

Covering the Future



[EDUCATION







Dr Craig Thomson

Scotland's Colleges Fife – Covering the Future

Dr Craig Thomson, Principal at Adam Smith College, talks to World Class Scotland about the role Fife colleges play in providing training to match the future skills base within Fife.

The University of St Andrews, Scotland's Colleges Fife and the private and public sectors are working together, via the Fife Economy Partnership, to increase workforce training throughout the University and the colleges. Particular attention is being given to the areas of retraining and short courses for staff development, in addition to attracting and retaining graduates.

"Scotland's Colleges Fife is the largest provider of training to the Fife workforce," said Dr Craig Thomson, Principal of Adam Smith College, and speaking as the representative for Fife colleges on the board of the Fife Economy Partnership.

"With a volume of 5,000 full-time and 20,000 part-time students, Adam Smith College works in two dimensions. Firstly, it introduces new entrants into the labour market from graduates of higher education who already have a developed skills and knowledge base in line with future sectors; and secondly, and very significantly, we work with the existing workforce and provide training by identifying and managing courses in areas where both companies and their staff need to update their skills and knowledge base. The programmes of higher education and further education therefore work hand-in-hand to ensure the workforce of Fife has a full and comprehensive skills set that matches the future economic need."

"Within Fife Colleges, the University of St Andrews, as well as the private and public sectors, it is very important that we increase apprenticeship and graduate training opportunities within the key sectors of the future. Identifying and implementing new apprenticeships and training courses for key growth sectors is crucial, and can be emphasised through our work with The Fife Economy Partnership by providing training for the renewables, care and the tourism sectors – as these are the biggest employers within Fife, said Dr Thomson. The care sector is a

crucial part of Fife's community and also has a large share of the employment market. Scotland's Colleges Fife offers undergraduate courses, in addition to craft and specific skilled programmes, and thus reflects consistency with the employment market and Fife's economy.

One of the Fife Economy Partnership aims is to make it easier to do business in Fife: "In order to be successful in business you have to have great staff with a comprehensive knowledge and skills base in order that your business can develop strongly in the future," said Dr Thomson. "Aside from training for existing companies we are also working with Business Gateway, which is a one-stop-shop for business development services, and is a great network for those going into self-employment – the entrepreneurs of the future, if you will. If you're going into furniture production, or new technologies and design and the creative services, Business Gateway helps to increase small and medium enterprise companies who employ up to 100 people and more."

The role which Scotland's Colleges Fife plays in contributing positively to the economy underlines how important education is to Fife and is enhanced by Fife Economy Partnership's initiative, Opportunities Fife. This is a unique partnership approach to tackling unemployment and improving skills. Encompassing a wide range of agencies, including the colleges, Opportunities Fife and its Employability Pathway supports those looking for employment or to access further education.

Scotland's Colleges Fife has the future covered. Retaining graduates into the local workforce who help drive forward and increase the economy of Fife, as well as offering flexible training courses for the existing labour market, means that Fife has a strong future skills base in line with its aims for a strong and growth-rich economy.

ADAM SMITH COLLEGE
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