

Cambridge-based National Extension College appoints new Chief Executive



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The National Extension College (NEC) – one of the UK’s longest-established providers of distance learning – has appointed Esther Chesterman as its new Chief Executive. She takes over from Ros Morpeth OBE, who led the organisation over three decades. NEC has based in Cambridge for nearly 60 years.

Esther has an impressive track record of leadership in education and training, spanning more than 20 years. She brings to the NEC experience in corporate governance, change management, quality assurance, online learning systems, international assessment and turnaround business strategies.

After completing an undergraduate degree and masters in law Esther spent the early part of her career in retail management, training and development. She managed and owned (from 2004-2010) The Profile Partnership – a work-based training provider that delivered NVQs and apprenticeships across East Anglia.

Esther then spent five years as Access to HE manager and quality lead at Cambridge Regional College. She also taught GCSEs and A levels in law and business, and oversaw the quality of the College’s international programme.

Moving to Cambridge Assessment International Education (which is part of the University of Cambridge) she managed the development, quality and assessment of a suite of teaching and learning diplomas for over 13,000 schools in around 62 countries.

In 2018 Esther joined NCC Education – an awarding body specialising in computing and business qualifications. As general manager she was responsible for a network of 180 partner centres in 60 countries. The organisation was awarded exporter of the year (in 2019) by the Federation of Awarding Bodies.

Esther is committed to improving access to education for all, particularly people from marginalised groups. She is on the board of trustees of the Global Girl Project, a charity that mobilises young women around the globe to achieve social change through community development and social action. She is currently supporting the organisation with fundraising for a new online programme and, together with her daughter, raised £1000 by walking 500 miles over a month.

She says: "What attracted me to the National Extension College was its commitment to widening participation and how distance learning can reach people who would otherwise not be able to benefit from education. One of my initial challenges will be how to meet the needs of learners post pandemic at a time of economic hardship and social disruption."

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