

The Power of SQA Advanced Qualifications



St David's College - Design and Technology

St David's College is a small secondary independent school in North Wales, with exceptional dyslexia and learning support provision. Since being founded in 1965, the school has pioneered teaching that enables pupils to reach their full potential. St David's has a highly regarded Design and Technology Department that is valued by employers and universities alike — many students go directly into employment or higher education to pursue Design/Engineering careers.



St David's College

— Est. 1965 —

St David's introduced AutoCAD (Computer-Aided Design) in the late 1980s when the software was fairly new. The school developed educational courses, and their own curriculum and certificate in the absence of any formal existing qualifications. The school sold these to local industrial firms and higher education institutions and over the years has continued to pioneer CAD education experimenting with a wide range of software.



Delivering the SQA Advanced Certificate in Computer Aided Draughting and Design

St David's has been delivering Level 3 CAD qualifications for a number of years, but these are due to be withdrawn in 2023, leaving a significant gap in their portfolio. When we launched our SQA Advanced Certificate in CADD (Computer Aided Draughting and Design) in England and Wales, the school was quick to come on board and has been delivering this course since early 2020. SQA Advanced Qualifications are globally recognised higher education qualifications at Certificate and Diploma level, developed in partnership with colleges, universities and industry, and specifically designed to meet the requirements of education professionals and the skills needs of employers.

Martin O'Leary, Head of Department praises the SQA onboarding process 'The approvals process was excellent and well supported. As a 'newbie' I have a lot of contact with SQA and have to admit that the service is excellent.'

He goes on to explain that the SQA Advanced Certificate in CADD has helped to elevate the study requirements for his students. 'The units that we deliver are diverse and the level is demanding. I also like the fact that we have the freedom to develop the units as we progress, and I will be doing this once I have become settled into the course. Universities and employers also like the qualification, and I am looking forward to working with them as our syllabus develops.'

In addition to our simple onboarding process, we also provide our centres with a wide variety of support materials for our Advanced Certificates and Diplomas, providing detailed guidance on a range of topics.



A route to employment or further study

The school has set itself apart by offering this level of qualification in the secondary sector (ages 16–18). The qualification enables students to go directly into employment based on their experience, helping to meet local skills needs. SQA Advanced Certificates also enable progression to relevant university courses and can allow direct entry into second year of an undergraduate degree. Two of the school's students were recently offered unconditional offers by universities — which demonstrates the value of the qualification.

Martin and the school are keen to make the most of these relationships moving forward. 'It is my aim,' he says, 'as the course progresses and we develop units that meet the needs of our students, to forge relationships with our main 'feeder' Higher Education (HE) establishments to establish best working practices and appropriate technologies.'

“ It has been a pleasure working alongside St David's College over the past few years, in particular Martin who has led on SQA delivery. He is extremely knowledgeable in his subject area, but also immensely passionate and that shows in the quality of the students' work. At SQA we pride ourselves on our customer service; there's no struggle for our centres to not only speak with an SQA contact, but to someone who they have been able to build a relationship with, who understands their needs and future plans and will help them to achieve those goals. To see our HE level qualifications being delivered in a 'non-typical' HE setting demonstrates the flexibility and adaptability of our provision. It is so encouraging that industry not only values these qualifications, but that the students also come out with real-world skills to help them build their future careers.”

Tammy Willett, Regional Manager at SQA

Future plans

St David's continues to go from strength to strength in Design and Technology - the school has introduced Virtual Reality (VR) into its CADD courses and will be developing this as the technology advances. The department has also been beta-testing augmented reality software for an external software house and will be integrating this software into its CADD curriculum.

'We are keen to work with local industries,' Martin adds, 'both to educate them in the use of new technologies and to develop strong partnerships. We often work on 'live' collaborative projects with industrial partners throughout the UK and this is an area that we will further develop over the coming years.'

SQA offers Advanced Certificates and Diplomas in a wide range of subjects. Visit www.sqa.org.uk/advanced to find out how SQA Advanced Qualifications could enhance your portfolio.

