

The Association of  
**Distance  
Learning  
Colleges**



# News 2020

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Association of British  
Correspondence Colleges  
Limited.



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# The Association of Distance Learning Colleges

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## CHAIRMAN'S LETTER

*"Always expect the best but be prepared to cope with the worst"*

**T**HE PHRASE 'Could do better' appears in many school reports. This should be our watchword for the coming years.

When starting to pen this letter to members I looked back over past efforts. 2013 seems to be worth remembering; we changed the Association's name to reflect more modern practices, reviewed the Code of Ethics to include disaster planning and widened our field of activity by showing the flag at various conferences, education fairs and exhibitions.

However, feeling that we could still do better, we have decided on a further change of name, to The Association of Distance Learning Colleges. We have a new banner for our future work. It has only taken seven years... The phrase from school reports seems apposite.

Development of 'lifelong learning' has drifted recently but must explode into the new world facing us

Action had already been taken in 2013 over the Certificate of Merit, and this has continued to highlight fascinating stories from amongst our student world. How precious are these pieces of paper. If only they could be the 'set' reading for all those tasked with educational administration, they might open some eyes. The life experiences gained by these students is almost more important than the academic standards expected by external bodies.

Our membership cares about the quality of the study on offer and the quality of support provided – in my book this is probably the main reason for our existence. As a trade association we are not mainly a marketing tool.

Heather has put together the following Newsletter and I am very proud to view the wide range of educational bodies and individuals whose work is highlighted, plus a reminder that we do have a history.

With best wishes and hopes for better times to come.

**Max Faulkner**  
**Chairman**

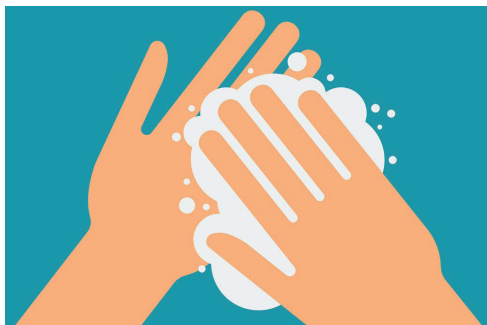
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## INTERESTING TIMES

**A**BCC, the original Association of British Correspondence Colleges, was founded as a response to wartime (see next page). It almost feels as if we are at war again, but with an invisible and intangible enemy. As I write, we are all locked down, working from home and urged not to go out. for fear of the highly contagious and potentially deadly Coronavirus. Schools and colleges, shops, theatres, restaurants, bars are all closed, and normal life has ground to a halt.

We are very proud to say that all our Member Colleges are soldiering on, as you might say. Our industry is of course peculiarly well adapted to working from home; most tutors and course writers do this anyway, and many of the smaller Colleges are family-run and based at the family home. The bigger organisations have worked quickly to transfer everything from an office set-up to home working, and students' courses have suffered no disruption. Indeed, many learners are probably finding that all this enforced leisure can be used to progress their studies. I'm heartened to see students' discussion pages, art and photography galleries and the like going forward quite as usual. There are a lot of resilient and determined people out there!

Several of our Member Colleges are offering discounts or bursaries, to help people start or continue with courses even if their income has



taken a knock. Some Colleges have blogged advice – how to cope with home working, home studying and kids! Some have even spoken on local radio about the challenge and their response.

A slightly alarming development, which I'm sure most of you will have noticed in your personal email and media feeds, is the number of '95% off' courses being offered to the public as a way of filling time. I say nothing about the quality of such offerings, I don't know anything of them, but I think we can take it that they will not offer the personal tutorial service and student support that is so central to our ethos and that of all our members.

As I write we have no idea how long this strange situation will last, or what will be the outcome, but we can only, in the rather trite words of the famous wartime poster, Keep Calm and Carry On.

## ABCC - A LITTLE HISTORY

OUR ASSOCIATION can trace its origins to just after the Second World War, when government approached existing Correspondence Colleges with a view to providing courses for members of the armed forces as they returned to civilian life.

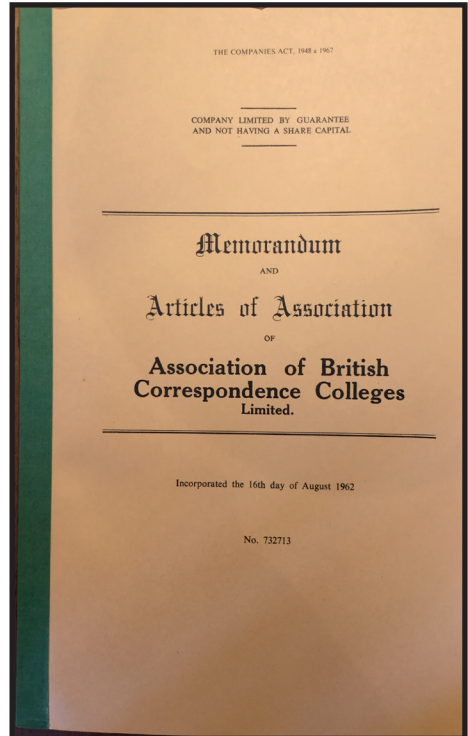
The colleges involved in this scheme kept in touch with each other by means of an informal committee, and in 1955 decided to form an Association. Its aims, then as now, were to safeguard the interests of students learning at home by ensuring high standards, and to provide services and a forum for discussion among its members.

In 1962 the members decided to incorporate the Association formally, and the Articles of Association were drawn up. This is the earliest piece of paperwork I have, and looks marvellous archaic, typed by a mechanical typewriter on foolscap paper, and with a rather impressive cover. The names of those early Member Colleges sound familiar to those of us whose memories go back a bit - Wolsey Hall, Pitman, ICS, the School of Accountancy in Glasgow, the Civil Service Correspondence School...

The Association of British Correspondence Colleges continued under this name until 2013, when the by then very outdated term 'correspondence colleges' was dropped and we decided to use the simple acronym ABCC, not standing for anything – along the lines of BP, though we are ever so slightly smaller.

This seemed like a good idea at the time. We didn't want to lose touch with our original identity or our brand, while giving ourselves a more modern look.

But neat though the new name might be, and making an attractive logo, it is not very informative. Potential members, or potential students, are



not drawn to it, and it doesn't show up well on searches. Recently we have been thinking that the label on the tin ought to say what is inside!

Hence the change to **The Association of Distance Learning Colleges**. A bit of a mouthful, and in everyday speech among ourselves I suggest we just refer to The Association. But the name on our website, letterheading and publications and on social media will make it much clearer what we are all about.

Afterthought – I was telling a local friend about all this, and she misheard the new name as **'The Association of Disconcerting Colleges'**. Maybe we should go with that!

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## NEWS FROM MEMBER COLLEGES

### Animal Care College

This year has seen a major change for one of our oldest and best loved Member Colleges, the Animal Care College. Retiring principal and founder David Cavill tells the story.

#### *Caring for people caring for animals: The work of the Animal Care College*

Forty years ago in 1980, David Cavill, primarily a teacher but also dog and cat owner, dog breeder and judge at dog shows and closely involved in the management of a boarding and quarantine kennels with its own pet shop, recognised that apart from university courses for veterinary surgeons and some basic courses at agricultural colleges for veterinary nurses, there was little information about caring for animals available. Almost every industry from construction through retailing to hairdressing had a well-established training board but there was nothing which tried to define what those caring for animals in their own homes or in the confined environments of grooming parlours, kennels and catteries or pet shops should know or what skills they should have.

David specialised in curriculum development in large comprehensive schools so one of his skills was the creation and management of effective syllabuses in all sorts of subjects so he set about designing programmes which would help people look after their own animals better and provide courses for managers and employees in the pet industry. He recognised that people found it difficult to travel to college of classes so, having himself taken an extra-curricular external degree by correspondence, quickly realised that well designed distance learning courses would not only be efficient and effective but allow access to education by anyone interested in learning. He soon had several courses 'up and running' including caring for animals in confined environments and breeding dogs.

Then in 1983 he met the wonderful dog trainer John Fisher, who had written a book and

# ANIMAL CARE COLLEGE

was looking for a publisher. David was able to introduce him to a friend looking to expand his animal related book list and in the following year 'Think Dog!', the seminal UK book on modern dog training which was founded on the work and research of Karen Prior in the United States, was published.

Based on that work, John wrote three of the most important courses for the Animal Care College, the Introduction, Intermediate and (with Sarah Whitehead), Advanced Canine Psychology courses. John's death from a brain tumour was a blow to everyone who knew him but his books and his courses, since updated by Dee Woodcock and others became the standard works for all those trainers who want to train dogs by understanding **why** they behave as they do rather than by rote and repetition.

Further courses followed: Feline and Equine Psychology, Veterinary Reception, Pet Bereavement, Managing Kennels and Catteries and Pet Shops, Horse and Pony Care as well as, among many others, courses on Pet Sitting and Home Boarding, First Aid and Rescue and Re-homing.

During the 1980s David was involved in the setting up for the Lead Industry Body for Animal Care at the request of the Employment Services

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Commission (MSC) – at last there was a body which could formally develop the sector and would have links to government. One of the objectives of the MSC and the Lead Bodies (which have since become Sector Skill Councils) was to ensure standards and quality through accreditation so the Animal Care College became associated with City & Guilds although courses were later accredited through the Department of Education approved awarding body LASER, a partner with the National Open College Network.

There are now many similar organisations modelled on the Animal Care College (many founded by past students and tutors!) but none have the range, experience, expertise or status of the College - nor so many successful students running their own businesses or employed by in the industry by charities and by organisations from Pets at Home to the smallest kennels and grooming parlours. They acknowledge that much of their success is down to the courses they have

taken with the College and the free booklet on careers in the animal care industry written by David.

The College also administered the Petcare Professional Register (now an independent organisation) for the sector for experienced professionals working with companion animals who have recognised accredited qualifications.

The College, as its contribution to the better care of dogs, launched two new – and free – courses to help people choose a puppy wisely and care for it and train it properly. It is a ‘proper’ course which requires thought and discussion – not a series of tick boxes and cartoons – which should enable parents to help their children to understand the responsibilities of dog ownership.

After forty years the time seemed right to pass on the College to a younger team and David was delighted to hand the reins to the very well established BSY Group as a stand-alone addition to their group of Colleges.





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### **The College of Media and Publishing CMP's Dave moves on after 15 years**

The College of Media and Publishing has said goodbye to its longest-serving tutor.

David Porter joined their team in 2005, and has helped hundreds on learners on journalism, proofreading and subediting courses. He successfully coached many of them for the National Council for the Training of Journalists Diploma and National Qualification in Journalism. Dave also served as CMP's head tutor and played a big part in developing new courses.

He is senior lecturer in journalism at Manchester Metropolitan University.

### **London Art College**

#### ***Gabrielle Marlow (Pet Portraits Diploma - D5) - A student's story***

I just finished my Pet Portrait course and enjoyed every part of it. It really has helped to develop the skills I needed to take my animal paintings up to the next level. I am already

receiving some commissions which are generated by posters, business cards leading to my website and word of mouth. The most rewarding thing has been that it has made people smile and even brought a little tear to someone's eye when they saw their beloved pet in a painting.

We always strive to get the 'wow factor' and when I achieved that it was the biggest enjoyment of making someone happy. Two of my horse paintings were accepted into the Royal Easter Show in Sydney and on top of this they both sold! This has given me the encouragement to do more. I hope to work towards an exhibition of paintings of horses in the landscape and have approached two galleries and both were interested. So now all there is left to do is lots and lots of painting.

Thanks Melanie Phillips for the great course and wonderful support you have given me as well as the London Art College for providing the opportunity to further develop my painting skills.

### **Foot Health Practitioner College**







The College of Foot Care Practitioners has recently relaunched as the Foot Health Practitioner College. We have teamed with a company called Clinical Skills R Us. The theory side has now been underwritten by top consultant podiatric surgeon - Stuart Metcalfe.

This raises the standard of training and I am now looking for further accreditation to level 5/6 (equivalent) to 1st year degree level.

We are also launching Fun With Feet, a programme for schools to teach children the importance of Foot Care.

### **Ideal Schools**

The ICB LUCA awards never disappoint... what a night. At Radisson Blu Edwardian Hotel Heathrow, Nicole Atkinson became our 7th winner in the Student of the year category. Scot van den Akker is now the first tutor to win Tutor of the Year for a second time, our 5th success in this category. Our Taxation tutor, Eszter Petrinovics, was awarded a Companionship of ICB, recognition of her amazing willingness to help others succeed. The Employer of the Year went to Michelle Smith, an IDEAL Ambassador, who adds another accolade to her success in practice.

There were other successes and nominations and we congratulate all involved.

### **NCT**

The New Apprenticeship Process has resulted in a dramatic change in the training of apprentices to meet the changing needs of employers, learners and providers.

Our courses can contribute to the End Point Assessment process. We can now provide training and support for Engineering NVQs through EAL.

### **Esoteric College**

#### ***A Gypsy method of tarot card reading***

Since the turn of the last century, the tarot has, to some degree, become much intellectualised. From psychology to astrology, many new ideas and interpretations have been projected upon the cards, and although this adds further insight into the card's meaning, it can make the card appear complex.

There is an intuitive and natural approach to tarot card reading that has been handed down from generation to generation. One of those methods is the gypsy method of tarot card reading. Over the past 25 years of teaching the tarot, I have added to this age-old system, which explains the story of each suit – its 'Song'. I was taught this when I was around 16-17 years old and it is magical.

The *Song of the Tarot* teaches ten cards at once so you hear the *Song* and not its whispering



meaning. Let's say that you have bought yourself a deck of tarot cards. You look at the example of a spread given in the booklet and now you lay out the cards and look for their meaning by turning to the booklet. You read each card's meaning; but in isolation of the Suit it belongs to. Simply put, you will never see its relationship and place within its Suit; the bigger picture- its Song!

Loud and clear, the Song begins with the Suit of Cups; Cups are associated with the element of water and water represents our emotions – how we are feeling. So, certain cards of the Suit of Cups can instantly tell the tarot reader if the querent (the person having the reading) is worried, deeply upset, has emotional problems or is happy, joyous and content.

Offering instant and vital emotional information, the suit of Cups quickly shows us how the querent is feeling, which builds a rapport between the reader and the querent, who usually says 'How did you know that!'

### **Oxbridge More Awards for Oxbridge**

Completing a lucrative year of wins for the distance learning provider, Oxbridge is closing 2019 with a Gold standard award for 'Best Use of Blended Learning – Commercial Sector' from the prestigious Learning Technologies Awards.

Recognising the organisation's Classroom Heroes programme, this week's win follows the biggest year yet for the innovative online college, which has bagged a total of nine regional and industry awards this year.

Considered one of the most prestigious events in the education sector, the Learning Technologies Awards celebrates excellence in e-learning, and saw Birmingham-based Oxbridge beat off stiff competition from the likes of Jet2.com (Silver Award), Calex UK & PSA Group (Bronze Award), L'Oréal, MG, Domino's Pizza, Capita and Govia Thameslink.

Going head-to-head with these multinational brands, Oxbridge received the Gold standard award for its Classroom Heroes programme. Launched in 2017, Classroom Heroes is a modern, blended learning programme that's perfectly pitched to teaching assistant trainees and the environment they work. The simplicity of the materials and the opportunity to apply and record the practical application of them shows that every aspect of the course has been well thought out and its effectiveness maximised.

Speaking after the win, Oxbridge's Founder and Managing Director, Matt Jones, said: "I am absolutely over the moon to have brought this award home; it's a huge accolade for Oxbridge and finishes off an incredible year for us. Hearing the judges' comments about how relevant and effective Classroom Heroes is to today's learners is exactly why we set up the business. We wanted to create a platform for people to continue their learning in a way that made sense to them. As a result of the Classroom Heroes programme, our budding teaching assistants now complete theory work 66% faster, feel 100% more confident in classroom situations, and employees want the programme as part of standard induction processes."

"But this kind of award doesn't happen by accident. We have an incredible team of writers, authors, tutors, and designers who put hours into making Oxbridge what it is today and to each



**Oxbridge**

and every one of them, I am sincerely thankful,” Matt continued.

This is the latest addition to Oxbridge’s extensive portfolio of awards and is further evidence that Oxbridge is paving the way for distance learning, gaining a notable reputation while doing so. This month alone has seen Oxbridge pick up ‘Small Training Provider’ at the ICB LUCA Awards in addition to Matt Jones picking up two big wins at the West Midlands Leadership Awards 2019 for ‘Company Leader’ and ‘Overall Winner’.

### **Premier School of Building**

#### ***Bespoke courses – the way forward for industry***

With full flexibility in completing the subjects combined with distance learning, our bespoke combined courses are a perfect fit for those with busy family and work schedules.

Each bespoke combined course is designed to further increase your skills and understanding in construction. The student simply chooses three single subject short courses from Entry and Continuing Levels to create his or her own bespoke combined course. This is perfect for those looking to develop skills for work as part of staff development; our combined courses are also beneficial to those self-employed.

From PSB combined diploma in Architectural Development to PSB combined diploma in Project Management, each bespoke combined course will give the student the right tools to a successful future in construction.

### **Write Story Books for Children (Digital Sea)**

**Abigail Groves** is a 23-year-old Sociology graduate from the UK with the goal of becoming a published children’s author.

Abigail’s idea was to write children’s stories while passing on her own experiences and coping mechanisms for dealing with anxiety.

As with most first-time authors, she had no prior knowledge or experience in this field of writing. She struggled with getting her ideas down on paper and into words that children would read.

While searching for courses on how to write for children she became discouraged by the high price of most training courses. Fortunately, after discovering the Write Storybooks For Children



course she was relieved that it was not only within her budget, but that it exuded trust and confidence.

Having taken this course Abigail has now written, created and self-published her very own children’s book called *Abigail’s World*. She launched the book in November which is already selling well through her own website and Amazon.

*“The story of Abigail’s World begins in book one, with the introduction to the characters and Abigail’s first adventure to put those worries aside.*

*The aim of the books is to provide help your little ones understand that it is ok to worry, it is absolutely ok to talk about them and that it can actually be fun to talk about them. As well as the books, we have a monthly newsletter that provides updates on our readers stories, tips for you, as well as fun exercises for your children to do.*

*“The feedback has been wonderful. I am receiving messages from people on my Instagram telling me they bought my book and their child loves it. Even a therapeutic coach bought one for a girl she was working with! It’s so amazing seeing young children holding my book and knowing they have enjoyed it.”*

**Abigail Groves**

## NEWS FROM ASSOCIATE MEMBERS

### HighGround

2019 was a challenging year for HighGround as we looked to establish fully our Horticultural Therapy operation at DMRC Stanford Hall (*The Defence and National Rehabilitation*) whilst concurrently consolidating our Rural Week programme at Bicton College, all whilst battling against a difficult backdrop of resource constraint. I am pleased to report that as a result of the amazing efforts of all those who have contributed to HighGround's efforts throughout the year, we have risen successfully to every challenge and can look back with immense pride on a wonderful year of charitable work.

Jane and Andy have worked tirelessly to fully establish HighGround as a key part of the broader therapeutic services provided at Stanford Hall. Our refurbished green-house was formally handed over to us in March this year and is now fully fitted with brand new, custom made, wheelchair-compatible staging. Together with our array of raised beds built during the summer, we are now able to optimise and maximise the therapeutic horticultural care we provide for patients. Since taking over the greenhouse in March 2019, we have provided almost 600 one-to-one Horticultural Therapy sessions and a further almost 40 group sessions.

In addition to working hard to integrate and embed themselves fully into the internal Stanford Hall medical community, Jane and Andy have also invested a great deal of time and effort into putting HighGround on the map in the wider local community. In this regard they have been supported tremendously by the 'Friends of

HighGround' whose efforts to publicise what we do and generate support and funding from both individuals and businesses for our work, remain a vital part of the Team HighGround's work.

Our Rural Week programme, which we deliver in partnership with Bicton College in Devon, has continued to go from strength to strength this year. We delivered 8 Rural Weeks at Bicton for 63 serving personnel and veterans from all 3 services – a 23% increase in beneficiary throughput over 2018! Feedback from attendees who ranged in age from 20 to 59, was once again 100% positive! We are hugely grateful to our key funders who allow us to do what we do within the Rural Week programme: Greenwich Hospital, The Soldiers' Charity, The RAF Benevolent Fund, The Royal Marines Charity and The Royal Foundation.

Last year I reported on our unique achievement of having successfully delivered a pilot Rural Week 'inside the wire' at HMP Dartmoor for 8 service veterans to assist with their rehabilitation. The initial trial was an outstanding success and we therefore conducted a further 'proof of concept' trial in March 2019 for an additional 8 service veteran offenders at HMP Dartmoor. Again, feedback was excellent. The trial results including formal academic analysis, have now been fed back into the Ministry of Justice. Whilst we await notification of the government's proposed way ahead (HighGround's involvement in which will be subject to sourcing new funding which will likely be challenging!), we were delighted to be approached by one ex offender who had participated in the first Dartmoor Prison trial. Now released, this veteran is being assisted by HighGround. His comment that "Your Rural Week changed my life" make all our hard work worthwhile!

### PETbc

**David Cavill of PETbc has been distinguishing himself in quite another field -  
A new mayor for Trowbridge has been elected into office.**

Having held the post of Deputy Mayor of







Trowbridge for the previous twelve months, Councillor David Cavill was elected as Mayor for the year 2019-2020 at a meeting of the Town Council in the Civic on Tuesday May 21st. *About David Cavill . . .*

*Throughout his life, David has spent time as a cabinetmaker, hod carrier, shopfitter, hospital ward orderly and mortuary attendant, eventually becoming a teacher, and for many years was head of departments in a number of large comprehensive schools. He became involved with the world of animal care in the 1970s, launched the Animal Care College in 1980 and with his wife, Angela, was headhunted by the world-famous Battersea Dogs Home in 1988 to both become senior managers, responsible for operations and staff training. He gradually became involved in publishing and writing (he has had several books published) and was elected a Fellow of the Royal Society of Arts in 2007. David was elected in 2017 as a Town Councillor for Paxcroft Ward, and served as Deputy Mayor of Trowbridge for the mayoral year 2018-2019.*

## ICB

June and I have just visited two of our outstanding branches; Devon and Avon. Devon, because they have the unique distinction that they were awarded LUCA for Branch if the a Year 2019, in the same year that their chair, Caryl Gibson, was awarded the LUCA as Branch Chair of the Year.

And Avon because Mike Johnson and his team won the first ever Branch of the Year Award, pre-LUCA but the glass trophy being proudly displayed at the meeting. Thanks to Mike, his support team and the members from the region, Avon remains one of the most active and successful branches.


At both meetings the discussion covered a range of subjects but credibility and money laundering were prominent. We discussed the latest information from HMRC that is tantamount to supporting ICB's call for our profession to be restricted to people who are qualified. Their suggestion that employees, or indeed suppliers, should be screened to ensure that they are competent and have integrity is a much welcomed development. I am writing a longer article incorporating judgements from a number of recent Court cases. This will be released shortly. It makes interesting reading so please look out for it.

## Royal Forestry Society


### **Winners make a poetic splash**

**Where My Wellies Take Me** competition entries have caused quite a splash with the six amazing winners announced today, World Book Day.

The response to the competition held by the Royal Forestry Society to help celebrate the 20th



Where My Wellies Take Me  
(Starring Jacob's Muddy Wellies)



If my wellies could tell you all the things they'd seen, they would talk about the places and everywhere I've been.




They'd tell you about the sun in the forest shining like a torch, they'd talk about the squelchy mud covering the path.

The sky is so beautiful, bright and way up high, I like the trees tall and thin when they're standing by.

They'd talk about the waterfall flowing fast and free, and the stepping stones bumpy and old when they were in front of my feet.

They'd talk about the blackbirds singing incredible musical notes, we liked the sound – marvellous. I loved that the most.

My wellies are super muddy now I've been on my walk, they've took me everywhere I wish they could talk.

anniversary of its Teaching Trees programme was overwhelming and charming with entries from across the UK. Read the winners here.

It was inspired by Michael and Clare Morpurgo's book *Where My Wellies Take Me* with the international spontaneous poet judgethepoet, taking on final judging.

He said: "I really enjoyed reading all the children's wonderful poems. It's great to see how they all realised the importance, as well as the dreamy fun, of trees and forests. And it's always incredible to see the many and varied ways they find to express themselves.

"The beauty of poems is that, like trees, every one can be different and yet equally beautiful. Keep writing, kids! I'm sure that from these little acorns, some great oaks shall grow!"

## **AAT**

### ***AAT Learning Pods triumph at PQ Awards February 28, 2020***

AAT Learning Pods, the new series of podcasts designed as a learning resource for students studying AAT Accountancy Qualifications, have won the PQ Award for Editor's Special Choice at the PQ Magazine Awards 2020.

The Pods were named winners as part of a prestigious awards ceremony, which took place on Wednesday 26 February at Café de Paris, London. AAT apprentice Bethany Duffy, who works for Grant Thornton, was named PQ of the Year at the same event.

Tom Clowry, Learning Services Manager at AAT, said:

"We're particularly thrilled with this award given that the Learning Pods series only started in the Autumn. The podcasts, which offer opinions and advice from key figures in the accounting world, received excellent feedback and to be recognized by PQ Magazine is a further endorsement.

"We're confident that the podcasts will grow in popularity among our students in 2020, allowing them to manage their studies with a greater level of flexibility and provide another layer of support on their journey."

## **MARINE SOCIETY COMING ASHORE**

Marine Society already supports seafarers who want to stay at sea and progress their career. Now we have new funding to support those considering a career ashore. The new Coming Ashore project will fund professional guidance, mentoring and work experience opportunities for seafarers who are looking for a maritime profession on land.

The issue of poor support for seafarers after their sea career was first identified in the UK as part of Project Ulysses. The project identified help for seafarers coming ashore as a key recommendation and sought to understand the skills gap and educational needs for seafarers wanting to come ashore. Marine Society's involvement in this area fits, with its mission to support the life-long learning needs of seafarers, at sea or coming ashore.

The Coming Ashore programme's goal is to identify and address additional skills and







experience seafarers needed when coming ashore and then providing a pathway to ensure they are suitably equipped. We have a number of industry professionals signed up as mentors, together with partner organisations who are providing a series of podcasts that explain the range of roles shoreside. The programme is open to all ranks and nationality.

***Marine Society Director, Darrell Bate***

#### **PRISONERS' EDUCATION TRUST (PET)**

Stephen Rogers teaches Functional Skills English teacher at high-security prison HMP Whitemoor. This month, he will receive the first Outstanding Prison Educator award from the Worshipful Company of Educators, having been named the 'winner of winners' out of last years' Prisoner Learning Alliance award recipients. Here he tells his story.

I served in the army for 15 years before becoming a teacher. I started out teaching in a college, but after a few years in the role I was disillusioned. I felt students were only there because they had been sent over the road from the Academy – attendance was poor and there wasn't much structure. Perhaps it sounds naïve, but my main motivation for applying to work in a prison was wanting to help people. I knew I'd be where I was needed, with people who had hit rock bottom and were at the mercy of the system.

If I can look a learner in the eye – someone who's doing a 30-year sentence – and smile, and listen – that small gesture makes a huge difference.

It was the guys I teach who nominated me for a PLA award. Some of them had mentioned they were planning to put my name forward but I thought, 'I'll believe it when I see it'. In the end 15

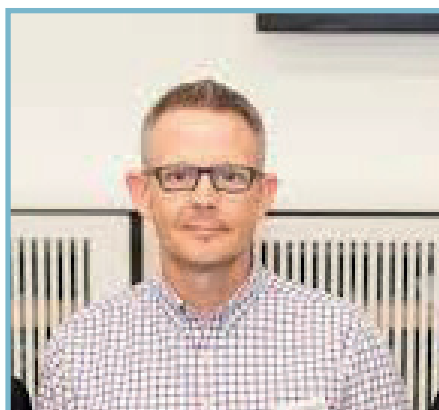
of them wrote in. That was a very good feeling. It meant a lot.

I was absolutely flabbergasted to be named overall Educator of Year. The extra award was announced as a surprise. I was sitting there thinking 'That's nice, whoever gets this deserves it.' When they said my name I felt the blood drain from my face. It was totally unexpected after hearing about the other PLA winners – learners, mentors, librarians – people who are doing staggering work in really difficult places. I was in a state of shock for quite a while.

Winning the award has definitely made a difference. I'm turning 50 this year, and it's given me a spring in my step. I've taken it as a message to carry on building positive relationships. Even if it's just a five-minute chat to ask, 'Are you thinking of returning to education? What are you interested in?', if I can look a learner in the eye – someone who's doing a 30-year sentence – and smile, and listen – that small gesture makes a huge difference.

I make a point of visiting learners while they're in segregation... It's saying: even if I'm talking through a flap in the door, I'm here

As a teacher, I've definitely realised that the most important thing is positive communication. In this profession, it sometimes astonishes me how bad at communicating we are – not being clear; negative body language. If you're a poor communicator the class will know in seconds, whether you're teaching in a primary school or



inside a prison.

I make a point of visiting learners while they're in segregation. The reason for that is to show consistency. It's saying: even if I'm talking through a flap in the door, I'm here and I'm bringing you papers and work and a pen, and I'll see you next on this day. This consistency, it has a massive impact on behaviour when they're down there – it makes things easier for the officers as well.

There have been times in the past when the pay check has been the main motivator. But the last three or four years have been different. What gets me to work in the morning is just being with the guys and having a good session. There are lots of times when someone has started with a lack of confidence in themselves and their abilities, there might have been behavioural issues, but through consistency and good communication and trust they achieve more. Then they've got the learning bug and you've got them.

I saw big men broken down... crying on my shoulder saying they missed their children

Not every day is a good day. It does upset you if you have disruptive learners. I am in a high-security prison – it's an oppressive environment where you sometimes feel you can't do anything right for doing wrong. It's also quite tough for resources – we can't have tablets, we hardly have any ICT. In Ofsted reports we get comments like 'You've got one computer, you have no internet access', but there's nothing we can do about it. Staffing levels also have a massive impact on us. We tell the learners – we're here every day, but there aren't enough officers to man the department, so we can't teach them.

One of the highlights of my work has been running the Fathers Inside programme. It's a nine-week course, all based on drama. We looked at parenting different age groups: choices; responsibility; homework; listening. There's an emphasis on 'good dad' not a 'perfect dad'. I saw big men broken down – saying 'Steve, can I have a quiet word', and then crying on my shoulder saying they missed their children. As a father myself I learnt every step of the way. It made me 100 times more aware of how I parent, how a small child views a big adult.

When you think of the bigger picture, you often feel powerless. But I love teaching. I enjoy learning from the men too – not how to cook food

in a kettle, but about where they're from, their religion, their lives. When you get engagement and connection, I couldn't think of a better feeling.

## **SKILLS AND EDUCATION GROUP (ABC AWARDS)**

### ***Essential Skills qualifications gives every learner a chance.***

While some learners find a clear route to higher education with little complications, there are some learners who require more guidance and academic support.

The Skills and Education Group Awards Essential Skills suite of qualifications are primarily designed to enable learners with few or no formal or appropriate qualifications to gain the confidence, knowledge and skills they need to progress on to Level 3.

The qualifications in this suite are:

- Level 2 Certificate in Essential Skills for Further Study in Science and Engineering
- Level 2 Certificate in Essential Skills for Further Study in Health Science Professions
- Level 2 Certificate in Essential Skills for Further Study in Humanities and Social Sciences

There may be gaps in learners' skills or knowledge, perhaps because their schooling was interrupted or disrupted, or because they are returning to study after bringing up a family. Learners may need to build a foundation of knowledge and understanding in an unfamiliar academic area to prepare for higher level study after some time away from formal education.

These qualifications have been endorsed by Open College Network Yorkshire and Humber Region and have been recognised as an entry route onto Certa Access to HE Diplomas **and as a first step academic progression route into higher education.**

Typical progression routes after this qualification include:

- Access to HE Diploma, then University
- A-Level study
- Access to HE Diploma, then a Higher Apprenticeship
- Scottish Higher

To find out more information about how these qualifications can be your learners' stepping stone to higher education, please visit our website.

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## STORIES FROM OUR AWARD-WINNING STUDENTS

**Sharon Rowe**

***Student with the Animal Care College studying  
Advanced Canine and Feline Care Level 3***

**From the tutor, H Briggs:**

I would like to recommend the above person for a special certificate of Merit

She has been an outstanding student, probably has produced the best work I have ever had submitted from a student on this course.

She was in fact overqualified to take the course in my opinion, having BA (hons) degree in communication, and having worked 20 years as a BBC Journalist.

She has worked in the Animal Care industry for the last 12 years and for the last 2 has developed her own, now very successful kennels and cattery. Her knowledge of the topics covered in the course is vast, and her answers to the questions were always excellent, very detailed, and presented in a form that will be useful for reference in the future.

The reason she took the course was because of the new regulations and her local authority needing a formal qualification for them to grant her a licence.

**Sharon's story**

*"I am 59 years old and took over my kennels and cattery three years ago. The new animal welfare regulations required me to gain a Level 3 qualification which I began last year. Half way through the course my partner left me and I have been running the business alone, seven days a week, no days off. So it's taken longer to complete the course but I am glad I did, doing so is reward in itself and I have gained useful knowledge for running the business and improving the care of the animals.*

*You are never too old or too busy to learn. I also have four rescue dogs and help with spayathons in Romania so extra learning about animals is helpful."*



### **Judith Payne**

#### **Student with HCC studying Conservation Studies – Countryside.**

Judith has produced work that is full of enthusiasm for the subjects being investigated. Her work communicates the information in an engaging and proactive manner that takes account of the relevance of these subjects to our current real world environmental situation, then giving an added edge to the tone of the investigations.

So it has been a great marriage between the learner and the source of study and I hope the assistance that we have given to developing her knowledge as the course has progressed. In fact her work has gradually developed into being superb - in communication, - research and presentation.

#### **Judith's story**

*The last time I completed any form of studying was many years ago when I completed my degree. I graduated in 1991 from Sheffield University with BA (hons) Sociology and Social Policy, and the HCC Conservation Studies course was the first time I have done any form of study since. My reason for returning to education was after being involved in a serious road accident with my husband, which kept me off work for 5 ½ months and gave me time to reassess what was important to me. Having worked in an office in administration for many years I felt it was time to consider whether I should be looking at a change in career, and the HCC has provided me with the opportunity to study a fascinating subject and look at different opportunities.*

*I knew that I wouldn't be able to commit to attending college on a weekly basis, either during the day or evening classes, so being able to do the Conservation Studies course online has been ideal for me, and being able to complete the course at my own pace, while still recovering from our accident, has been perfect. The feedback from my tutor, Mike, has always been positive, and gave me the confidence to continue to study and read as much additional material as I could find to gain more knowledge during each lesson.*

### **Dalia Abdel-Salam**

#### **Student with Oxbridge studying Level 3 Child Psychology**

Dalia has made excellent progress on the course, meeting all assessment criteria to a high

standard and always adhering to developmental feedback and resubmission requests following tutor support. She received two 'gold medal' images, for unit one and unit four.

### **Anne Davies**

#### **Student with HCC studying An Introduction to Botanical Illustration**

Anne started well showing a natural tendency to neatness and good observation, both a great help in this subject.

She kept up a good pace with sending in her assignments and did not lose the momentum of the course, so often done in distance learning courses.

Anne acted on all the advice given. I never had to repeat an instruction. Her research and labelling of her plant parts was both pleasing and accurate. Each subsequent assignment developed from what she had learned from the one before. By the end of the course the work she produced was of a professional standard. She should be ambitious in using and continuing to broaden her skill so that no task in this genre is beyond her.

### **Amanda Frankland**

#### **Student with Oxbridge studying Supporting Teaching and Learning Level 3**

Amanda has worked really hard on the STL Course and never gave up no matter what life through at her. She was juggling being a mum and volunteering at a school to better her life. Her perseverance was amazing! She never let anything get in the way of her achieving this course even all the current medical conditions Amanda is battling through.

### **Emma Harrison**

#### **Student with the Distance Learning Partnership studying Certificate in Commercial Management**

Emma completed the course in two years with an overall distinction plus distinctions in Estimating, Measurement and the Final Assignment.

#### **Emma's story –**

*"I found it challenging fitting in my part-time study whilst having full time job commitments. It was also a struggle with home life too as I had two children and one with a disability to look after. My employer VolkerRail did grant me a little study*



time during the week but due to my workload I couldn't always get the time to study. I found setting myself targets helped and I knew I could always ask my tutor if I wanted further clarity on anything I didn't quite understand. Even with all the challenges I have faced over two years of the course I exceeded my own expectations and that of my employer and received a Distinction overall in Certificate of Commercial Management. Receiving this qualification has helped me to achieve promotions in work and working towards my ultimate goal of Quantity Surveyor and achieving this in just 3 years. I went on to progress in my HNC and complete again to a high standard. Ultimately I want to achieve a degree in Quantity Surveying which I shall be completing over the next three years. I couldn't be a Quantity Surveyor without the knowledge and skills I have learnt from completing my course."

**Ana Munoz**

**Student with London Art College studying Chinese Brush Painting Sumi-e**

Ana has been working with focus and passion in this course. She has been very committed in

trying new approaches and exploring the technique following the philosophy of this style of painting and with amazing results.

Her work shows how much she has grown as an artist and finding her individuality into the style working continuously and always listening to advice and guidance. She is very talented and, in my opinion, she deserves to be recognised as a brilliant student and creative person.

**Jamie Munro**

**Student with the College of Media and Publishing, studying Google SEO**

Jamie always presented well-laid out and proofread work, and assignments which showed a comprehensive understanding and serious application of the principles learned in the course, while taking on direction and applying it to the following assignments, as well as implementing the applications at work.

**Nicola Haley**

**Student with the Distance Learning Partnership studying Certificate in Commercial Management**



Nicola completed the Certificate course over a period of three years with an overall Distinction, plus distinctions in the courses for Estimating, Measurement & Management, and also the Final Assignment.

**Nicola says –**

*Distance learning has been a very positive experience for me. The flexibility of distance learning has given me the opportunity to supplement my work experience with academic learning, while also progressing my career at the same time. It has also given me the confidence in my abilities that I never got in traditional learning by allowing me to learn at my own speed and in my own way.*

**Eline Staplehurst**

**Student with Oxbridge studying Creative Writing**

Eline is a mature student who undertook this course as a way of keeping her study underway. She has written some amazing short stories as part of her course. She didn't think she would be able to achieve this in the correct course time.

**Anna Shutyak**

**Student with Oxbridge studying Supporting Teaching and Learning Level 3**

Anna has worked really hard on the STL Course. English is not Anna's first language and she did not give up. She built up a fantastic rapport with the children she was working with and the teachers within her school placement.

Anna wants to go on and learn Russian, Ukrainian, Polish and pass the languages exams. This will enable Anna to help children in English schools who do not speak English as a first language.

**Jennifer Pawlak**

**Student with BSY Group, completing 15 courses with Distinction or High Merit**

Jennifer has been a student with BSY for over 10 years, first enrolling in 2006, and in that time has completed an impressive 16 courses with consistent distinctions. Jennifer hand writes all her assignments in her local café and using books alongside her materials to study. She says this helps her achieve such high grades. Jennifer

is enthusiastic and her positive outlook to her studies is inspiring and we are impressed with her approach and constant high grades. She has studied subjects as diverse as Creative Writing, Dream Analysis and Egyptology!

Jenny says of her studies *"I was searching for something educational, but not on computers. Something I could write myself, pen and paper. I think BSY was mentioned in our library and straight away it was for me. That was it I was hooked and 16 diplomas later, I'm on a break and ready to get started again in September."*



**Julie Humphrey  
Student with the Animal Care College studying Intermediate Canine Psychology and many more courses.**

Julie has completed over 15 courses with the Animal Care College over the years and has been a dedicated student covering a range of studies. Her tutors have always been complementary about the level of detail that she goes into within her assignment submissions and we are very pleased to nominate Julie for this award.

**Julie's story**

*"I love cats and dogs and simply love learning more about them. The courses I have studied with the ACC have taught me so, so much and I have used what I have learnt with my own cats. You cannot know enough when dealing with animals and through these courses I have learnt so much and feel more confident when studying. I love every course I study."*

**Chloe Morgan**

**Student with the Distance Learning Partnership studying Certificate in Commercial Management**

Chloe completed the Certificate in under three years, earning a distinction, with distinctions for her coursework and a distinction on the Final Assignment.

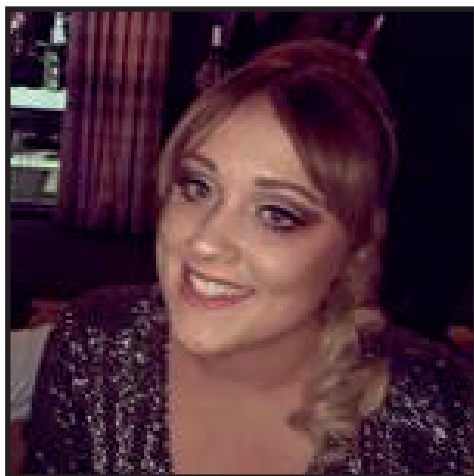
**Chloe's story**

*Straight from leaving school I started an*



apprenticeship through my local college where I completed a NVQ Level 2 and Level 3 in Business Administration. During this time I moved through various departments gaining knowledge in each which would help me to decide which specific way I would like to progress my career within the business. Upon finishing these qualifications, I decided that I would like to work within the Commercial Division, in our business. We have a Commercial Academy, which is a learning group for all employees completing a Commercial qualification. I decided along with the help and guidance of the Commercial Director and the Learning and Development Manager that my next step would be to complete the Certificate in Commercial Management through the Distant Learning Partnership. I really liked the idea of distant learning, as I would be able to study at my own speed and know that if there were any issues to arise that these could easily be resolved with the help of an assigned tutor. All textbooks and reading material was also provided through the Distant Learning Partnership so I was always sure that I had the information to be able to complete assignments.

During my time studying I moved to another department internally which also meant a promotion and relocation of office/site. This was a very tough time but I had full support from my former Line Manager, my internal mentor and also my new Line Manager. This move meant that I achieved the internal promotion to a Trainee Quantity Surveyor, which had been my goal since beginning the course. My main focus during the Certificate in Commercial Management was to achieve the best grade that I possibly could whilst working full time, I wanted to prove that I could



achieve my goals.

I have now completed the Certificate in Commercial Management with a Distinction and I have also achieved a further promotion to an Assistant Quantity Surveyor.

Completing this course through the Distant Learning Partnership has really kicked off my career. I am now looking into further Distant Learning courses that will help my career progress even further.

**(We have printed Chloe's story at some length, because it illustrates a valuable type of learning that is often ignored – learning vocational skills in the workplace, using distance learning materials and with the support and encouragement of the employer.)**

### **The Certificate of Merit is our way of recognising the achievements of some of our Member Colleges' most remarkable students.**

The Certificate is very simple and has no monetary value, but it gives great pleasure to those who receive it - one student said that he mounted his on his study wall and looked at it whenever he felt his enthusiasm for learning slacken.

The nominations also gives us a fascinating insight into the lives of our students and their motives for learning.

We would like to urge all our Members to look out for remarkable stories among their learners, and nominate them for the Certificate.

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## ASSOCIATE MEMBERS

**AAT - The Association of Accounting Technicians**

www.aat.org.uk  
020 37352468

**ABC AWARDS**

www.abcawards.co.uk  
0115 854 1620

**HIGHGROUND**

07951 495 272  
<https://highground-uk.org>

**ICB - The Insitute of Certified Bookkeepers**

www.bookeepers.org.uk  
020 7398 4440

**THE MARINE SOCIETY**

www.marine-society.org  
020 7654 7050

**NEBOSH**

www.nebosh.org.uk  
0116 263 4700

**PETbc - The Pet Education, Training and Behaviour Council**

www.petbc.org.uk

**The Prisoners' Education Trust**

www.prisonerseducation.org.uk  
0203 752 5680

**RFS - The Royal Forestry Society**

www.rfs.org.uk  
01295 678588

**RHS - The Royal Horticultural Society**

www.rhs.org.uk  
01483 226500

## LIFE AND HONORARY MEMBERS

**Al Vanden Akker**

**Ian Campbell**

**Peter Fisher**

**John Mercer**

**Christopher Middleton**

**Diana Nadin**

**Mike Rigby**

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## MEMBER COLLEGES

### **The Animal Care College**

[www.animalcarecollege.co.uk](http://www.animalcarecollege.co.uk)  
0800 041 8500

### **ATC (Accounting Training College)**

[www.accountingtrainingcollege.org.uk](http://www.accountingtrainingcollege.org.uk)  
0800 988 0065

### **The BSY Group**

[www.bsygroup.co.uk](http://www.bsygroup.co.uk)  
0800 731 9271

### **Careers in Travel (Digital Sea)**

[www.CruiseShipDiploma.com](http://www.CruiseShipDiploma.com)  
[www.HolidayRepCertificate.com](http://www.HolidayRepCertificate.com)  
[www.SuperYachtDiploma.com](http://www.SuperYachtDiploma.com)  
0845 643 8442

### **The College of Media and Publishing**

[www.collegeofmediaandpublishing.co.uk](http://www.collegeofmediaandpublishing.co.uk)  
07596 249899

### **Distance Learning Centre**

[www.distance-learning-centre.co.uk](http://www.distance-learning-centre.co.uk)  
0845 129 7238

### **DLA Ltd**

[www.distancelearningassociation.co.uk](http://www.distancelearningassociation.co.uk)  
0114 2326279

### **Esoteric College**

[www.esotericcollege.com](http://www.esotericcollege.com)  
01672 511427

### **Fitness Courses College**

[www.fitnesscoursescollege.co.uk](http://www.fitnesscoursescollege.co.uk)  
0800 781 6188

### **Foot Health Practitioner College**

[www.fhpcollege.co.uk](http://www.fhpcollege.co.uk)  
01553 768661

### **HCC (Horticultural Correspondence College)**

[www.hccollege.org.uk](http://www.hccollege.org.uk)  
0800 083 9191

### **Health and Safety Training College**

[www.healthandsafetytrainingcollege.org.uk](http://www.healthandsafetytrainingcollege.org.uk)  
0800 977 4007

### **Ideal Schools**

[www.idealschools.co.uk](http://www.idealschools.co.uk)  
0141 248 5200

### **iPhotography Course**

[www.iPhotographyCourse.com](http://www.iPhotographyCourse.com)  
0845 643 8442

### **London Art College**

[www.londonartcollege.co.uk](http://www.londonartcollege.co.uk)  
0800 3280 465

### **NCT National College of Technology**

[www.nctonline.net](http://www.nctonline.net)  
08456 345 445

### **Oxbridge**

[www.oxbridgehomelearning.uk](http://www.oxbridgehomelearning.uk)  
0333 222 4010

### **Premier School of Building**

[www.premierschool.co.uk](http://www.premierschool.co.uk)  
01244 311609

### **Regent Academy**

[www.regentacademy.com](http://www.regentacademy.com)  
0800 378 281

### **The School of Health**

[www.schoolofhealth.com](http://www.schoolofhealth.com)  
01453 765956

### **Write Story Books for Children**

[www.WriteStoryBooksForChildren.com](http://www.WriteStoryBooksForChildren.com)  
0845 643 8442

## The Association of Distance Learning Colleges Code of Ethics

Members of the Association pledge themselves to maintain the highest standard of integrity in all their dealings and, in particular, they undertake:

1. To ensure that any information they give about the choice of a career, the prospects in a particular career or a prospective student's studies shall be accurate to the best of their knowledge, and that any advice they give to prospective students and others shall be given in good faith and the best interests of the persons to whom the advice is tendered.
2. To take every reasonable care to enrol students only for courses that are suited to their individual needs and educational status, or for tuition for examinations for which the students are likely to be eligible.
3. To inform students in their prospectuses and/or enrolment application forms of the conditions on which they are enrolled and to include in advertisements only statements which accurately reflect such conditions.
4. To make fair regulations governing their relationship with students, and to treat equitably those who, through circumstances beyond their control, are unable to comply strictly with their regulations.
5. To provide efficient tutorial service, to maintain adequate and appropriately qualified tutorial and administrative staff and to issue to their students without undue delay adequate and reasonably up to date tutorial literature and instruction suitable to each student's needs.
6. To encourage their students to complete their courses of study and to do everything reasonably possible to enable the students to derive full benefit therefrom.
7. To issue only certificates or diplomas that fairly represent the instruction given and not to make any statement or to imply that any such certificates or diplomas are equivalent to a degree or to a certificate awarded by a recognised examining body.
8. To maintain the highest ethical standards in their publicity by making no statement in any advertisement, prospectus or publicity literature, or by correspondence or orally, that is knowingly untrue or wilfully misleading; and in particular by publishing no examination results or statistics or particulars of their tutorial service of staff that are knowingly inaccurate or misleading.
9. To encourage fair, dignified and honourable competition.
10. To ensure that all examinations and assessments related to accredited courses are administered and supervised to the standards as laid down by the appropriate external body.
11. To prepare and maintain a record of the working procedures of the business that can be readily available to a responsible person in the event of the sudden death or major illness of the principle manager of the business. According to the set up of the business alternative arrangements are acceptable. The Association is prepared to hold confidentially a copy of such a document.
12. To arrange for the Association to be notified immediately if such an incident occurs that might cause the business activities to be in jeopardy.
13. To ensure that their staffs are acquainted with this code, that they are given all facilities for complying with it, and are encouraged to honour it in the spirit as well as the letter.