



WEST OF ENGLAND

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MARCH/APRIL
NEWSLETTER
2025

WELCOME



With a new government at the helm, a period of uncertainty was inevitable as new priorities were set. Skills are high on the agenda, and rightfully so; however, this meant Institutes of Technology's (IoTs) would naturally come under scrutiny, given their crucial role in the technical education and skills landscape.

West of England Institute of Technology Director Claire Arbery, who is also Vice Chair of the National Institutes of Technology Executive Board, along with other representatives, welcomed a meeting with Minister Jacqui Smith to showcase the incredible work and collaboration taking place across the IoT network in support of the skills agenda. Fellow IoT **Greater Birmingham & Solihull** hosted the visit, where the Minister was able to witness firsthand the work being carried out and the importance of IoTs in embedding collaboration as a norm within the education landscape.

We were pleased to receive confirmation that IoTs will remain for at least another three years, **until July 2028**, fantastic news that allows us to continue building on the progress made over the past five years!

In addition to the ongoing work across our partner education institutions, we have agreed on a strategic focus that leverages the strengths of both **education providers** and **employers** to address regional challenges. This includes technical education upskilling for teachers, deeper employer integration into full-time provision to align skills with industry needs, and the creation of a centralised hub for young people, teachers, parents, and carers to access all things related to technical education. This initiative will highlight 'pipelines and pathways' into different occupations - so watch this space!

Claire also represented the West of England Institute of Technology as **Skills Lead** for the **Business West Local Growth Planning and LSIP Update**, joining other panellists in championing the West of England Institute of Technology's role in regional skills development and fostering further collaborative partnerships.

We were also pleased to be invited Parliamentary launch of the Strategic Skills Plan for the UK Hydrogen Economy, as one of the founding partners of Hydrogen South West and an active member of the Hydrogen Skills Alliance it was wonderful to see the output of the meetings we have attended to get a plan on paper. We are not just words, our education team in **Yeovil College** are powering ahead (pun intended) to deliver hydrogen skills to the IoT region with their new Hydrogen facility.

Additionally, work has begun on an exciting new initiative: '**Engineer Your Future**'. This aims to support aspiring engineering apprentices who have been unsuccessful in securing placements with larger primes in the region. West of England Institute of Technology will work with SMEs looking to recruit apprentices, facilitating interviews and helping to bridge the gap. Two events are planned—one at the **National Composites Centre in June** and another at **iAero in July**.

If you are an SME in the engineering sector looking to recruit an apprentice and would like the opportunity to meet pre-qualified candidates, please contact Donna Kenny at donna.kenny@weston.ac.uk.

We look forward to continuing working together to drive innovation, strengthen industry collaboration, and create meaningful opportunities in, and raise awareness of technical education.

If you have any questions, would like to get involved, or want to learn more about our initiatives, please don't hesitate to reach out to the team.

Claire, Donna, Georgia & Zac



STUDENT IMPACT



SPENCER

MEDIA PRODUCTION FOUNDATION DEGREE

SGS COLLEGE

My journey began at **SGS College** studying **Level 3 Media**, which laid the foundation for my transition into the **Media Production foundation degree**. During my Media Production degree, I have **engaged in workshops, live productions, and projects that deepened my knowledge and practical skills**. Working on group assignments and client-based projects allowed me to apply my learning in real-world scenarios.

One of my most memorable experiences was collaborating with a broadcast team to produce and livestream events for SGS academies. This opportunity helped me develop leadership, teamwork, and problem-solving skills—qualities essential for my career in media.

Like many students, I faced personal challenges, a demanding workload, and moments of self-doubt. I am a survivor of an unsolicited knife attack, being stabbed several times and consequently I have had to spend time away from my course to recover. **The Support at SGS has also provided practical assistance**, such as **access to food banks and mental health resources**, which made a significant difference in my overall well-being and motivation.

At times, meeting deadlines felt overwhelming, but with perseverance and the **support of my tutors**, I managed to stay on track. **SGS College provided invaluable support through the library**, well-being team, and lecturers. **One-on-one tutor sessions** were particularly helpful, allowing me to discuss both academic and personal challenges in a supportive environment. Socially, I've thrived by **building friendships** and moving into **shared accommodation with fellow students**. My dedication to my studies also helped me **secure a position within a media company**, allowing me to **travel and gain hands-on industry experience—a dream I had since college**. My hard work, combined with the supportive environment at SGS, allowed me to grow academically, socially, and professionally.

I'm incredibly grateful for the foundation SGS has provided and excited for my future in journalism, media and TV production.

'The West of England Institute of Technology (WEIoT) champions higher technical education, including Degree Apprenticeships, Higher Technical Qualifications (HTQs), and Foundation Degrees, all underpinned by employers and the skills needed in industry. The WEIoT focuses on four priority sectors within the region, with Spencer's Foundation Degree falling into the Digital sector.'

We also champion progression routes into higher levels through T Levels and entry-level Apprenticeships. These provide students with the opportunity to navigate their way through technical education from entry level upwards.'



South Gloucestershire
and Stroud College



EMPLOYER PROFILE: AIRBUS



Airbus is a global leader in aeronautics, space, and related services, dedicated to driving innovation and developing the next generation of aerospace professionals. In the West of England, Airbus collaborates closely with the West of England Institute of Technology (WEIoT), Weston College, and University Centre Weston (UCW) to cultivate a strong talent pipeline for the aerospace and defence industries.

Partnership with Weston College and UCW

Airbus works with Weston College and UCW to deliver industry-focused programs that equip students with the essential skills needed for careers in aerospace and engineering. Through this collaboration, students gain hands-on experience and real-world training, helping them develop the practical expertise that makes them highly employable.

A Key Partner in the West of England Institute of Technology (WEIoT)

As a major employer partner of WEIoT, Airbus plays an active role in shaping technical education to meet industry demands. WEIoT brings together leading employers, colleges, and universities to provide training in digital innovation, engineering, and advanced manufacturing—sectors critical to the region's economic growth. Airbus ensures students acquire the latest industry knowledge and skills, preparing them for high-tech careers.

Supporting Student Success

The impact of these partnerships is evident in the success stories of students who have trained with Airbus and UCW. A standout example is Immanuel Oyetunde, who completed a degree apprenticeship with Airbus through UCW and WEIoT. This program allowed him to gain invaluable hands-on experience while studying, bridging the gap between academic learning and real-world industry application. His journey exemplifies how Airbus's partnerships create opportunities for exciting careers in aerospace.

Inspiring the Future Workforce

Airbus is committed to not only offering apprenticeships but also inspiring the next generation of engineers. At the recent Breaking Barriers: Engineering and Sustainability event, part of the UCW Lecture Series, two Airbus engineers, Hannah Smith and Lucinda Blanchard, shared their career journeys with students. Both began as aerospace engineering apprentices, yet their career paths have diverged significantly. Hannah is now a lead engineer working on sustainable aviation fuels, while Lucinda leads Inclusion & Diversity at Airbus UK. Their stories demonstrated how apprenticeships can open doors to diverse career opportunities and highlighted the importance of resilience, innovation, and diversity in engineering. Through its partnerships with Weston College, UCW, and WEIoT, Airbus is playing a crucial role in training and inspiring the future workforce of the aerospace and engineering industries. By equipping students with the skills, experience, and industry connections they need, Airbus is ensuring they are ready to thrive in high-tech careers.



AIRBUS



NATIONAL APPRENTICESHIP WEEK



SGS College's, Electrical Assessor for Apprenticeships, Liam O'Keefe took a step away from guiding their apprentices to connect with Sports Academy learners at SGS Wise Campus. With exceptional presentations from the Army, Shine, and Everyone Active promoting #NAW2025 and #skillsforlife, Liam delivered a powerful session on apprenticeship opportunities.

He captivated the audience by sharing his personal apprenticeship journey and raising awareness for the RFU Injured Players Foundation (IPF). As one of the original SGS Filton rugby academy players, Liam started with an apprenticeship in Gas Engineering and transitioned to an electrical apprenticeship at a nearby college. In 2015, Liam faced a life-altering challenge—a severe neck injury while playing for St Mary's Old Boys, leaving him quadriplegic. With unwavering support from the RFU Injured Players Foundation (IPF) from day one, Liam began his demanding journey of rehabilitation and adapting to a new way of living. He has since regained some mobility and continues to inspire with his resilience.



City of Bristol College celebrating apprentice Bethany who has been on an incredible journey since joining as a Marketing Apprentice! She has learnt about the key areas of Marketing, such as managing and attending events, planning marketing campaigns and creating social media content.

Bethany was nominated for the colleges 'Rising Star Award' this year by her colleagues, and within her first five months of joining, she was awarded 'Apprentice of the Year' at the Apprenticeship Awards!

National Apprenticeship Week



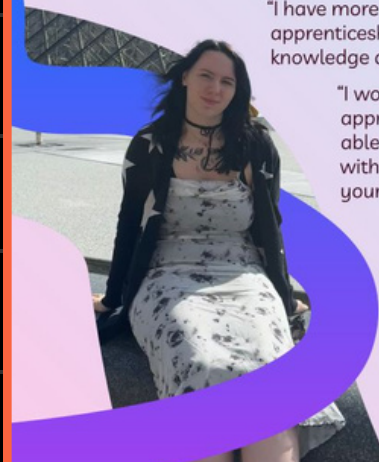
Apprentice Wednesday

Hear from Bethany!

"I have more confidence since starting the apprenticeship as I am content with my knowledge and how to present this to others.

"I would definitely recommend an apprenticeship to others as you are able to get hands-on experience within your chosen industry and get your foot in the door!

"If you're considering an apprenticeship, just dive into it! Take all the opportunities you can and gain as much experience and knowledge as possible."



Weston College took the chance to catch up with some of their employers. Britannia Windows has seen firsthand how apprenticeships help businesses thrive. Weston chatted with Vicky their Compliance Manager, to explore the impact of taking on apprentices and how all businesses should consider one or more!

Britannia Windows still have several employees who have come through the apprenticeship route and thriving with them! Some have moved up to management roles and others have moved departments within the business to continue their development and learn new skills in different areas!

APPRENTICE SUCCESS



Bath College recognised Horstman UK Defence Systems where apprenticeships are shaping the future of engineering. Their partnership with Bath College has been invaluable, helping apprentices gain vital manufacturing, engineering, and employment skills while learning from experienced professionals.

"Our relationship with Bath College and the apprenticeship scheme with them has benefited us immensely in the past and is set to do so even more in the future."

With expert guidance, many past apprentices have gone on to become CNC Machinists, Design Engineers, and Maintenance Engineers, and the impact continues:

"Keenan and Cameron have become vital members of the Horstman team, and we look forward to seeing their careers develop with us."

Yeovil College looked back to when UK Female Skills Learner of the Year!

This is what Charlotte had to say after receiving her win: "It still feels pretty unreal, if I wasn't holding the trophy in my hand, it would have felt like I dreamt it! It feels so special doing something to promote women in the trade and promoting it through social media to prove women can do it just as well as men.

I hope to encourage other girls to consider a career in construction and women that don't have much confidence in themselves, just like I did. I looked up to other females and it really inspired me. If I can encourage even a couple of girls to do it, that would be really special to me.

One piece of advice I would give to other females in the industry, is: believe in yourself, you can achieve anything you put your mind to, it's hard work but it pays off.

The support from my lecturers has been amazing and thank you to my assessors for putting me forward for the competition, if it wasn't for you I would have never of done it."



UWE hosted an Apprenticeship Celebration the at Bristol Beacon. Where they welcomed apprenticeship employers, apprentices, partners and UWE colleagues to recognise the transformative impact that apprenticeships can have for all.

Laura Fogg Rogers spoke on the 'Women Like Me' programme, an initiative to provide mentorship to women in STEM careers.

Prof Elena Marco lead an amazing panel discussion exploring the power of apprenticeships, how they provide educational pathways, shape regional growth, and widening access to skills-based learning.



FUTURE OF DIGITAL DENTAL TECHNOLOGY



At Yeovil College and the West of England Institute of Technology (WEIoT), the dental programme is more than just filling skill gaps—it's about cultivating future talent and securing the industry's future.

Why Are Yeovil College & WEIoT Leading the Way in Dental?

Yeovil College's expertise in rotary aerospace and advanced manufacturing has laid a strong foundation for advancements in digital dental technology. Their experience in digital production, additive manufacturing (3D printing), and composites has seamlessly transferred to dental technology. The College prioritises listening to the business community and responding to their needs, with clear guidance from the dental tech sector driving their entry into this new field.

Leading the UK

A collaborative effort involving dental laboratory owners, manufacturers, the General Dental Council, NHS England, Open University, West of England Institute of Technology (WEIoT), and the dedicated Yeovil College team has resulted in a highly effective partnership. This collaboration has led to the creation of new resources and fit-for-purpose education and training, all designed to meet the future needs of the sector efficiently.

Investments in the Dental Curriculum

Significant support and investment from NHS England, WEIoT, and the sector have fuelled exciting advancements. This includes the establishment of two new labs (digital and wet), a patient treatment simulation space, and the development of new Apprenticeship and Degree Apprenticeship programmes. Additionally, hundreds of hours of innovative blended learning content have been created by dental sector experts.

Expanding Reach and Impact

With the sector's approval of the digital dental training, Yeovil College, supported by WEIoT, is expanding to new locations across England. The first new site will be in Leicester, in partnership with Ivoclar. The hybrid apprenticeship and degree apprenticeship model will be implemented in 3-4 locations, featuring laboratory training every six weeks for three days and flexible weekly virtual classroom sessions. These locations will be strategically placed near clusters of dental labs and transport hubs to ensure easy access for apprentices and labs. The Degree Apprenticeship will be based in Somerset, utilising the new labs and following the same blended delivery model.

Future Growth Plans

The dental sector has indicated a need for thousands of new dental technicians and upskilling for the existing workforce. Yeovil College aims to meet this demand by training over 100 new students annually. The broader dental community and NHS England have also voiced the need for new dental curricula, bringing additional stakeholders into the conversation and highlighting further training and education needs for the dental workforce. The College's priority focus is listening to the business community and responding to their needs.



WEST OF ENGLAND
INSTITUTE OF
TECHNOLOGY



EVENTS AND OPPORTUNITIES



Weston College Engineering Fast Track Apprenticeship Interviews
Thursday 3rd April 3pm - 6:30pm.
South West Skills Campus Weston

[For further information and to book CLICK HERE](#)

Join us at our South West Skills Campus (Locking Road, Weston-super-Mare, BS22 8ND) for an opportunity to connect directly with fantastic employers in the engineering industry, looking to recruit people like you



Bath College Adult Skills Open Event
Wednesday 23rd April 4pm - 7pm.
City Centre & Somer Valley Campus

[For further information and to book CLICK HERE](#)

Join us for the next Bath College open Event for the 2025-26 Academic year, at our centrally based City Centre Campus in Bath all about Adult Skills.



SGS College Open Evening
Thursday 1st May 5:30pm - 8pm.
SGS College

[For further information and to book CLICK HERE](#)

Explore the diverse study programs at South Gloucestershire & Stroud College with programs starting in September 2025.



City Of Bristol College Independence Training Facilities Open Event
Sunday 11th May 4pm - 6pm.
The Brislington Centre & Ashley Down Centre

[For further information and to book CLICK HERE](#)

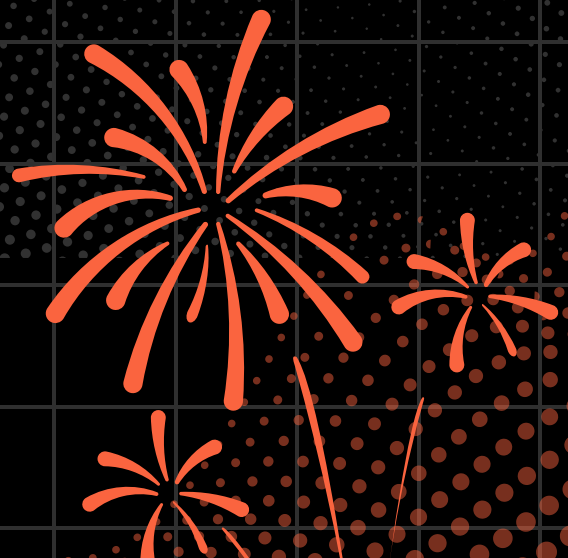
These specialised Open Events are your chance to discover our incredible facilities for yourself. You'll have the chance to explore the centres and have the opportunity to meet our dedicated teams to discuss your individual pathway.



Yeovil College May Open Event
Thursday 22nd May 5pm - 7pm.
Yeovil College

[For further information and to book CLICK HERE](#)

If you are planning to join us in September, now is the time to put your plan into action and secure your place. Alternatively, if you are currently in Year 10, why not visit us early and get a head start on your planning for next year, as many of your peers will also be doing this. If you are currently in Year 12, and looking for a change in course or college, we can support you.





Supplying the Artform of Welding

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