

# Ewell's Nescot graduates prove you don't have to move away to go far

9 February 2026



Over 90 Nescot students gathered at Epsom Downs Racecourse on Friday for their Higher Education Graduation Ceremony, donning caps and gowns to celebrate their success with proud parents, families and tutors.

The event marked a major milestone for students who completed university-level qualifications while studying close to home, proving that higher education doesn't have to mean moving away to succeed. For many, Nescot offered the best of both worlds: small, supportive classes with expert teaching, alongside the flexibility to continue living with family while balancing study with local work.

Nescot partners with several prestigious universities including Kingston University, the University of Greenwich, the University of West London, The Open University and the University of Arts London (UAL), offering degrees and other university-level qualifications across subjects including healthcare, performing arts, education, art and design, teaching, management and sports science.

Guests of Honour on the day included the Mayor of Epsom & Ewell, Councillor Robert Leach, alongside Nescot honorary fellows Paul Nicholson, former professional darts player, and Jane Wilson-Howarth, world-renowned physician, author and zoologist.

Julie Kapsalis, CEO and Principal at Nescot said: "Our higher education graduation ceremony is one of my favourite days of the year. It's exciting and joyful, but the overwhelming emotion is pride. Students, who've put their heart and soul into achieving their qualifications, feel so proud of themselves as they step on stage. Families, who've often been there for students every step of the way, burst with pride at what their son, daughter, brother or sister has achieved. There are usually a few tears too, some from our incredible staff who have watched these students persevere, learn and grow and are now waving them off to careers in their chosen fields. Whether you come to us aged 16 or 66, Nescot is a launchpad and I wish all our graduates every success with whatever comes next."

Students from across the college were fully involved in the ceremony. Travel and tourism students welcomed guests on arrival, music students provided DJ sets and live music throughout, and performing arts students surprised the audience with an incredible singing flashmob.

Guest of honour, Paul Nicholson, gave an inspiring speech, telling students: "What you've done to get here is remarkable – you should be extremely proud of yourselves. But by being here you haven't finished; you've only just started. Your ambitions should never have an end date...with the skills and experience Nescot has given you, make our world a little bit better every day."

Madiha Mahmood who studied for a BA (Hons) in Education Studies gave a speech at the ceremony, including a thank you to lecturers, tutors and support staff at Nescot: "Your dedication, patience, and belief in us, especially during challenging moments, has made a lasting difference. You have guided us, encouraged us, and pushed us to be the best versions of ourselves."

Today is a celebration, but it is also a reminder. A reminder that it doesn't matter how long it takes. It doesn't matter if you fail at the start. It doesn't matter how many people doubt you. If you keep going, you can change your whole story. Congratulations to every graduate here today, we did it!"

No matter which qualification students are working towards, Nescot's lecturers and tutors are dedicated to helping them reach their full potential. Staff are experienced tutors but also have substantial experience of working in the relevant industry too. Student satisfaction is high, with National Student Survey results showing the college is "significantly above the benchmark" across all 27 categories.

To find out more about studying at Nescot call 020 8394 3038, visit [www.nescot.ac.uk](http://www.nescot.ac.uk) or email [adviceteam@nescot.ac.uk](mailto:adviceteam@nescot.ac.uk)

NESCOT



# A recipe for success - Dame Prue Leith visits Ewell's Nescot

9 February 2026



Dame Prue Leith DBE visited students at Nescot college in Epsom today, to share her experience, expertise and enthusiasm with students, including the next generation of culinary talent.

Prue, a chef, author and founder of Leiths Education, as well as a broadcaster and former judge on 'The Great British Bake Off', met students and staff and toured Nescot's award-winning catering and cookery facilities. She also watched students in action, chatting to them as they prepared some of her own recipes in the college's professional kitchens.

During the visit, Prue spoke about her incredible life, during an 'in conversation' session attended by around 250 students from business, catering, art and design, healthcare and media courses. The session, facilitated by Nescot's CEO and Principal, Julie Kapsalis, included questions about setting up her cookery school, her writing career, including her new book due out in February, and how she moved into broadcasting. Prue also shared personal anecdotes from her time on TV and highlighted the importance of healthy eating and nutrition, an area she has previously advised the government on.

Julie Kapsalis, CEO and Principal at Nescot said "Although many of our students know her from the Bake Off, Prue is a powerhouse business leader, an amazing chef, an author and an educator. Her career is an incredible demonstration of how with determination, resilience and hard work, one person can achieve across several fields. Our Professional Cookery students loved showing her their skills and I know they appreciated her advice, which no doubt they'll refer to when they're running kitchens of their own. Prue has shown our students that the sky's the limit - we're so grateful for her time."

Prue Leith said "Nescot is amazing! Truly professional, caring teachers and enthusiastic students."

As well as Professional Cooking qualifications, Nescot offers a wide range of courses for school leavers and adults, including Animal Care, Hair & Beauty, Computing and IT, Construction, Performing Arts, Childcare and Health & Social Care. To find out more about studying at Nescot call 020 8394 3038, visit [www.nescot.ac.uk](http://www.nescot.ac.uk) or email [adviceteam@nescot.ac.uk](mailto:adviceteam@nescot.ac.uk)

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Prue with Julie Kapsalis CEO and students in the Nescot professional kitchens.

## Epsom celebrity visits his old college

9 February 2026



**Joe Wicks** MBE, widely known as The Body Coach, recently visited his former college, Nescot (North East Surrey College of Technology), the place where his journey into fitness and education began. His visit to Nescot was filled with inspiration, energy and memorable moments.

Joe was warmly welcomed by Nescot Principal and CEO, Julie Kapsalis, students and staff to the college. He toured the

Nescot Fitness centre where Julie proudly presented him with a commemorative plaque, 'Joe's Gym' in his honour. He also signed copies of his bestselling cookbooks for staff and the college's Learning Resources Centre and was delighted to receive his original college lanyard and a thoughtful gift from the college.

Students from our Sport, Public Services and Foundation Learning courses joined Joe in the sports hall for an unforgettable workout session. Joe led the students in a fun and energetic routine, sharing his passion for fitness and wellbeing.

Sports students, Patrick and Nathan shared their thoughts on meeting Joe. Patrick said, "It's been a huge honour meeting Joe who's done so much for fitness, inspiring young kids at an early age and even raising money for charity. A good day for Nescot too." Nathan added, "It's incredible to meet Joe who's a household name and who's been to the same college as me!"

Joe's visit continued in the college theatre, where he took part in a packed Q&A session hosted by Julie Kapsalis. Staff and students gathered to hear about Joe's incredible journey and his time at Nescot.

Joe Wicks, who completed a National Diploma in Sport at Nescot in 2002, spoke warmly about his time at the college, "Nescot started me on my journey to education. The college helped me to grow and mature, and to be more independent as a learner." Speaking candidly to the students, he encouraged them to persevere, "Always try your hardest and put your heart into what you do. It won't always be easy, but never give up – give it your all."

Nescot Principal and CEO, Julie Kapsalis, said, "It has been a privilege to welcome Joe Wicks, The Body Coach, back to his hold college. His visit was particularly meaningful as his journey began here at Nescot, and we are so proud that his time here laid the foundation for a thriving career in fitness, exercise and nutrition. A huge thank you to Joe for taking the time to inspire our community with his message to stay 'Fitter, Happier and Healthier'. We look forward to welcoming him back again in the future."

At the end of the Q&A session, Julie Kapsalis presented Joe Wicks with a Nescot Honorary Fellowship, the highest accolade that the college can bestow, in recognition of his outstanding contributions to fitness, wellbeing and nutrition education, and his mission to improve the nation's health.

Nescot's NVQ Catering and Hospitality students also presented Joe with a cheque for £300 in support of his charity, The Body Coach Foundation. They fundraised by preparing and selling meals inspired by his recipes. The visit concluded with excited students lining up for a group selfie and reflecting on how Joe's message of resilience and ambition left a lasting impression.

To learn more about Joe Wicks' journey and his time at Nescot, visit our alumni feature on our website

NESCOT



## Epsom and Ewell College Principal wins Silver at National Business Women's Awards

9 February 2026



**Julie Kapsalis recognised for bridging the gap between boardroom and classroom.**

Nescot's Principal and CEO, Julie Kapsalis, won silver in the 'Community Champion' category at the National Business Women's Awards in London last night. Julie was also a finalist for the 'Corporate Leader of the Year' award, highlighting how the college brings together corporates, the community and students, offering young people exciting opportunities to shine.

Under Julie's tenure, Nescot has made business and community partnerships a primary focus, consistently opening doors for students. Examples include collaborations with the cruise industry and Epsom Downs Racecourse which have given students hands-on experience and led to new apprenticeships. Other students have gone behind-the-scenes at darts tournaments, hotels, museums, airports and at the Hampton Court Palace Garden Festival, while the art department has revitalised community spaces in Epsom with vibrant murals.



Julie Kapsalis, Principal and CEO at Nescot said: “Congratulations to the worthy and inspirational winners last night. It was great to win silver and to be in such illustrious company. The recognition reflects the hard work that goes on across Nescot, where we’re always creating and taking opportunities to help our students thrive. I love my role, which I see as an enabler, and being able to make things happen. I get huge job satisfaction from bringing employers and students together so they benefit, either through an apprenticeship, a placement or even just an introduction that changes their path.

“The joy of attending awards is the connections you make and the inspirational stories you hear. Networking is key and I love meeting people, as I know that each business, community or civic connection we make has the potential to change a student’s life.”

Julie established a Women in Business Network, which hosts local leaders from organisations including KPMG, NatWest, Ringway, Wates and Atkins Realis. This year, she is especially proud of a partnership that Nescot has formed with the Royal Society for Blind Children which has enabled the establishment of a new Centre of Excellence for Blind and Visually Impaired students at Nescot, meaning young people from Surrey no longer need to travel outside the county for a college education.

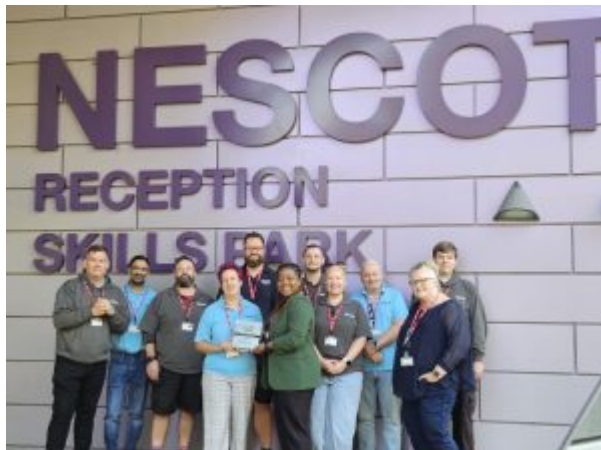
The National Business Women’s Awards aims to raise the profile of industrious, hardworking and enterprising Business Women nationally. The awards are made up of 23 categories and winners are chosen by an expert panel of judges. Find out more here.

NESCOT



## Epsom and Ewell’s NESCOT plumbs the heights

9 February 2026



Nescot’s gas and plumbing apprenticeship provision has been awarded a City & Guilds End Point Assessment (EPA) plaque for excellence in apprenticeship delivery.

Elizabeth Akinlaja, City & Guilds Business Development Manager for London, Kent & Sussex, officially presented the award to Principal and CEO, Julie Kapsalis and the plumbing team at the college this week (Monday 22 September). She said: “Congratulations Nescot, it was a pleasure presenting the City & Guilds EPA Excellence plaque to the apprenticeship team. This award is for their dedication and commitment in supporting learners on their Building Services Engineering (BSE) apprenticeship provision, which has resulted in outstanding first-time pass rates, especially in plumbing, an area facing significant skills shortages. Well-done to everyone involved for making such a positive impact!”

Learners on the gas engineering apprenticeship, part of the plumbing apprenticeship department at Nescot achieved a 94% first time pass rate.

The award recognises excellence in Nescot’s EPA delivery, which is the final stage of an apprenticeship designed to validate an apprentice’s knowledge, skills, and behaviours against the required apprenticeship standard. It signifies the high quality and standard of the college’s apprenticeship training, and celebrates the plumbing apprenticeship department’s successful and impactful EPA achievements.

Liz Crawley, Head of School, Construction, Engineering & Automotive at Nescot, commented: “It’s fantastic to receive such amazing feedback from City & Guilds. Our plumbing team work really hard to ensure the best possible outcomes for our apprentices and local employers.”

Sarah Keith, Head of Apprenticeships at Nescot, added: “I am so proud of the teamwork at Nescot across all apprenticeships. This award is a testament to the benefits of working in a strong team that supports our apprentices, employers and each other. It means that our students are fully qualified and industry ready. Well-done to the plumbing team, and everyone involved in apprenticeships at Nescot.”

The EPA Excellence award showcases Nescot’s commitment to apprentice success and industry standards and reflects the wide range of apprenticeship training available at the college. At Nescot, we offer apprenticeships in carpentry and joinery, commercial catering, gas engineering, plumbing and heating, electrical installation, business administration, customer service, team leading and management, marketing executive, hairdressing, early years, health play specialists as well as laboratory scientists.

Explore the range of apprenticeship courses available on the Nescot website.

**Photo:** (centre left to right): Nescot Principal and CEO Julie Kapsalis receiving the City & Guilds EPA Award plaque from Elizabeth Akinlaja, City & Guilds Business Development Manager for London, Kent & Sussex along with the Nescot Plumbing team. Credit NESCOT

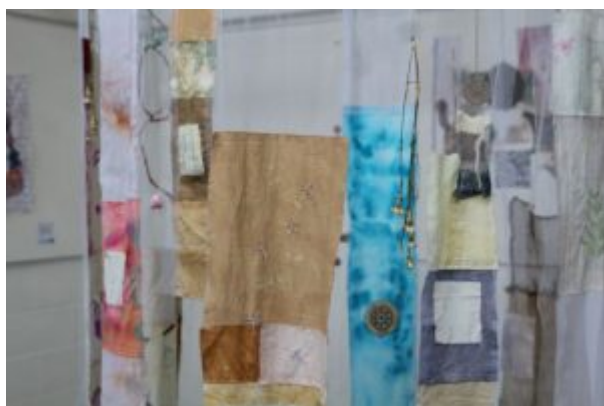
An EPA Plaque from City & Guilds is an award given to colleges and training providers to recognise their high-quality apprenticeship delivery and the success of their apprentices. The plaque highlights consistent excellence in End-Point Assessment (EPA) performance, based on factors like high pass rates and a large number of Distinction grades achieved by apprentices. It is also a recognition of staff dedication, guidance and support offered to learners.

NESCOT



## Ewell's Nescot student's work selected for Origins Creatives 2025

9 February 2026



Art & Design student from Nescot College, Imaani Zafar, has been selected to exhibit her work at Origins Creatives, taking place at the Mall Galleries in July.

Imaani's submission, titled, 'Mother Nature: The Voice of Amazigh Women Through Textile', explores the idea of civilisation and caught the attention of UAL (University of the Arts London) Awarding Body's curator, Calum Hall, amongst over 600 submissions.

Speaking about her work, Imaani, who has completed the first year of her UAL Level Three Extended Diploma said, "I made this installation to educate people about the Amazigh women. Their knowledge and practices are often overlooked, and I wanted to create something to honour their existence."

Sarah Morgan, Art and Digital Design lecturer at Nescot commented, "We are all so proud of Imaani. Her creation demonstrates her artistic voice with meaning and sentiment. We are thrilled that her work has been selected by UAL Awarding Body for Origins Creatives at the prestigious Mall Galleries. It is a fantastic opportunity for Imaani to showcase her work at this annual celebration of student achievement, connect with peers, industry experts and the public."

Origins Creatives is a free exhibition presented by UAL Awarding Body, offering an exciting opportunity for art enthusiasts, critics, and industry professionals in the creative sector to discover fresh, original talent. This event celebrates the dedication and hard work of young creatives from across the UK and internationally. Origins Creatives provides a platform for emerging talent to be seen and celebrated, connecting them with potential collaborators, industry leaders, and a wider audience.

The exhibition features outstanding work from students based across the UAL centres showcasing their talent across the UAL subject areas of Art and Design, Fashion Business and Retail, Creative Media, Music Performance and Production, Performing Arts, Entry Level 3 in Art and Design and Performing Arts, Professional Diplomas, and the Extended Project Qualification.

This year's edition of Origins Creatives will take place in person at the Mall Galleries in central London. The exhibition kicks off with an invite-only opening night on Tuesday 15 July. It will be open to the public from 16 - 19 July, alongside an online showcase.

The exhibition will showcase selected work created by students from Entry Level and Levels 1, 2, 3 and 4 across all subject areas. You can expect to see a diverse range of painting, photography, drawing, sculpture, fashion and more.

Exhibition opening times for the public:

- Wednesday 16 July, 10am - 6pm
- Thursday 17 July, 1pm - 6pm
- Friday 18 July, 10am - 6pm

▪ Saturday 19 July, 10am – 5pm

Address: Mall Galleries, The Mall, St. James's, London SW1Y 5AS

If you are interested in attending this event, please book your ticket at: <https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/origins-creatives-2025-tickets-1345097014379?aff=oddtcreator>

In addition to the range of Art and Digital Design UAL Awarding Body courses, Nescot offers a wide range of college courses for school leavers and adults, including Animal Care, Business, Computing and IT, Construction, Performing Arts, Childcare, Health & Social Care and Beauty Therapy. To find out more about studying at Nescot call 020 8394 3038, visit [www.nescot.ac.uk](http://www.nescot.ac.uk) or email [advice@nescot.ac.uk](mailto:advice@nescot.ac.uk)

Nescot student Imaani Zafar's art installation\_Origins Creatives 2025\_2

## Ewell students cruise to new careers

9 February 2026



Cruise industry giants have teamed up with three colleges to highlight the sector as an exciting, rewarding career pathway for school leavers. This included 12 Travel and Tourism students at Nescot college in Ewell, who have just completed their first Cruise Career Springboard programme, allowing them to dip their toes into a potential career in the cruise sector by visiting several incredible ships, hearing from industry leaders and seeing head office and shoreside roles in action.

The Cruise Career Springboard programme was developed and masterminded by Edwina and Matthew Lonsdale at Mundy Cruising and has been supported by key industry figures, who have come together to invest in the next generation. This includes representatives from the Cruise Lines International Association (CLIA) and leaders from numerous operators including Royal Caribbean, Celebrity Cruises, Silversea, Norwegian Cruise Line, Oceania, Regent Seven Seas, Cunard, P&O, Princess, Seabourn, MSC Cruises, HX Expeditions, Uniworld, AmaWaterways, Windstar and Viva. Former Managing Director and Vice President of Celebrity Cruises, Jo Rzymowska, an inspirational speaker and Non-Executive Director at Hays Travel joined the programme to mentor the Nescot students. Participants have also benefited from the wisdom of former Managing Director of Regent Seven Seas Cruises UK, Graham Sadler, and Debbie Dale, leading trainer for the sector.

The course, which took place over nine weeks and included students from St John Bosco College in Battersea and Itchen College in Southampton, also aims to improve diversity and inclusion, introducing learners from varied backgrounds to the wide range of on-board and shore-based opportunities. This could be anything from engineering to entertainment, HR to health and safety and destination management to deck duties.

This year the students visited six cruise ships and learnt about the product offer covering expedition, luxury, mainstream and river cruise liners. They also undertook classroom work, visited and heard about operations at company headquarters and prepared for a final presentation to industry professionals where they will pitch the opportunities for career pathways in the sector. Plans are already in place to embed the learning and experience into Nescot's future delivery and to launch a Level 4 qualification in Travel & Tourism with a pathway in the cruise industry from 2026.

**Julie Kapsalis, Principal and CEO at Nescot said:** "This programme is very close to my heart as a cruise addict – I've recently returned from my latest fantastic adventure. It's wonderful to share my love for this sector with my students. University isn't always the right route for everyone at eighteen, particularly once the cost is factored in. With that in mind, we aim to be innovative at Nescot, working closely with businesses to show students there are other exciting options out there. This includes apprenticeships and entry level roles which can be inspiring and fun with exceptional progression pathways. The Cruise Career Springboard has offered once-in-a-lifetime experiences, expert mentorship and the chance to learn about and try roles beyond the course. It's clear that the Cruise industry offers students a world of opportunity and we're working together to help them grab it."

**Edwina Lonsdale, Managing Director of Mundy Cruising and Cruise Career Springboard creator said:** "Many young people look at the cruise sector and don't realise it could be a career option for them, so we set out to change that. We want a diverse, enthusiastic workforce, both at sea and shoreside so linking up with colleges made perfect sense. I've been blown away by the continued industry reaction and how many individuals and operators have come on board to help us. We're incredibly grateful, as with their support, the Springboard programme can launch more careers than ever. I have also been struck by the enthusiasm and participation of the students – they have a great future ahead of them."

**Eva Williams, Travel & Tourism Student at Nescot said:** "Nescot's partnership with the Cruise Career Springboard



programme has been amazing! We were so lucky to visit all the different ships and have big names in the industry chatting to us. I was genuinely surprised by how many people work behind the scenes to keep everything running – whole teams making things happen without ever stepping on deck. I'd never really considered the cruise industry as a career option before, but it's definitely on my radar now. I love the idea of playing a part in helping people's dreams come true."

Working in the cruise industry allows young people to access a wide range of careers and utilise skills that cover a range of jobs and functions. As a global industry, it also offers opportunity to work with colleagues around the world and to travel. Many who join the cruise line industry might begin on ships, but then pivot into shore-based roles as their career develops, or family commitments make travel more difficult. The industry can provide a lifelong, varied and dynamic career.

Industry professionals interested in finding out more about the Cruise Career Springboard can contact Edwina Lonsdale – edwina@mundycruising.co.uk

In addition to Travel and Tourism courses, Nescot offers a wide range of college courses for school leavers and adults, including Animal Care, Business, Computing and IT, Construction, Performing Arts, Childcare, Health & Social Care and Beauty Therapy. To find out more about studying at Nescot call 020 8394 3038, visit [www.nescot.ac.uk](http://www.nescot.ac.uk) or email [adviceteam@nescot.ac.uk](mailto:adviceteam@nescot.ac.uk)

Image: Students from Nescot, St John Bosco and Itchen Colleges are joined on Silver Spirit by Edwina Lonsdale – Mundy Cruising, Mentors Graham Sadler and Jo Rzymowska, Peter Shanks – Silversea Cruises and Julie Kapsalis – Nescot.

## Jane Wilson-Howarth visits her Epsom alma mater

9 February 2026



North East Surrey College of Technology (Nescot) welcomed **Jane Wilson-Howarth**, world renowned physician, author, zoologist and an authority on travel health to the college yesterday. Jane inspired and motivated our learners with two very special talks about her journey as a published writer, and her love for animals in her fascinating encounters with the wildlife in Madagascar.

Jane studied at the college in the early 1970s when it was known as Ewell Technical College, completing her Ordinary National Diploma in Sciences. She was delighted to return to her alma mater, now known as Nescot.

Jane's first talk reflected on her career as an author and her time at the college. She spoke about how a letter-writing habit in childhood helped her writing abilities. She explained to students that writing is an essential and useful skill and emphasised the importance of finding your passion, "It doesn't matter what it is, if you're passionate about something, it will come across in your writing", said Jane.

For her second talk, Jane spoke about her travels in Madagascar and her fascination and love for the wonderful wildlife on the island especially the lemurs. Our Animal Care students, some of whom have been to Madagascar on a college trip last year were fascinated to hear her experiences and reflections – including being bitten by a scorpion.

Jane was also given a tour of the college including the Learning Resources Centre (LRC) that featured an eye-catching and creative display of her fiction and non-fiction books, a selection of photographs from her travels and various newspaper articles. Students are able to borrow and browse Jane's books from the LRC. At the end of her visit, Jane was delighted to be awarded with the Nescot Honorary Fellowship by Principal and CEO, Julie Kapsalis.

Julie Kapsalis, Principal and CEO said, "It's been an absolute pleasure to welcome Jane back to her old college as one of our most illustrious alumni. A big thank you to Jane for sharing her extraordinary career as a writer and zoologist with our students and staff.

"It's a privilege to award Jane with an Honorary Fellowship. We introduced the award in 2023 for the college's 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary to recognise excellence of former students and members of the local community. It is the highest accolade the college can bestow."

Speaking about her visit, Jane said, "It's a real pleasure to come back to Nescot. I was here from 1970 to 1972 and had a really good science education at the college and that gave me the confidence I needed. It's been so wonderful meeting and speaking with students today. I was so touched by the time and effort that went into creating the wonderful display of my published work in the college's Learning Resources Centre and the beautiful drawing I received of a leaf tailed Gecko by one of the students. I was especially thrilled to receive an Honorary Fellowship from Nescot. Thank you to everyone at the college for making me feel so welcome and for such a memorable day."

Image: Jane-W-H-Nescot-Honorary-Fellowship-Award-and-Julie-Kapsalis-Principal-and-CEO

# Darts mathematics lesson for Epsom college students

9 February 2026



Nescot (North East Surrey College of Technology) College in Epsom, Surrey welcomed a trio of darts legends and MC, Paul Starr to the college Wednesday to inspire students and encourage them to develop their mental maths skills. Paul 'The Asset' Nicholson, Devon 'The African Warrior' Petersen and three-time darts World Champion Mighty Michael Van Gerwen visited the college for the 'Nescot Loves Darts & Maths' event promoting arithmetic and numeracy, launching a college darts league and sharing their stories of determination and success.

Nescot hosted a full day of darts events, aimed at students re-taking their maths GCSEs. Nicholson and Petersen played a 5-leg match, then the players and Paul Starr held a Q&A and participated in a darts related maths quiz with students. Smaller groups of students later met the players in workshops on self-belief and inclusion.

The players also formally opened the newly branded Nescot Department of Maths. Each classroom now has a darts board and is named after a darts legend. In addition, Nescot launched a darts club and league, the first college in the country to do so. The inaugural Kapsalis Cup was contested between Nescot and East Sussex College Group, with plans to roll out a wider college league. During the sessions, all three players plus the MC were awarded a Nescot Honorary Fellowship and the day concluded with a 'meet and greet' for students.

The event was masterminded by Julie Kapsalis, Principal and CEO at Nescot, and also a massive darts fan. Julie makes an annual pilgrimage to the Lakeside World Championships and loves watching the sport, live and on TV. Having previously worked in sports PR, she also has contacts in the world of darts and reached out to them with the seed of an idea.

**Julie said** "Exciting and engaging students retaking their maths GCSEs was the challenge that made this day take shape. We regularly invite leaders from business, sport and the community to share their stories and when looking for a maths enthusiast, my mind turned to my own sporting passion – darts.

"The response from the darts community was incredible, after one phone call we were gifted boards, surrounds and darts, then the representatives of top players suggested an entire day of events at the college. We created a mini arena, and it was so exciting to see darts legends step up to the oche at Nescot. We're so grateful to the players, their management and everyone involved for taking the time to promote maths and inspire our students. Highlighting role models from all kinds of backgrounds and making learning fun are key at Nescot. I can't wait to see our students' playing darts in the classrooms. Game on!"

**Michael van Gerwen said** "It's great to see first-hand how Nescot are using darts to inspire their students. It's a brilliant way to improve mental maths, as the two go hand in hand. I love the fact the college is going to have a dartboard in every maths class too. It will be a fantastic addition, and I'm sure the students will love it."

**Devon Petersen said** "It was a pleasure to visit Nescot College, and it's so good to see them following core values and using darts to enhance their arithmetic. I have seen darts and maths work together in the work that I do for Bullseye Maths with young children, and Nescot will definitely see the benefits of using darts to enhance their education."

**Paul Nicholson said** "Seeing young people like the ones at Nescot College enjoying the sport of darts today is so good to see, and I have no doubt that including darts as part of the student's maths learning journey will only be a good thing. Darts is a sport for all, and it can be educational as well as fun, as proved with what Nescot are doing. Schools and colleges can only benefit from adding darts to their learning program."

Darts is a sociable, inclusive sport, which almost anyone can access. It can improve mental health by enhancing cognitive function, reducing stress and boosting confidence. It also improves motor skills, hand-eye coordination and problem solving. Importantly for the maths department, the mental maths involved in darts can improve maths skills generally, especially around multiplication and subtraction.

Maths skills and mental maths are important for many employers. Nescot welcomes students who would like to retake their maths GCSEs and improve their employment prospects before they step into the world of work.

As well as functional skills courses in maths and English, Nescot offers a wide range of college courses for school leavers and adults, including Animal Care, Business, Computing and IT, Construction, Performing Arts, Childcare, Health & Social Care and Beauty Therapy. The college has an open event on May 15th, from 4.30 – 7.30pm, where prospective students can learn more about the courses, campus and facilities. To find out more about studying at Nescot call 020 8394 3038, visit [www.nescot.ac.uk](http://www.nescot.ac.uk) or email [adviceteam@nescot.ac.uk](mailto:adviceteam@nescot.ac.uk)



Image: Julie Kapsalis and Andy Cowan from Nescot alongside Devon Petersen, Michael Van Gerwen and Paul Nicholson

# Watching out for tomorrow's film talent in Epsom and Ewell

9 February 2026



Creative Media students from North East Surrey College of Technology (Nescot) were joined by their tutors, family and friends for the premiere of their short film, 'The Watching' which was screened at Epsom Picturehouse last week.

'The Watching' was filmed on location in the South Downs in November by Nescot's Level 4 and HND Creative Media students as part of their domestic filming project. Written by and starring former student, Charlie McCarthy, 'The Watching', is a psychological drama, exploring themes of identity, state control and the human cost of forgetting, set against the desolate beauty of an isolated coastline.

Louise Gaskin, Head of Curriculum for Creative Industries at Nescot said, "A huge well done to our cast and crew. We are so proud of their efforts and hard work on this project which has resulted in, I think, one of the best films we've made as a department. Thank you to Epsom Picturehouse and Satisfied Eye International Film Festival for supporting our students, we were thrilled to be able to showcase our students' film on the big screen."

Abigail Partington-Moran, Creative Media tutor at Nescot added, "The students have worked really hard on this filming project and enjoyed themselves too. They've taken the early starts, late nights, cold weather and countless unit moves all in their stride. The project has given them the real-world experience of working on set, and alongside the technical film-making skills, they've also learnt team work, problem-solving and time management skills."

After the film screening, key cast and crew members involved in the filming took to the stage for a Q&A session with Creative Media tutor demonstrator, Alex Marshall. They included, former student, Charlie McCarthy, Script Writer and Actor, and Sam Gower, Actor; HND student, Hannah Lealan, Producer; Level 4 student Frankie Hamley and HND student Nathan Elford, Directors and Level 4 student, Amani McKenzie, Script Supervisor.

Former student Charlie was part of Nescot's Gold Medal winning Creative Media team at WorldSkills UK 2023. He said his inspiration for the script was the filming location, "I liked the idea of writing something satirical with reference to the beach. Everyone involved was brilliant and so dedicated all of the time. We had lots of fun making this film and I do hope audiences enjoy it."

HND student, Nathan, who had the role of Director along with Level 4 student Frankie said, "We all worked really well together, there were no arguments which was great! Both Frankie and I collaborated to bring together the visual aspects of the film. The whole production was very professional. The experience has given me an idea of the job role I'd like to get into."

"Even though it was stressful at times, it was good stress and taught us how to problem-solve. We have learnt a lot from this whole production. It has made us ready for the film-making industry," added Frankie.

HND student, Hannah who had the role of Producer said, "We were essentially two different classes, working together. We turned a challenge from never having worked with someone before into an opportunity to develop, work and learn from each other. We had lots of fun on set between takes which made the experience enjoyable."

Level 4 student Amani explained that as part of his role as Script Supervisor, he had to ensure there was continuity through the whole production from props to the actor's lines, to make sure everything ran smoothly. "It's been an amazing experience and has prepared us for handling industry-related situations. We are ready!" he said.

Nescot Creative Media alumnus and industry professional, Luke James was present for the screening. Addressing the students, he reminisced about working on a similar filming project nine years ago when he was a student at Nescot and offered them key advice. He said, "Filmmaking is a labour of love and there are endless opportunities in this industry. The opportunity to make something like this film is just so valuable, and you may not feel it now, but you should all be extremely proud of yourselves."

'The Watching' has been entered into the Student Short (UK) category for the 2025 Satisfied Eye International Film Festival

Nescot's Level 4 and HND Creative Media students on location for the filming of 'The Watching'. Credit NESCOT

# The real world visits the virtual world at Ewell's NESBOT

9 February 2026



Principals and teachers from across the world visited Nescot (North East Surrey College of Technology) College in Ewell, Surrey last week, to try out its brand-new virtual reality (VR) immersive classroom. Delegates from Brazil to Bulgaria and South Africa to Singapore joined a visit arranged by global education network ORT for a masterclass on artificial intelligence (AI), chatbots, and the use of immersive technology in education.

The Nescot immersive classroom is packed with state-of-the-art technology, including an Igloo (a pod with a 360-degree projection system), immersive room, vehicle simulators, and VR headsets. The international delegates were able to try these out and found themselves virtually transported to different spaces, driving diggers on a construction site, and exploring hazards in a health and safety simulation. Students from across the curriculum at the college use the room to gain skills and experiences they couldn't easily access elsewhere.

The visit to Nescot was part of ORT's Hatter technology seminar programme, where professional educators from around the world explore the latest developments in science, technology, engineering, and maths teaching and learning.

Somayyeh Clifton, Head of Quality Improvement & Innovation at Nescot, who led the masterclass, said: "It's been so fantastic to welcome delegates from across the globe to Nescot to share ideas, experience, and knowledge on AI. It's also been brilliant to give them a demo of our incredible equipment, which makes learning exciting, interactive, and fun. Working with other education professionals like this is so valuable, with different perspectives helping to inspire our work going forward. We're all working to give students the best education, which will lead to fulfilling careers in the modern world. Our excellent facilities at Nescot have been a game changer."

Leor Harel, World ORT Learning Development Manager, said: "Nescot's VR classrooms are a groundbreaking approach to education and immersive technology. This visit was a perfect opportunity for our group of global education experts to see first-hand a world-leading provision. We are delighted that our teachers will go back to their schools and apply the principles and learnings from their time at Nescot."

Nescot is a hub of innovation, with the Sussex and Surrey Institute of Technology hosting robotics, AI, and cyber security facilities. The college is part of the AI in Education initiative, with Principal and CEO Julie Kapsalis sitting on the Strategic Board. AI in Education aims to support and advise schools and colleges so they can maximise the benefits of AI and minimise the risks.

The funding to create the immersive space was provided from the Government's Local Skills Improvement Fund, a project which aims to support local people into work. As well as being beneficial for education professionals and Nescot students, the college is encouraging local businesses to get involved by using the technology to train staff. Partnerships with business and enterprise are invaluable for both parties, as organisations get to access cutting-edge training and learning resources, plus a pool of talented, experienced students who can enter the workforce via apprenticeships, work placements, and post-college recruitment.

Nescot offers college courses for school leavers and adults, with a wide range of career-focused vocational courses including Animal Care, Business, Computing and IT, Construction, Performing Arts, Childcare, Health & Social Care, and Beauty Therapy.

To find out more, call 020 8394 3038, visit [www.nescot.ac.uk](http://www.nescot.ac.uk) or email [adviceteam@nescot.ac.uk](mailto:adviceteam@nescot.ac.uk).

Local businesses interested in using the immersive classroom for training, or working with the college on apprenticeships, work placements, or recruitment should contact [businesscentre@nescot.ac.uk](mailto:businesscentre@nescot.ac.uk) or call 020 8394 8593.

# Epsom and Ewell College wins Surrey's employer of the year

9 February 2026



**Nescot** college in Reigate Road, Ewell, won “Employer of the Year’ at the Surrey Business Awards last night, against some stiff competition. (NESCOT stands for North-East Surrey College of Technology.)

The **Surrey Business Awards**, which took place at G Live in Guildford, is the largest event of its kind and the most prestigious in the county. Winners were chosen by a distinguished panel of judges, consisting of industry experts and influential business leaders.

Nescot has an annual turnover of £25m and is one of the largest employers in East Surrey, supporting over 7,000 learners and 500 businesses each year. The award highlights that Nescot’s greatest asset is its staff, who work 365 days a year (the farm never closes!) to ensure that the 60-acre site is fully functioning and providing high quality training and facilities.

Nescot is rightly proud of its work culture and its leadership, with 650 staff who support thousands of learners each year, but also have the opportunity to learn, develop and progress in their careers.

**Julie Kapsalis**, CEO and Principal at Nescot said “We’re over the moon to win the ‘Employer of the Year’ award. Nescot is a unique and special place to work and our investment in staff wellbeing and professional development is a key priority. We have an incredible community of dedicated staff who share our vision and work tirelessly, for both our students and our staff. This award is for them.”

Julie was also recognised personally last night with a nomination for ‘Businessperson of the Year’ as a result of her work both within the college and externally.

As well as her role at Nescot, she has been Chair of the Coast to Capital Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) for the last four years and on the Board for over a decade. The role helped to oversee £275 million of investment in the region which supports infrastructure, skills, heritage and businesses. For the past three years she also served as Chair of Catalyst South – a group of six LEPs covering the South East as a direct voice to Government. Julie is also a director, trustee, advisor and mentor and already has awards under her belt for inspirational leadership, corporate social responsibility and being a community hero.

In addition to the award win and nomination, Nescot was also a proud sponsor of the ‘Future Talent of the Year’ award at the event, attended by business leaders and guests from across Surrey.

Anyone interested in joining the team at ‘Employer of the Year’ – Nescot, can visit [www.nescotcareers.co.uk](http://www.nescotcareers.co.uk) or email [jobs@nescot.ac.uk](mailto:jobs@nescot.ac.uk)

Photo: Nescot team: Donna Patterson – Chief People Officer, Andy Cowan – Deputy Principal Curriculum and Quality, Julie Kapsalis – Principal and CEO and Sarah Watson – Chief Operating Officer.

## Nescot proud to sign the Armed Forces Covenant

9 February 2026



North East Surrey College of Technology (Nescot) is proud to have officially signed the Armed Forces Covenant at a special event at the college today (16 October). The Covenant is a formal commitment to those who serve and have served that they will be treated with fairness and respect, and a recognition of the valuable attributes they bring to the workplace.

The Armed Forces Covenant (AFC) was signed at the event by Julie Kapsalis, Principal and CEO of Nescot and Brigadier Ben Banerjee KHS QVRM DL VR, Head Army Medical Services Reserve, Army HQ.

By signing the AFC, Nescot has pledged to uphold its key principles and to recognise the critical contribution that the Armed Forces community make to our country.



Nescot has already been awarded the Bronze ERS Award for the college's commitment to the Armed Forces.

Julie Kapsalis, Principal and CEO of Nescot said, "Nescot is extremely proud to sign the Armed Forces Covenant and pledge to continue to show our support for the Armed Forces community, both as an education and training provider and as an employer.

"Indeed, Nescot's first Principal, Colonel Thomas Buchanan was a decorated army veteran of 'legendary coolness and bravery'. He was admired for his compassion, foresight, leadership and encouragement. In 1964 he became Deputy Lieutenant for Surrey, and was appointed an OBE for services to education in 1970. I am very proud to stand in his shoes today and to do something that I believe he would have been proud of and that continues his legacy."

Julie Kapsalis added, "We continue to have a unique role as an educational institution in providing opportunities for members of the Armed Forces to further their education and enhance their career prospects. We are also committed to being an Armed Forces friendly employer. We recognise the unique skills and experiences that members of the Armed Forces bring to our community. Their leadership, discipline, and resilience enrich our campus culture and provide valuable perspectives that benefit all students."

The event at the college included a flag raising ceremony by students representing our Public Services cohort, Leo, Skye and Poppy.

Leo, a student on our Level 3 Public Services programme said, "It's an honour to be part of the Covenant signing event today. I am interested in a military career and it's great that we get a chance to have visits and opportunities to interact with the Armed Forces here at Nescot."

Through our Public Services courses, our students are offered regular engagement opportunities with the Armed Forces as part of their training and also take part in the annual Poppy Appeal with the Royal British Legion.

Earlier in the day, our Public Services students benefitted from inspirational talks in the college's theatre from Brigadier Banerjee, Head Army Medical Services Reserve who spoke to them about some of the amazing experiences from his career, and from Ben Trevan from Nescot's Foundation Learning team and British Army Reservist with The Royal Regiment of Fusiliers.

Ben Trevan spoke to the students about his role as a Learning Support Assistant at the college and as a Reservist. He said, "I have been a Reservist for two years now. Although the role can be challenging, it offers a great sense of camaraderie. I have been able to use my transferrable skills from both, teaching and my role as a Reservist. More importantly, I am able to fit my Reservist role around my teaching job. I am very grateful and thankful to my employer, Nescot for their support with respecting my commitments and allowing me the time to train. The signing of the Armed Forces Covenant reiterates the fact that I'm supported both by the Army and Nescot, which are both a part of my daily life."

Invitees at the event also had opportunities for networking and were invited to tour Nescot's facilities including the college's cutting edge immersive learning spaces.

The event which was held at the college's Skills Park was also attended by representatives from the Armed Forces community and local organisations from: Reserve Forces' and Cadets' Association for Greater London (GL RFCA); 135 Geographic Squadron; Epsom & Ewell Royal British Legion; Royal Navy; Epsom & Ewell Borough Council; Combat Stress, Nescot staff and students.

More information about the covenant, including how organisations can help support the forces community, is available on the Armed Forces Covenant website.

Related report:

Surrey Scouts honour Armed Forces Covenant

Image: Julie Kapsalis, Principal and CEO, Nescot and Brigadier Ben Banerjee, Head Army Medical Reserve, Army HQ, sign the Armed Forces Covenant at Nescot.

## Government Minister immerses herself in NESCOT

9 February 2026



Staff and students were delighted to host Baroness **Jacqui Smith**, the Department for Education's Minister of State for Skills, Apprenticeships and Higher Education on her visit to **Nescot** (North East Surrey College of Technology) in **Ewell Epsom** on Tuesday, 3 September.

Nescot Principal and CEO, **Julie Kapsalis** and **Chris Muller**, Chair of Governors, welcomed the Minister and were proud to showcase the college's state-of-the-art facilities, courses, study programmes and skills provision. The Minister had a

tour of the Skills Park that included meeting students, apprentices, staff and the college's employer partners.

Upon arrival, the Minister met Creative Media student, Charlie who won gold at WorldSkills UK 2023, the college's new alpacas, Dolly and Florence (from the on-site farm) and Rhubarb, the assistance dog.

The Minister was introduced to students studying on Nescot's new courses in Construction Skills for Highway Maintenance delivered in partnership with leading highway maintenance contractor, Ringway. She observed demonstrations from students who were learning to lay concrete slabs and drive virtual diggers.

Supporting the Government's ambition to grow apprenticeships, the Minister met apprentices from the construction industry, from Ridgeback, Premier Heating and Watkins Cole. She heard how Nescot has supported many of the students through progression pathways and finding employers. She was particularly interested to hear how Nescot is working to recruit more women into the construction trades through role models and working with employers including Wates.

The Minister was shown the college's new state-of-the-art immersive learning spaces with virtual reality driving simulators and a variety of artificial intelligence tools offering students an innovative learning experience. The Minister also met Pepper, the humanoid and programmable robot from The Sussex and Surrey Institute of Technology (IoT) at Nescot. The IoT offers specialist courses and apprenticeships available in digital technologies to equip learners with the relevant skills in an increasingly tech reliant world.

Julie Kapsalis, Principal and CEO along with Nescot's senior leaders had the opportunity to speak to the Minister about some of the college's challenges and successes. She said, "We are thrilled and honoured that the Minister chose to visit Nescot at the start of the academic year. The FE sector plays a critical role in not just the training and education of young people and adults, but it is at the forefront of enabling social mobility and meeting the local skills and employment needs."

Essential to Nescot's success are the college's relationships with businesses and the community. Ringway, the Animal and Plant Health Agency (APHA), Epsom & Ewell Borough Council, Surrey Chambers and Wates had the opportunity to meet with the Minister to talk about their skills needs and work with the college.

**Lewis Bridgman**, Service Director, Ringway said, "The collaboration between Ringway and Nescot is a shining example of how local partnerships can foster economic growth and community development in Surrey. By investing in the next generation of engineers, the community is setting a strong foundation for long-term prosperity within the delivery of the Surrey Highways service. This approach not only benefits current residents but also ensures that the future workforce is well-equipped to maintain and enhance the region's infrastructure, contributing to a robust and sustainable economy."

Julie added, "On behalf of all our staff and students, I thank the Minister for taking the time out of her busy schedule to visit us. We hope our wonderful staff and students (and animals) have left a lasting impression. I would also like to thank our employer partners for their ongoing support and collaboration."

The visit concluded with plastering student CJ presenting the Minister with a sculpture of a dog made by her department.

Image: Baroness Jacqui Smith, the Department for Education's Minister of State for Skills road-testing the vehicle simulator in Nescot's new immersive learning space.

## Ewell Teachers who go further awarded

9 February 2026



The Creative Media Teaching Team at Nescot college in Ewell, Surrey, has been recognised with a Silver Award for **Further Education Team of the Year** in the Pearson National Teaching Awards. Now in the running for the coveted Gold Award, the team was selected from thousands of Pearson award nominees due to its inspirational approach. The tutors not only teach students skills for a career working in the media, but also shape young lives by partnering with charities and weaving issues like inclusion, mental health and awareness raising into their projects.

Recognising a lack of work experience opportunities for students, the Creative Media Teaching Team has partnered with charities to create bespoke projects. This provides students with hands on experience and increases the reach and impact of the charities involved. The team have initiated projects on Black History with The Black Curriculum, on suicide in young men with Olly's Future and on healthy relationships with Everyone's Invited. Students have developed videos on poems about race, have created animated films on mental health awareness and have produced video stills about toxic masculinity. The charities involved use these resources across social media and within education programmes to boost awareness and make a 'real life' difference.

**Julie Kapsalis, CEO and Principal at Nescot said** "I'm so proud of the Media Teaching Team, who consistently produce exciting, challenging, and impactful projects. They've been creative about getting Nescot students work experience and have worked hard to embed and champion inclusion in their work. Those on the course are offered real world, credible experience which will help them when they move into the workplace. The team are also moulding young



people who understand their community, have empathy, speak up and feel heard. I hope they'll clinch the Gold Award later this year – it would be so well deserved."

This isn't the first award the team has received. They have an enviable tally of success at the World Skills Awards over the last decade – 5 Gold (including 2023), 2 Silver and 2 Bronze awards – a credit to their commitment, hard work, and dedication to their students.

The National Teaching Award announcement comes as students, schools and colleges across the UK are today paying tribute to all those who work in education to mark National Thank a Teacher Day, which celebrates the whole education community and shines a light on the exceptional impact they have on shaping young lives.

**Sharon Hague, Managing Director of School Assessment & Qualifications at Pearson UK, said**

"We're delighted to recognise this year's Silver Award winners on their outstanding achievements. The contributions they make and the impact they have on young people's lives every day is truly exceptional. We're extremely proud to support the National Teaching Awards and mark the achievements of all our very worthy winners. Thank you for your continued work and congratulations!!"

National Thank a Teacher Day and the Pearson National Teaching Awards are run by the Teaching Awards Trust, an independent charity established over 25 years ago to celebrate the transformative impact of education, shining a spotlight on the pivotal roles teachers, support staff, colleges, schools and early years educators play in inspiring young people, every single day.

## Local college to drive student success

9 February 2026



From September, Nescot College in Ewell, Surrey is offering a new course on Motorsport Vehicle Maintenance and Repair with spaces still available for school leavers aged 16 – 19. An element of the course includes the preparation and inspection of a real-life Nescot racing car which will be entering high profile racing events around the UK. Student mechanics will attend track days at circuits like Brands Hatch, Donington Park and Silverstone to experience motorsport in action and keep the car in top condition.

The one-year qualification – the Institute of Motor Industry Diploma in Motorsport Vehicle Maintenance and Repair – is an addition to Nescot's well-established Motor Vehicle Department. It's a full-time course which involves a combination of practical experience and theory. Students learn on several vehicles in the college workshop including the racing car, and study systems such as the brakes, engine and suspension.

The course has been developed by a teaching team with a track record of success in national motorsport competitions. Students from other departments such as engineering, media, sport, and hospitality will also be able to take part in the competitions, contributing their own skills and forming a multidisciplinary motor racing team.

Nescot will enter their team, driver and car into the Student Motorsport Challenge which is embedded into the British Racing & Sports Car Club Nankang Tyres City Car Cup. The season typically consists of 7 race events which include 17 races. Students race against other schools, colleges and universities in the Challenge and also compete against the professional teams and drivers in the City Car Cup. Students will be responsible for the smooth running of the car and will attend racing circuits to experience motorsport, learn on the job and network.

George Keith, Head of Curriculum for Construction, Trades and Green Technology at Nescot said "If you want to be a mechanic or have an interest in other roles in motorsport, then this course will be right up your street. You get hands on experience in the workshop, and then at the racetrack. You'll be making our Nescot race car the best it can be, while getting work-ready and learning vital skills for a career, post-college. We still have some spaces available, so why not sign up and be a key part of our racing team?"

Julie Kapsalis, CEO and Principal at Nescot said "We're keen to offer courses on things that young people are passionate about and wherever possible, help them find ways to turn those interests into careers that they'll love. This is a perfect example, mixing motorsport with mechanics to create an exciting course which can set them up for a great career. I can't wait to see Nescot's racing car in action, and it will be amazing knowing that our students got it to the start line, with their new skills, knowledge and hard work. Then it's just fingers crossed for a win!"

Local businesses are being encouraged to support or partner with the Nescot race team. Sponsors already on board include LKQ Euro Car parts (which has donated new vehicle parts for the build) and Bosdog vehicle wrapping in Redhill (which has agreed to carry out the wrap at a discounted price). Sponsors not only support young people's education but may also have the opportunity to get their logo on the race car and attend motorsport events. Businesses interested in



finding out more, can contact George Keith on [gkeith@nescot.ac.uk](mailto:gkeith@nescot.ac.uk) or call 0208 394 1731, extension 3136.

Entry requirements for the course are 4 GCSEs grade 9-3 (A\*- D) that includes English grade 3 and Maths grade 4. Applicants must have a strong interest in the Motorsport industry. Following completion of the course, a successful student with this qualification may have the opportunity to attain a related Higher Education qualification or be employed as an apprentice within the Motor or Motorsport industry.

To find out more about the Motorsport course, call 020 8394 3038, visit [www.nescot.ac.uk](http://www.nescot.ac.uk) or email [adviceteam@nescot.ac.uk](mailto:adviceteam@nescot.ac.uk). More information on the motorsport competition Nescot is taking part in can be found at [www.studentmotorsport.com](http://www.studentmotorsport.com)

Nescot is holding a Summer Fair, where prospective students can visit the college and see the facilities. This is taking place on Saturday 15th June 2024, 10.00am – 2.00pm.

Credit for image: Student Motorsport