

STUDENTS MANAGE THE HOLIDAY INN HOTEL!

The Holiday Inn Hotel in Eastleigh was part of an exciting project last weekend with 70 Eastleigh College Hospitality and Catering students running the hotel for two days on Friday 15th and Saturday 16th January. The students took over the entire hotel, managing all the departments including housekeeping, front office and catering.

This exciting and unique project allowed first, second and third year catering and hospitality students to experience the pressures, challenges and rewards of working in a 4* hotel. Students went through a rigorous interview process with the hotel management before being selected for their roles and undertaking an induction programme. They filled a variety of senior and team roles including General Manager, Duty Manager, Head Chef, Bar Assistant, Commis Chef, Receptionist and many more. Students managed all areas of the hotel, along with some hotel staff who were on hand for support, ensuring the smooth running of reception, check-in, the restaurant, and events that were taking place including some conferences and the hotel staff's Christmas party of 60 people.

Level 2 Hospitality and Catering student Carmen Delmanin worked as Reception Team Leader, undertaking tasks such as checking in customers and ordering taxis for the guests. She commented, "It's been great fun working on reception. I like working with people, and it's useful learning how different people react to scenarios and how to deal with them in the best way."

Jack Bryant, Level 3 Hospitality and Catering, worked as Head Chef for the day. Jack wants to open his own restaurant, so learning how the kitchen works was really beneficial to him: "Today I have been writing menus and leading the team in the kitchen. I've also been

ordering food, which is something I've never done before. I shadowed the Head Chef here who showed me how the process works.”

Alastair Lawson, General Manager at the Holiday Inn, was pleased with how the takeover went. “It’s going very well”, there’s lots going on at the hotel to keep the students occupied with five conferences taking place.” Alastair explained how the process had differed slightly from the event last year, when students took over the hotel for the first time in January 2015: “Last year was a huge success, but this year we wanted the students to have an advance knowledge of the roles they would be doing, so each student came for an induction shift prior to the takeover.”

“The most important thing that students should take from this experience is the understanding of the whole employment process. It’s not just about the event – it’s about writing an application and a CV, coming for an interview and selling yourself to the employer. The whole experience will help set them up for future employment.”

Alastair was impressed with Level 3 student Dan Lipscombe, who had taken over Alastair’s job as General Manager for the day. Commenting on the experience, Dan said, “The way a hotel runs is very different to how you would expect – there’s lots of planning and strategy to think about, as well as making sure the hotel runs smoothly by auditing rooms and making inspections.”

Sue Lyons, Hospitality and Catering lecturer at Eastleigh College, was pleased with the performance of the students. She said, “The students are all in good spirits and are enjoying working in the departments they wanted. This experience ticks a lot of boxes for them in terms of working in a real industry environment and learning to work together. A lot of them are doing job roles such as reception, reservations, and housekeeping, which is completely

different to what we do in college. It opens their minds and exposes them to a range of job roles they may wish to pursue.”

For more information on the range of Hospitality and Catering programmes on offer at Eastleigh College visit www.eastleigh.ac.uk.