

# **WEC**

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**ENGINEERING ACADEMY**

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## **WEC GROUP APPRENTICE HANDBOOK FOR LEARNERS**






INTEGRITY

EXCELLENCE

POSITIVITY

TEAMWORK

SAFETY



***“DEVELOPING  
THE NEXT  
GENERATION OF  
WORLD CLASS  
ENGINEERS”***

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# WELCOME TO WEC GROUP

This handbook provides a useful guide to everything you need to know about your Apprenticeship at WEC Group and your journey as a learner, as well as containing information on getting the most out of your apprenticeship.

## STATEMENT FROM WEC GROUP'S MANAGING DIRECTOR, STEVE HARTLEY

I am delighted to extend a warm welcome to each of you as you join the WEC Engineering Academy — a place of innovation, learning, and growth.

Having once stood in your shoes, I understand the excitement and anticipation that come with starting your journey as an apprentice. My own career began in the very same way as an apprentice welder fabricator some years ago, and I can assure you that the path you've chosen holds immense potential.

The WEC Group has always believed in the power of apprenticeships, recognising them as a foundation for exceptional careers. As Managing Director, I am proud to lead an organisation that values hands-on experience, teamwork, and a dedication to achieving excellence in engineering.

Throughout your time here, you'll have the chance to learn from seasoned engineers, work on real-world projects, and contribute to the success of the company. Embrace every challenge, ask questions, and never stop learning — your future is in your hands.

I look forward to watching each of you flourish and become the next generation of world class engineers. Welcome to the WEC Engineering Academy, and here's to a bright future ahead!



**Steve Hartley,**  
Managing Director

## WEC GROUP OVERVIEW

**Established for over 40 years, WEC Group have grown from a small welding & fabrication shop operating from a makeshift shed in Darwen, Lancashire to one of the largest contract manufacturing companies in Europe.**

With over 850+ staff across Lancashire, Merseyside, Yorkshire and the West Midlands, WEC Group now comprises of 14 manufacturing companies specialising in individual areas of engineering & fabrication.

WEC Group's in-house Training Academy was founded in 2006 and is one of the only apprenticeship schemes of its type in the UK.

Our Level 3 Plate Welder Apprenticeship provides individuals in Lancashire and South Yorkshire with an opportunity to gain the relevant skills to carve out a successful career in engineering.

Apprentices also work on exciting community projects throughout the year with local authorities, charities and residents to develop their skill sets. Recent work has seen apprentices create a 5ft stainless steel statue in tribute to LS Lowry, a replica weathervane which was donated to a local church after the original was damaged in a storm, as well as a research space rocket for Starchaser Industries.





Every year we enter our apprentices into a range of awards, and also into the prestigious WorldSkills UK competition as a testament to the world class training they receive. Our welding/fabrication apprentices have won gold medals for three years in a row, as well as silver, bronze and Highly Commended.

WEC Group are extremely proud to have won a range of awards over the past few years, including the BAE Systems Award for Large Employer of the Year in the Liverpool, Cumbria and Lancashire region finals in 2016, 2018, 2019 and 2022.

We are exceptionally proud to have achieved major national recognition after being crowned with The British Army Award for Large Employer of the Year at the National Apprenticeship Awards in 2020 and the Regional Award in 2022. We were also awarded the National Highly Commended Award at the National Apprenticeships Awards 2018 and 2019.





# MEET THE TEAM!



**STEVE HARTLEY**

Steve is WEC Group's Managing Director and WEC Engineering Academy's Head of Board of Governors



**KRIS MERCER**

Kris is WEC Engineering Academy Manager and also a qualified Master Welding Instructor



**CHRIS DICKINSON**

Chris is our Apprenticeship Programme Leader and is also a qualified Master Welding Instructor



**PHILIP HOSEY**

Phil is a former welding & fabrication apprentice and is now a qualified Master Welding Instructor



**OSCAR SATUR**

Oscar is a former welding & fabrication apprentice and is now MTL Advanced's trainee Welding Instructor



**EDD BELSHAW**

Edd is WEC Engineering Academy's Designated Safeguarding Lead & Careers Advisor



**GEMMA KENNEDY**

Gemma is WEC Group's HR Manager & Mental Health First Aider and is based at our HQ In Darwen



**NAOMI COATES**

Naomi is MTL Advanced's HR Manager and Safe Guarding Officer

***"Developing the next generation of World Class Engineers"***

## OUR MISSION

“Developing the next generation  
of World Class Engineers”

## OUR VALUES

### INTEGRITY

We will operate ethically, reliably and honestly.

### EXCELLENCE

We will exceed expectations and strive to be the best we can.

### POSITIVITY

We will bring energy and enthusiasm to both our work and learning whilst being supportive of others, our processes, our customers and our Company.

### TEAMWORK

We will work together to be more efficient and productive, resulting in increased innovation, higher morale and improved retention.

### SAFETY

We will promote a safety culture within the workplace which is fundamental to our operational excellence.

## OUR VISION

At WEC Group, we believe that providing World Class Apprenticeships is essential to the growth and development of our business, as well as contributing to the sustainability of the wider community. Our apprenticeship programme is designed to bridge the skills gap facing the engineering industry, safeguarding the future of the skills within our sector by developing the next generation of welders and engineers.

We are committed to ensuring the very best in learning and development for our apprentices, providing the highest standard of training within our very own state-of-the-art Engineering Academy. Our pledge as an employer is to continue to recognise local talent and inspire our apprentices to become the very best that they can be, in order to build a successful future for themselves and our business.





## COMPANY VALUES

### How our Company Values are embedded within your apprenticeship

During your apprenticeship with the WEC Group we truly want to embed our 5 key values and weave them in to everything you do. We strongly believe that our company values are the foundation of the WEC Group culture and of your apprenticeship with us.

We want to ensure that the core values are integrated in to every apprentice related process, including the job description, your interview, your performance/ progress review meetings and our rewards & recognition programme.

The WEC Group runs an internal values awards process every quarter throughout the year. The Managers across the WEC Group nominate an apprentice who they believe have strongly demonstrated one of our 5 key values: 1) Integrity 2) Excellence 3) Positivity 4) Teamwork 5) Safety

The Managers submit a short statement to the Academy Manager detailing the apprentice's achievement based on their observations.

Once nominees have been submitted, a winner for each value is then selected by the Academy Manager - this means that each quarter there will be 5 winners, each demonstrating one of the 5 values.

During our annual award ceremony, one Apprentice from each year group will be awarded with the 'Annual value award' this apprentice will be rewarded for demonstrating WEC Group key values extremely well throughout their apprenticeship.

# YOUR LEARNING JOURNEY

## STAGE 1 - APPLICATION, ONBOARDING AND INDUCTION

### Application submission

Prior to the start of your Apprenticeship here at the WEC Group we will ask you to complete a WEC Group Apprentice application form. Your application form will then be reviewed by the Recruitment Team and, if successful, you will then be invited to attend a 1st stage interview.

The 1st stage interview will consist of Competency based questions which will be scored and some basic practical skills tests.

### Onboarding- Learner Management System (LMS), Initial assessment, Recognising prior learning and Maths/ English functional skills

Following a successful 1st stage interview, you will then be invited to apply for the next stage of the interview process. You will be sent a link from the WEC Group Learner Management System (LMS- APTM).

The LMS will capture all your details, you will undertake a Skills scan which will help us to identify your starting point and your existing skills levels. It will look at any previous skills and achievements.

This part of the onboarding process also identifies qualifications and learning you may have previously completed, that may offer an exemption from parts of your apprenticeship. These will be discussed in more detail during your onboarding process and will help us to develop your Individual Training Plan.

You will also need to undertake Maths and English diagnostic assessments (BKSB) to identify the level you are currently working at, and to identify whether you will need additional support.

All Apprenticeship Standards include a requirement to attain a certain level of English and Maths (Levels vary between Standards). If you have not already achieved the levels required\* then as part of initial assessment you will be required to undertake BKSB English/Maths initial assessments.

Where required you will receive additional 1:1 support via an external provider to achieve your functional skills.

All learners regardless of their level will be supported during the apprenticeship programme to develop their English and Maths “Functional Skills”.

\*WEC Group will require evidence of such attainment e.g., copies of certificates.

After a thorough initial assessment we will confirm whether your application has been successful and explain the next steps.



## **Welcome Evening**

Once you have been offered your Apprenticeship you will then be sent your Contract of Employment and you will also be invited along to a 'Welcome Evening'. During this evening you will have the opportunity to learn about your Apprenticeship in more detail, speak to current apprentices, meet the team and ask the Training Manager, Apprentice Coordinator and Programme leader any questions you may have.

## **GCSE certificate/ I.D gathering day**

You will then be invited back for a final 'data gathering' day. You will be contacted by the Group Apprenticeship Coordinator and given a date and time to bring your GCSE certificates in.

Whilst on site you will also be asked for your original ID and Eligibility documents. You will sit with the Training Manager, Apprentice Coordinator and the Programme Leader to review your ILR and discuss your skills scan in further detail which will be finalised to produce your Individual Training Plan for your Apprenticeship with us.

The Training Plan will include your name, your job role, the title and level of the Apprenticeship Standard, your normal working hours, the End Point Assessment Organisation, start and planned end dates, and the volume of the off the job training requirements. The Training plan will be signed and dated and copies retained by WEC Group and yourself on Aptem. Reviews of your progress will include the updating of this Plan.

## **Apprenticeship Agreement**

WEC Group will also provide you with an Apprenticeship Agreement that summarises various aspects of your Apprenticeship. Both the WEC Group and yourself are required to sign this document. A copy will be kept by yourself and WEC Group on Aptem.

## **WEC Group Apprentice Induction/ First day in learning**

Once you commence your Apprenticeship and start your first day in learning you will be enrolled and undertake a 5-day induction.

As your employer, we will ensure that you have thorough knowledge of the WEC Group, procedures relating to your employment responsibilities, Company policies on Health and Safety, Equality and Diversity, Safeguarding and Prevent, Mental Health champions, Mission, Vision, Values, terms and conditions of employment.

You will also be inducted onto your Apprenticeship and we will explain:

- o The content of your apprenticeship
- o Your Training Plan and how this will be delivered and monitored
- o Your apprenticeship assessments including your End Point Assessment
- o Maths and English support that may be required
- o The Learner Management system (APTEM) and how to use the system throughout your apprenticeship
- o Your '20% off the job' training requirement

## STAGE 2 - APPRENTICESHIP PROGRAMME

### Level 3 Plate Welder (ST0852)

The apprenticeship that you will be undertaking is typically a 38-month programme. During this apprenticeship you will complete a portfolio of evidence which is mapped against the standards KSBs.

#### Review meetings

Throughout your apprenticeship you will have regular review meetings with the Training Manager or Apprentice Coordinator and your Line Manager, these meetings will be referred to as 'Milestone' and 'Tripartite' meetings.

This three-way discussion is an opportunity to acknowledge your progress and achievements towards previously set 'on and off' the job training, and to agree and complete any planned training ahead of your next meeting.

During your reviews we will cover:

- o Targets set at your previous meetings
- o Feedback to develop your knowledge and skills
- o Agree targets for progression and success
- o Review and record off the job training and discuss what off the job training is planned for the following months
- o Support your Health & Safety and well-being and signpost you to our mental health first aider and safeguarding officers
- o Update and review your learner file on the LMS Aptem
- o Discuss development and signpost you to your information, advice and guidance advisor, Edd Belshaw or Jamie Sharp.

#### Resources

You will have access to the Learner Management System, Aptem. This is an electronic e-portfolio system which you will use to collect evidence towards your Apprenticeship. During your Apprenticeship you will have access to Chrome books on site to access Aptem and you will also be able to gain remote access to work on activities and assignments plus submit evidence. The Training Manager, Programme Leader, Apprentice Coordinator, Group Apprentice Coordinator and your Line Manager will also be able to access your e-portfolio to mark your work and provide feedback.

#### Types of learning

This will be made up from hands on practical, classroom, remote and virtual.





## 20% off the job (OTJ) training

During your Apprenticeship you are required to spend at least 20% of your time completing OTJ training during your normal working hours.

OTJ training refers to anything in the workplace that is new to you, that will support your knowledge and skills development in the workplace. It will be directly relevant to your role and is undertaken away from your normal working duties.

As your Employer we will ensure you are allowed time to complete this requirement of your apprenticeship.

The key is that on a weekly basis you record any OTJ training hours on Aptem.

## Absence from the Apprenticeship programme

Whilst a WEC Group apprentice you are expected to follow the company requirements and report any absence as instructed in the Absence Procedure. We must remind you that poor timekeeping and attendance will be dealt with in line with the Company disciplinary procedure.

If your personal circumstances change during your apprenticeship (illness, accident, pregnancy etc) and this results in a long-term absence we can agree a 'break in learning' on the agreement that you intend to return to the programme and complete your apprenticeship.

## STAGE 3 - ASSESSMENT

### End Point Assessment (EPA)

Your apprenticeship occupational knowledge, skills and behaviours will be evaluated at the end of your Apprenticeship with us by taking an End Point Assessment (EPA). Your EPA will include a portfolio review of your occupational KSB's, welder approval tests and an occupational discussion with the IEPAO (Eng EPA)

## STAGE 4 - COMPLETION AND CERTIFICATION

Once you have successfully completed your Apprenticeship and any other qualifications, you will receive your well-deserved certificates at the Awards Celebration Evening Ceremony, these are held annually.



# CAREERS ADVICE AND PROGRESSION OPPORTUNITIES

## Careers Advice & Guidance

Throughout your apprenticeship with us you will be provided with information on progression opportunities for further training and qualifications, relevant to your work role and responsibilities.

Whatever your role, we can continue to support your learner journey and help you with continuous development opportunities, just ask your Manager or our Careers Advisors, Edd Belshaw and Jamie Sharp for more information.



Amir, Project Engineer  
and Former WEC Apprentice



Megan, Marketing Assistant  
and Former WEC Apprentice



Johnny, Chargehand  
and Former WEC Apprentice



***“EARN WHILE YOU  
LEARN AND GAIN  
SKILLS FOR LIFE”***



## CASE STUDIES - PREVIOUS APPRENTICES AT WEC GROUP

Our pledge as an employer is to inspire our apprentices to become the best that they can be in order to build a successful future for themselves.

Our Apprenticeship programme was created with a clear vision, that WEC Group could nurture and develop the skills of local individuals, who would then go on to have long and successful careers within the company. Since opening we've welcomed over 200 apprentices in advanced disciplines including welding and fabrication, mechanical engineering and CNC Machining.

Take a look at what some of our current and former apprentices have to say about their experience of being a WEC Apprentice.



**Megan, Marketing Assistant and Former WEC Apprentice**

*I chose my career at WEC Group as I have always heard really positive things about the company.*

*I love how my day varies, I am constantly learning new things.*

*I would highly recommend WEC to anyone looking to start a career in a great company. All the staff are really friendly and supportive.*

*Starting my career at WEC Group has definitely been the best decision I have made. I have now progressed into a Marketing Assistant role and I look forward to seeing what the future holds.*

*I first heard about WEC Group online and I chose to work there as they offer good training within their facilities and I saw an opportunity to become an established skilled welder.*

*I enjoy the everyday life at WEC Group, because I learn something new everyday.*

*They have great facilities, good teachers and you get to gain a lot of knowledge working here learning from more experienced workers.*



**Lewis, 4th Year Apprentice**

*I like the practical side of my apprenticeship as I'm always busy. My teachers are always there to help me improve my skills and knowledge.*

*I would recommend anyone who is looking to learn new skills and develop their talent to become a WEC apprentice.*



**Rachel, 2nd Year Apprentice**



*I chose a career at WEC Group as they offer the highest amount of professionalism I've seen anywhere, as well as great opportunities for anyone with the ambition to progress in their careers.*

*I originally heard about WEC from my cousin who was a 1st year Welding & Fabrication apprentice with them at the time and he told me about the opportunity to better myself in a trade worth having under your belt.*

*I decided to give it a go considering that I was stuck at a fast food job at the time with little qualifications.*

*Turned out to be the best decision I have ever made looking at how far I've come now.*



**Amir, Project Engineer  
and Former WEC Apprentice**



**Johnny, Chargehand  
and Former WEC Apprentice**

*I chose to work at WEC Group as it was a local, well established and successful engineering company that provided a good apprenticeship scheme in welding and engineering.*

*I have recently been working on various welding and fabrication projects for the nuclear and rail industry.*

*The benefits I enjoy the most is the variety of jobs I can work on and the ability to learn new skills.*

*I chose a career at WEC Group as they offer brilliant career opportunities.*

*WEC, to me, has always been synonymous with advancement be that professional or personal, and with WEC's continued support they have guided me from the position of apprentice welder/fabricator to a project manager.*

*What I enjoy the most about working at WEC Group is that hard work truly gets rewarded!*



**Jacob, Project Manager  
and Former WEC Apprentice**



# ***“THE UK’S FIRST CENTRE OF WELDING EXCELLENCE”***





# RIGHTS & RESPONSIBILITIES AS A WEC GROUP APPRENTICE

As an Apprentice you have the same rights and responsibilities as all other WEC Group employees; this includes pay, working hours, holidays and sickness. Below are the main areas of rights and responsibilities.

## Working Time Regulations

If you are aged under 18 you must not work more than 8 hours per day or 40 hours per week. If you are aged 18+ you must not work more than 48 hours a week on average – normally averaged over 17 weeks (this is sometimes called the ‘working time directive’ or ‘working time regulations’). There are some exceptions to these rules, which can be found by visiting : [www.gov.uk/maximum-weekly-working-hours](http://www.gov.uk/maximum-weekly-working-hours)

List of policies and procedures can be found by visiting: [www.wec-group.com/wecacademy-policies.html](http://www.wec-group.com/wecacademy-policies.html)

- o Mission Statement and vision
- o Equality and diversity policy
- o Apprentice Training Continuity Plan
- o Health and Safety Policy
- o Safeguarding Policy
- o Staff Training and CPD Policy
- o Preventing Radicalisation Policy
- o Anti-Bribery & Corruption
- o Anti-Slavery & Human Trafficking



## SAFEGUARDING, PREVENT AND EQUALITY & DIVERSITY

Safeguarding is a term used to describe the duties and responsibilities that those providing education and training must carry out to protect individuals from harm and to ensure they feel safe. Safeguarding includes online safety, sometimes referred to as e-safety.

At WEC Group the welfare of our employees including apprentices is paramount, we ensure that:

- o Safeguarding and promoting welfare is everyone's responsibility
- o All employees, including apprentices, regardless of age, gender, ability, culture, race, language, religion, sexual identity, have equal rights to effective safeguarding arrangements
- o All employees, including apprentices have an equal responsibility to act on any suspicion or disclosure that may suggest an apprentice is at risk of harm
- o All employees, including apprentices involved in safeguarding and protection issues will receive appropriate training and support
- o We operate a 'zero tolerance' approach to abuse and other harmful situations

### Our Safeguarding Team

Our Safeguarding Team are accessible during our regular open hours.

We do not currently offer a 24-hour service but please see below useful links and services available.





# OUR SAFEGUARDING TEAM



**EDD BELSHAW**

**Designated Safeguarding Lead / Careers Advisor**  
edd.belshaw@wecl.co.uk  
07570808267



**KRIS MERCER**

**Safeguarding Officer**  
kris.mercer@wecl.co.uk  
07493969929



**CHRIS DICKINSON**

**Safeguarding Officer**  
chris.dickinson@wecl.co.uk  
07825870943



**GEMMA KENNEDY**

**Deputy Safeguarding Lead / Mental Health First Aider**  
gemma.kennedy@wecl.co.uk  
07384460546



**NAOMI COATES**

**Safeguarding Officer**  
NaomiC@mtladv.com  
07384469942



**LISA SANCHO**

**Mental Health First Aider**  
LisaS@mtladv.com  
07384469089

**See something, say something!**  
**If you are worried about someone else,**  
**let us know in confidence.**

**Email - [safeguarding@wecl.co.uk](mailto:safeguarding@wecl.co.uk)**

**Telephone - 01254 773718 / 07570808267**

## Prevent

Prevent is part of the Government's anti-terrorism strategy and is intended to stop vulnerable people being groomed, radicalised and drawn into terrorism or violent extremism. You will be introduced to this strategy and learn about someone who may be vulnerable to, or at risk of, radicalisation. If you have any information regarding suspected terrorist activity you should report this to the police or contact the Anti-Terrorist Hotline on **0800 789 321**.

## British Values

British Values reflect life in modern Britain and are the common values that all communities share. There are four British Values which are:

- o Democracy – Meaning the people of Britain have the right to have their voices heard, vote for the people who make the laws and decide how the country is run
- o The Rule of Law – The laws, legislation, rules and policies designed to ensure Britain is a safe and secure environment in which to live and work
- o Individual Liberty – The protection of your rights and the rights of others to believe, act and express oneself freely
- o Mutual Respect – show mutual respect for and tolerance of those with different faiths and beliefs, and for those without faith

## Equality & Diversity

Our commitment to equality of opportunity covers all stages of your Apprenticeship. We aim to ensure that our learners do not receive less favourable treatment on the grounds of:

- o Sex
- o Religion or belief
- o Age
- o Race
- o Gender reassignment
- o Marital or civil partnership
- o Disability
- o Pregnancy or maternity
- o Ethnic background
- o Being an ex-offender with a spent crime





## SUPPORT AND USEFUL CONTACTS

### WEC Group Academy

01254 773718

0114 261 7979

### WEC Safeguarding Team

01254 773718

0114 261 7979

[safeguarding@wecl.co.uk](mailto:safeguarding@wecl.co.uk)

### Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Service (ACAS)

[www.acas.org.uk](http://www.acas.org.uk)

### NSPCC

[www.nspcc.org.uk](http://www.nspcc.org.uk)

### Social Care Helpline

0300 123 6720

0300 123 6722 (Emergency Duty Team)

### Anti-Terrorism Hotline

0800 789 321

### Prevent Duty Guidance

[www.gov.uk/government/publications/prevent-duty-guidance](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/prevent-duty-guidance)

### NHS Freephone Wellbeing service

0800 915 4640



# WEC

## GROUP

# WEC

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### ENGINEERING ACADEMY

#### WEC Engineering Academy

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Blackburn

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