

UNDER EMBARGO: not for publication or broadcast until 00:01 Thursday 6 April 2017

NEW ERA FOR VOCATIONAL QUALIFICATIONS AS EMPLOYERS RATE THEM AS EQUALLY VALUABLE AS A-LEVELS IN TODAY'S JOB MARKET

- *New research report on public attitudes to vocational qualifications and apprenticeships released by new 'super college' for vocational education to coincide with the introduction of the new UK national apprenticeship levy today, 6 April 2017.*
- *Vocational skills and professional qualifications needed as jobs in construction, catering, digital, finance and engineering are among the UK's Top 10 occupations for hard-to-fill vacancies due to skill shortages.*
- *Apprenticeships, professional and technical qualifications now offer entry routes into career paths leading to many of the UK's Top 20 best paid jobs.*
- *BBC2's Dragon's Den Investor, Deborah Meaden, announced as first of college's 10 high-achieving alumni as part of 'Have you MET your future?' campaign.*

To coincide with the UK Government's new national apprenticeship levy which comes into force today, a research report¹ published by a new 'super college' for vocational education in Sussex, The MET², reveals significant employer support for apprenticeships and vocational qualifications as credible routes to career success in today's job market.

The METfutures research report, which is being released as part of a new 'Have you MET your future?' campaign, reveals that when it comes to having the right skills over academic qualifications, significant numbers of top professionals across the UK agree. Almost one in two (47 per cent) of the UK's top professionals, such as CEOs, surveyed said they believe that vocational qualifications provide a higher level of relevant skills to many careers; one in three (34 per cent) believe vocational qualifications are as valuable as A-Levels in today's job market; and over a third (37 per cent) said they would even consider doing an apprenticeship themselves.

Of all 14-16 year olds in the UK surveyed for the report, one in four (25 per cent) agree that vocational qualifications are as valuable as A-levels in today's job market. And a further quarter (24 per cent) of the 14-18 year olds questioned believe vocational qualifications are as valuable a route to career success as having an academic university education.

While teens and adults aged under 35 appear to see the benefit of vocational paths into work, they seem less aware of labour market skills gaps and the potential for vocational education to help fill them than older age groups. Just 25 per cent of 14-16 year-olds and 19 per cent of 17-18 year olds agreed that the UK will have a skills shortage in the future and vocational qualifications will help to fill this skills gap; compared to 47 per cent of adults aged over 55. The research also found a lack of awareness around the new apprenticeship levy, with one in two (54 per cent) of 14-18 years olds not aware of its planned introduction.

Labour market data within the METfutures report gives insight into the **Top 20 Highest Earning Occupations in the UK**, based on median earnings in 2016. Interestingly, while many post-holders in these occupations may have studied for A-Levels and an academic degree, alternative entry level requirements do now exist, including apprenticeships, vocational courses and professional qualifications, The Top 10 occupations include: aircraft

pilots and flight engineers (annual median salary £100,776.00); air traffic controllers (£89,835.20), chief executives and senior officials (£86,049.60), legal professionals (£75,420.80), marketing and sales directors (£72,737.60); IT directors (£70,969.60); brokers (£67,412.80), medical practitioners (£66,497.60), senior professionals of education establishments (£64,126.40) and advertising and public relations directors (£62,753.60).

METFutures report data also reveals that jobs in construction and catering will be among the **Top 10 Growth Occupations in the UK** over the next five years, but also that engineering, construction and building trades have the highest percentage of hard-to-fill vacancies due to skill shortages. Quantity surveyors are top of the table, with 70 per cent of unfilled vacancies due to skills shortages, followed by mechanical engineers (69 per cent), construction and building trades (57 per cent), engineering professionals (54 per cent) and scaffolders, staggers and riggers (53 per cent).

Nick Juba, Greater Brighton Metropolitan College CEO said: “For the first time in many years a much needed emphasis is being placed on professional and technical education – whether through apprenticeships or college-based study. The demands of our labour market are changing and therefore so too are the skills and qualifications employers are looking for. As our College embarks on a new era of opportunity, it feels like the right time to address some of the myths and lack of understanding that often exist around apprenticeships, technical education and the career and Higher Education options they lead to through our METFutures campaign.”

A #METFutures social media campaign is being launched today on Facebook to encourage young people to envisage their future working selves and turn their passions into professions through vocational education and training. Supported by industry leaders from across Sussex, the campaign includes a film featuring high-achievers from the college’s alumni and some its newly announced Honorary Graduates, who include: BBC 2’s ‘Dragon’s Den’ investor and entrepreneur Deborah Meaden; Brighton Head Chef and ‘Masterchef: The Professionals’ 2016 semi-finalist James Villiers; celebrity fashion designer Gresham Blake; special effects Oscar winner Paul Norris; ‘Harry Potter And The Cursed Child’ hair and make-up artist, Alice Townes; and Aston Martin engineer Georgie Nunn

ENDS

Find out more about the #METFutures campaign from 6 April on **Facebook at @METFutures**

Notes to editors

1. The full ‘Have you MET your future?’ report is available for press preview. See press contacts, below.
2. The Greater Brighton Metropolitan College, known as ‘The MET’, was created in April 2017 through the merger of City College Brighton and Hove and Northbrook College Sussex as part of the UK Government’s recent ‘Area Review’ restructure of the post-16 education and training sector. A new Board and Executive team have been appointed to lead the College. It is now Sussex’s second largest provider of vocational education and training for 16-year-olds, full and part time courses for adults, apprenticeships, professional qualifications and university degrees. The college operates across five campuses in Brighton, Shoreham and Worthing and generates an income of over £40m.
3. Labour market insight specialists, Emsi, were commissioned by the Greater Brighton

Metropolitan College to look at UK industry, employment, occupation and earnings data in order to identify the following:

- Top 10 industries for % jobs growth over the next five years in the UK
- Top 10 occupations for % jobs growth over the next five years in the UK
- Top 10 occupations in UK with hard-to-fill vacancies due to skills shortages
- Top 20 highest-earning occupations in the UK, rated by median earnings

4. The MET has published an **online guide to the new apprenticeship levy**:

<https://apprenticeships-explained.com/>

A downloadable **3-page guide for employers** is also available here:

<https://www.hightail.com/download/dDZleW4rUzcxUUM1eDhUQw>

#METfutures film featuring industry leaders

A film featuring industry leaders talking about the value of apprenticeships and professional and technical skills in the workplace will kick-start a new #METfutures campaign on social media on 6 April here <http://thndr.me/GME0cs>

Images available to download - students and apprentices 'meeting their future' with industry leaders and MET Honorary Graduates:

- Trainee construction site manager <https://spaces.hightail.com/receive/g6zdi>
- Masterchef semi-finalist <https://spaces.hightail.com/receive/zmQ7y>
- Fashion designer <https://spaces.hightail.com/receive/ihzTs>
- Hairdresser <https://spaces.hightail.com/receive/0Rs7x>
- Beauty salon owner <https://spaces.hightail.com/receive/TNxUi>
- Plumber <https://spaces.hightail.com/receive/2Wi11>
- Music composer <https://spaces.hightail.com/receive/8oF2v>
- Theatre hair and make-up stylist <https://spaces.hightail.com/receive/HrnW6>

Spokespeople and case studies available for interview:

- MET College CEO Nick Juba
- MET College Honorary Graduates and Industry Leaders – download summaries here: <https://www.hightail.com/download/dDZHL0dEQzc3bURMYnNUQw>
- Student/apprentice case studies – download summaries here: <https://www.hightail.com/download/dDZleW4rUzdVbS81SE1UQw>

Q&A document <https://www.hightail.com/download/dDZHL0dEQzd5UkhMYnRVag>

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