

Optimising Skills for our Nuclear Future

Case Study: Energy Coast UTC: a strong regional partnership between industry and education



About the NSSG

The NSSG is the UK's lead strategic skills forum for the sector, and represents the Nuclear Industry Council's Skills Workstream. Its members represent both the civil and defence nuclear sectors and it is accountable for developing a nuclear skills strategy, addressing the skills infrastructure, processes and the training provision needed to secure the required supply of qualified and competent personnel.

About University Technical Colleges (UTCs)

UTCs came about in 2009 to address the needs of English employers for work-ready 18-year-olds with a technical education suited to the needs of the modern economy. UTCs teach one or more technical specialisms that meet the skills shortages in the region. This is alongside traditional GCSEs or A levels. The UTC governing body is always controlled by local employers and a local university.

About the Energy Coast UTC

The Energy Coast UTC is focussed on delivering engineering excellence through innovative, technically-focused education and training for 14-19 year olds on the west coast of Cumbria.

Its aim is to meet the current and growing skills demand from employers across Cumbria's "energy coast" with a focus on the rapidly-expanding energy sector including nuclear. In a climate of mutual support and respect, individuals gain the motivation to work using their own initiative and also the self-confidence to ask questions and to seek the help of others.

Of over 300 students in learning, 90% go on to apprenticeships in engineering and civil engineering, all make progress well above national performance and 0% are NEET (not in education, employment or training).

The Student Experience

Young learners at the UTC rapidly gain the confidence and both the technical and personal skills to become creative contributors to industry as well as the regional economy and community, primarily through the challenge of solving real-life industrial and community problems. While it is hoped that students go on to use their UTC skills locally, the education they receive also helps to prepare them to pursue national or even international career opportunities not only in the energy sector but in other engineering or construction industries.

The college offers:

- A high quality technical vocational education choice for young people aged 14-19
- A high quality academic education
- An ethos and working day that matches closely with business practice
- Unprecedented and daily work with industry partners
- Apprenticeship experience
- Practical work-related projects
- Rich opportunities for informal learning, through project work
- State of the art workshops, buildings and facilities
- A caring, supportive environment

'Outstanding' Ofsted report

In July 2019, the UTC was delighted to announce that Ofsted graded the college as outstanding in all areas. Cherry Tingle, Principal, described the achievement as exceptional, with the outstanding classification spanning every single area of inspection. Inspectors said Ms Tingle had 'systematically and very skilfully developed high-quality leadership skills in all school leaders and managers'.

Cherry Tingle explained: "We are only the second UTC in the country to be rated outstanding and one of only 34 schools nationally who were graded outstanding by Ofsted last year. It is rare to see such a steep trajectory of improvement from our previous 'requires improvement' grading. There were only 4 schools nationally that made this huge jump last year."

Ms Tingle added: "When I started, there were a range of problems, from poor results to the need for improvement in every area. Now results are excellent as are destinations. My mantra was, and still is, everything has to be 'good enough for my child'".

Case Study – building future skills

Sellafield Ltd, owned by the Nuclear Decommissioning Authority (NDA) remains one of the world's most complex nuclear facilities with a range of operations including decommissioning, reprocessing and nuclear waste management. The UTC is helping prepare young people for the job opportunities that exist at the facility, for example it is the only secondary school in Cumbria to provide an exciting new Level 3 Cyber Security qualification as part of its Post-16 offer to students.

This course has been built in close collaboration with the NDA and Energen and is aimed at ambitious students who want to pursue a career in this ever-growing field of digital technology. Students on the course are able to gain industry relevant experience and receive advice from leading industry experts.

Dr Donna Connor, Head of Education and Skills at Sellafield Limited said: "Industry investment in the Energy Coast UTC is so important and reflects our commitment to providing a wide range of opportunities in education and training, many specifically designed to match the future skills requirements of the nuclear sector.

"By supporting important projects like the UTC, Sellafield Limited and other local employers are helping Cumbria to become a centre for excellence in providing the best quality education, training and employment prospects for local people".

"Our company is based on science and engineering, and we are doing all we can to continue to encourage young people to pursue STEM subjects and meet the current and future skills demand of West Cumbria and the whole UK."

The NSSG is committed to playing a role in ensuring the sector shares best practice, useful resources and expertise around skills and people development. This learning from each other includes case studies from across the sector. We are encouraging nuclear employers and partners to contribute by submitting such case studies which we will make available on the NSSG website. Thank you to all our contributors.

Ofsted also recognised that:

"Leaders, managers and other staff have nurtured very effective relationships with a range of high-profile employers in the region. The employers and the UTC have developed excellent work-placement programmes that enthuse and engage students in STEM careers. Consequently, almost all students who leave the school at the end of Year 13 progress to STEM-related apprenticeships in the local community."

Industry Partners

Morgan Sindall Infrastructure	Iggesund
Sellafield Ltd	James Walker Nuclear
NDA	National Nuclear Laboratory
Novia	Royal Navy
Energen	



01925 515 200
nssgmembers@cogentskills.com
www.nssguk.com

 Nuclear Skills Strategy Group NSSG

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