

Press release

For Immediate use

Business and colleges celebrate recognition

A local business and college has been recognised at a prestigious national award ceremony in recognition of their partnership working which has helped the company develop and grow.

IQA Utilities at Paisley and Reid Kerr College was commended for the Workforce Development More than 50 Employees category at the 'Business to College Awards' held on Wednesday night (24 March) at Dynamic Earth in Edinburgh.

The company provides gas, electrical, building services as well as health and safety consultancy to local authorities, housing associations, private companies and small installers.

Following a request by a housing association to undertake periodic inspections on a 5 year rolling programme, the company identified the need for electrical inspection, testing and certification training within its workforce.

Although forty-six electricians were already employed, their expertise was not in the inspection of domestic properties despite having the relevant training in the subject. By working in partnership with Reid Kerr College, IQA Group was able to develop a training programme that met the specific requirements of the contract.

The programme was based on components of the already existing City & Guilds 2391 Course, which were developed into a two-day bespoke programme in electrical testing and certification. The investment in this training has resulted in a more confident workforce with the skills to carry out electrical test and inspection process efficiently and effectively.

Martin Watson, Business Director for IQA Group, said: "Since winning the contract the company has increased turnover and the number of new contracts from local authorities and housing associations, we are also opening new premises in Armadale West Lothian. This new business has allowed for increased job and apprentice opportunities, helping the company to make significant contributions to the local and Scottish economy."

The 'Business to College Awards', sponsored by the Scottish Funding Council and organised by Scotland's Colleges, is part of the *Scotland's Colleges Mean Business* campaign which aims to raise awareness of the support available to businesses from Scotland's network of 43 further education colleges. This year, colleges have been encouraged to take part in a week-long campaign – dedicated to highlighting the college sector's expertise, experience and facilities which are available to businesses – by staging events on campus, aimed at engaging with the local businesses community.

Now in their second year, both the campaign and awards bring together Scotland's leading business and skills organisations – the Scottish Chamber of Commerce, the Federation of Small Businesses Scotland, Scottish Enterprise, Alliance of Sector Skills Councils, Business Gateway, CBI Scotland, Skills Development Scotland, Scottish Qualifications Authority and Highlands and Islands Enterprise - to support the initiative.

Attending the awards, Keith Brown, Minister for Skills and Lifelong Learning, said: "These awards are a great way of acknowledging the huge contribution colleges make in supporting the business community, helping to secure Scotland's economic recovery and our future prosperity.

"As a Government we have always acknowledged the way colleges have stepped up to the mark and continued to deliver for learners in Scotland. In recent times, just as the demand for college places has risen, so too have colleges themselves risen to the challenge of meeting that demand.

"Too often in previous recessions, the damage to young people has lasted a generation, and sometimes a whole lifetime. We are working hand in hand with Scotland's colleges and businesses to make sure we do not repeat the mistakes of the past."

Ray Harris, Chief Executive Scotland's Colleges, said: "The Business to Colleges Awards is a great opportunity to celebrate the creative and innovative ways in which colleges and businesses are working together. Scotland's colleges provide real value and benefits to the businesses they engage with. With a practical 'can-do' approach to solving the challenges of the businesses that operate in a modern thriving economy, they contribute a great deal towards Scotland's economy.

"The constant investment in the skills of college staff, as well as the development of many state of the art training facilities, ensures that our colleges continue to meet the demands of all the businesses they engage with."

Joe Mooney, Chair of Scotland's Colleges Knowledge Action Group and Principal, Reid Kerr College, said: "The awards highlight the flexible, local solution colleges are able to offer to businesses. They also underline the amount of work they do across Scotland in supporting businesses – identifying and implementing solutions to tailor-fit the company's requirements – which ultimately lead to a real step change in performance and profit.

"Colleges offer a wide range of expertise and experience and the campaign and awards are designed to encourage companies, no matter what sector or size, to contact their local college and discuss the services on offer."

Scotland's College's Mean Business is part of the wider knowledge transfer and employer engagement agendas for both higher and further education.

Businesses can obtain further information on *Scotland's Colleges Mean Business* by visiting www.scotlandscollegesmeanbusiness.com.

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Notes to editors

Photo caption: (L to R) Kaye Adams, Karen Nimmo, Alliance of Sector Skills Council (category sponsor), Martin Watson, IQA Utilities, Keith Brown MSP

Business to College Awards 2010

Winners

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| Workforce Development Up to 50 Employees | All1 Smile Orthodontics & Coatbridge College |
| Workforce Development more than 50 Employees | Servite Housing Association & Dundee College |
| Sustained Relationship | McGill Electrical & Dundee College |
| Impact – Public Sector | JobCentre Plus & Forth Valley College |
| Impact – Private Sector | Print Matters & Dundee College |
| Business Start Up | Discovery Packaging & Design & Dundee College |
| Innovation | Dawn Homes & South Lanarkshire College |
| College of the Year | Dundee College |

Highly Commended

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| Workforce Development Up to 50 Employees | Gary Hoffman & Clydebank College |
| Workforce Development more than 50 Employees | ChesapeakeBranded Packaging& Motherwell College |
| Sustained Relationship | Dumfries & Galloway Housing Partnership & Dumfries & Galloway College |
| Impact – Public Sector | Ministry of Defence & Carnegie College |
| Impact – Private Sector | Burntisland Fabrications & Carnegie College |
| Business Start Up | The Outpost & Perth College |
| Innovation | OPITO & Forth Valley College |

Commended

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| Workforce Development Up to 50 Employees | Orchardhead Care Home & Carnegie College |
| Workforce Development more than 50 Employees | IQA Utilities & Reid Kerr College |
| Sustained Relationship | Scottish Water & Cardonald College |
| Impact – Public Sector | NHS Tayside & Dundee College |
| Impact – Private Sector | Mechanex UK & Central College |
| Business Start Up | Studio 19 & Adam Smith College |
| Innovation | Northlink Ferries & Orkney College |

The Scotland's Colleges Mean Business marketing campaign was first launched in March 2009. It aims to make business more aware of the support services that exist from colleges which can help achieve a step change in performance and profit.
www.scotlandscollegesmeanbusiness.com

Independent research published in November 2007 showed that as a network, Scotland's colleges are in regular contact with more than 10,000 businesses and are providing support services worth almost £40million.

The Scottish Funding Council is responsible for allocating £1.7 billion of public funds each year to colleges and universities in support of Scottish Government priorities. The Council's funding contributes towards the costs of learning and teaching, skills development, research, innovation and other costs such as staff, buildings and equipment in Scotland's 20 universities and higher education institutions (HEIs) and 43 further education (FE) colleges. The £14 million funding SFC provided for knowledge transfer and developing employer engagement was announced in circular [SFC/30/2007](#).