

AN EMPLOYER-LED APPROACH TO EDUCATION

Working closely with the local business sector already forms a key part of the strategy at The Guernsey Institute and something the team will continue to build on in the future. College of Further Education Principal, Dr Louise Misselke explains why



The Guernsey Institute is the new organisation which will bring together as one the College, GTA University Centre, and the Institute of Health and Social Care. We are looking forward to The Guernsey Institute new campus building as part of the post-16 campus at Les Ozouets. However, we don't need to wait for the new building to continue to forge close working connections with industry, which is vital as the world of work continues to rapidly change.

Every business-related report you read suggests that most industry sectors are undergoing technological transformation and, as we know, the pandemic has further changed the way business is conducted. That's as true for Guernsey as it is in the UK and beyond, and if we are to continue to train employment-ready individuals with the relevant skills and expertise to fill skills gaps, education needs to evolve in a similar way. That means that on-going dialogue and collaboration with the local employment sector is essential.

This isn't something new. Local businesses have been working with us for many years to ensure that our professional, technical, vocational curriculum and qualifications are wholly relevant to current industry needs. But, as we move forward, to develop our economy at a time of change we must be both agile and adaptable. To facilitate this, we want to continue to build and develop close connections with our local business community.

There are many ways in which local employers can work with us, including:

Work experience for our full-time students

High quality work experience is integral to our ethos. We are developing a career-focused curriculum for our younger learners, where exposure to the 'real world of work' is a key element of their development

Curriculum creation

We welcome joint working with a range of industry experts to help develop design, and co-create curriculum. This would include providing input as to the specific industry requirements of its employees, as well as offering direction on broader issues relating to technical/specialist training requirements

Industry placements for our team

College of Further Education offers staff the opportunity to return to industry for two days each academic year to ensure they are wholly aware of changes and trends within their own specialist area

Masterclasses

We welcome professionals from across all sectors to speak with groups of students on any of our programmes about industry issues, projects and examples of activities from any sector

Industry visits

These are a great opportunity to promote the opportunities available to students and showcase how the learning they receive with us translates into real-world experiences

There is also a broad acceptance that adult learning provides a means to both reskill and upskill, strengthening employability and competitiveness. The changing shape of work means that roles which would have been traditionally for low skilled workers are more likely to be automated, meaning that these groups of people will be facing decreasing demand for their work in the labour market and a need to change career direction. The Guernsey Institute team is committed to ensuring that adults are supported through life training opportunities, a flexible offer of learning which will help people gain new skills while balancing work and life. We aim to support people to either make progress in their current sector, or to switch into more sustainable roles as the world of work changes.

The apprenticeship model is one that we aim to further develop in the future and is not age restricted - the average age of people on an



apprenticeship locally is 25+, so this is one way of potentially facilitating career changes for more mature learners.

The popularity of apprenticeships has increased considerably over the past five years locally and is set to expand further. There are now 18 professional sector pathways with more on the horizon. The model offers learners the opportunity to continue to earn whilst they gain a professional or technical qualification, knowledge and expertise in a new area.

We are continually developing our apprenticeship provision, working with more than 400 local employers to develop programmes to fill local skills gaps, and, as The Guernsey Institute grows further, I see this development trend being one from which the island's future workforce will benefit greatly.

Changes such as the speed of technological advancement, climate change, our island demography, ageing population, and Brexit all have made a contribution to economic challenges.

The pandemic has accelerated and magnified already-existing trends in ways that are transforming our working lives. The 'new normal' is here. The old certainties have disappeared - the familiar office, the fixed working day. One commentator has described the pandemic as an 'earthquake that triggered a tsunami, one that has washed away the old ways of working'.

Our workforce has to adapt to these unprecedented times - something that is well documented across other jurisdictions - and skills training provision must equally evolve to support these changing needs. Working in partnership, with strong connections with the local business community is the only way of ensuring that we help develop students of all ages and skill sets in such a way as to ensure a future flourishing economy for the island.

If you are an employer who would like to get more involved with the development of our current and future workforce, please email future@gcfe.net.

