public.

Both the restaurant kitchen and training kitchen have been renovated and a new

lecture theatre built, which has cameras that record a demonstration and project it on plasma screens. Executive Director of the Learning and Skills Council Tees Valley, Pam Eccles, summed up the Catering and Hospitality department well when she commented, 'This centre should be a beacon that attracts employers and allows people to use the excellence they have learned here.'

Anyone interested in courses at the CoVE centre should contact Head of Faculty Chris Mann on 01642 333260 or log onto [www.mbro.ac.uk](http://www.mbro.ac.uk).

