

Certification Success Story

CompTIA Customer Case Study – Stevenson College, Edinburgh, Scotland

The Challenge:

Three years ago the college started to experience poor student retention rates, poor examination success rates and little or no progression by students onto further study. The consensus within the department was that some of the current courses offered were severely out-of-date, having been in existence for over eight years. The training programme did not reflect the current demands for up-to-date relevant qualifications by students or employers. In a bid to turn itself around and become a centre of excellence in Scotland, the college felt the need to offer a significantly different curriculum, one that would give employers the type of candidates who had completed much sought-after professional training courses and exams. This would mean employing staff without the need to spend vast amounts of money on training them further.

The Solution:

The college felt the adoption of a vocational - orientated qualification would solve many of the problems they were encountering. By incorporating professional vendor-neutral and technology-specific qualifications within the new course provision, the college would be in a position to provide the type of training and examinations that employers would recognise. This in turn would lead to greater employability of the students. As a result, the college set up a series of new short courses in line with student and

local employers' suggestions, increased the provision of vendor qualifications in the existing curriculum, and begun developing a new framework in conjunction with the Scottish Qualifications Authority. The new course framework gave students the ability to study in a fashion suitable to their needs while also providing a good qualification upon which they could base further study. Part of the new course framework was to involve the CompTIA set of qualifications.

"It was crucial to include a vendor-neutral entry-level qualification, which would provide a good foundation for students before they progressed to more complex vendor specific qualifications. The CompTIA set of certifications will not only provide this, but also give the department good quality teaching materials and assessments, within a proven curricula," said Mike Smith, Programme Leader, Stevenson College Edinburgh.

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About CompTIA

CompTIA is a global trade association representing the business interest of the information technology industry. For more than 22 years CompTIA has provided research, networking and partnering opportunities to its 20,000 members in 102 countries. The association is involved in developing standards and best practices, and influencing the political, economic and educational arenas that impact IT worldwide. More information is available at www.comptia.org.



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Implementation:

It was important to incorporate a course that would allow students to progress onto higher education. Stand-alone and traditional qualifications were looked at, but ultimately, it was felt that the CompTIA set of certifications fitted the bill exactly. In the opinion of the college, incorporating CompTIA certifications in to the new course framework provided various benefits to the student, including:

- CompTIA qualifications are vendor-neutral, providing the widest overview to the student without entering into the complexities of any single vendor.
- The CompTIA certifications provide a solid foundation to more complex vendor-specific qualifications and other higher education courses.
- The CompTIA qualifications were equally suitable for both student and employer. Each unit is self-contained thereby offering a high degree of flexibility. Attendance can therefore vary from full-time through to part-time and evening courses.
- CompTIA courses are recognised by industry around the globe, offering graduates a reliable and suitable qualification.
- Academic credit could be given to candidates already in possession of professional vendor qualifications such as CompTIA.

The Scottish Qualifications Authority manages the HNC and HND products in Scotland. The HNC/D Internetworking is designed to allow centres to integrate a range of vendor programmes where they feel this adds value to the student experience. The SQA was pleased to incorporate the positive experience of Stevenson College into the development of this programme.

Results:

The success of the framework with vendor qualifications has meant that Stevenson College Edinburgh is now one of the single largest sources of students to the BSc level networking course at the local University. Currently 77% of students in the course have applied to study at university. Feedback from prospective students and employers has also been extremely positive, with local employers commenting that the new course programme meets the current industry shortage.

Success rates have risen to 83%. This is an increase of 26% over a three-year period, due in part to the incorporation of professional qualifications. A pilot running of the CompTIA A+® course, as an evening class, has seen 14 students successfully complete the one-year program. The inclusion of a large number of vendor qualifications in the new course framework aims to improve the student experience. The CompTIA A+, Network+®, i-Net+® and Server+™ qualifications provide the basis for further success and continued growth in this area.



"Having wanted to re-enter the field of IT after a few years, I found that my skills set was somewhat out of date. Enrolling in the CompTIA A+ course has proved to me that anyone of any age can successfully re-train themselves with up-to-date certifications. CompTIA certification is industry recognised and I feel it will stand me in good stead for future employment within the IT industry," said Graham Paton (55 year old student in the A+ course).

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