Sharing Innovative Approaches to Implementing 16 – 19 Study Programmes

Bicton College
“Study Programmes have allowed us to develop distinct study and progression routes that are more aligned to what students and ultimately what employers require. This freedom has been an unexpected bonus to us. The down side for land based colleges is trying to train and prepare students for our industries in the time allowed”.  
Jane Townsend, Deputy Principal

About the College

Bicton College is located in East Devon close to the World Heritage coastline and within a Site of Special Scientific Interest and Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. The college is a specialist land-based provider and occupies extensive grounds, with a commercial farm surrounding the main college campus. Full-and part-time courses are offered at foundation/entry level, and at levels 1 to 3 in agriculture, service engineering, animal care, veterinary nursing, countryside management, arboriculture, equine studies, horticulture, floristry, and outdoor leisure management.

There is on-site residential accommodation for 230 students, the majority of whom are 16-18 years of age. Approximately 650 16-18s are enrolled each year with around 4,700 total enrolments annually. For those who are funded by the EFA or SFA around 1400 will be at level 1; 1300 at level 2; nearly 600 at level 3; and a small number studying at level 4. The college recruits around 140 apprentices, the majority undertaking agriculture, service engineering, and veterinary nursing apprenticeships. The additional enrolments have alternative sources of funding, including HE, where there are 150 students on Foundation Degrees in land-based industry subjects.

The estate and grounds provide an extensive employability training opportunity for all learners. It is intended that all curriculum areas have their own enterprise and commercial businesses which the students are involved in running. The college operates a Rugby Academy linked to Exeter RFC and also has a Military and Public Services (MaPS) Academy. Both Academies make provision to Level 3 and have extensive community links.

The college works in close partnerships with local 14-19 providers. In 2011/12, 205 14-16 young people from various schools across the County attended the college. The majority were undertaking work-based Diplomas and the remainder engaged in a variety of school/college partnership arrangements.

Bicton College is collaborating with its catering partner, ARAMARK, in delivering a new sustainability initiative. An objective has been created for the college's farm

1 http://www.bicton.ac.uk
and gardens to provide all vegetables, milk and meat for Bicton's catering services by 2020, integrating the supply chain and reducing waste. This is will provide work experience opportunities for Study Programme students.

**Study Programmes**

All Bicton's Study Programmes have been developed to provide either an academic route to support learners wishing to progress potentially to HE, or a vocational route where they wish to progress sooner into employment. This has resulted in a distinctive focus for these two pathways at levels 2 and 3.

Level 1 and level 2 Study Programmes will consist of 600 guided learning hours (GLH). All students will follow a substantial vocational qualification together with either Functional Skills in Maths and English, or a GCSE if they do not already hold a grade C or above in these subjects.

Level 3 Study Programmes will also provide a substantial vocational qualification (the entry requirement includes GCSE grade C or above in Maths and English). All students will have the opportunity to study GCE A levels (with a choice of Business or Biology) alongside their main qualification. If they choose to do so they will be following the college's academic route. Those that choose to take more employment-led additional qualifications will be following the vocational/employability access route. It is anticipated that the hours for the level 3 study programmes will be in excess of 600 per year. With innovative timetabling, non-vocational qualifications will be delivered across subject areas.

At all levels the Study Programmes will include work experience, which is an established part of Bicton's delivery methods and one that is common throughout land based colleges. This comprises of both internal (commercial estate activity) and external work experience opportunities, through the college's extensive network of employer links.

A Bicton “sustainability” qualification will be introduced for full time students as part of their Study Programme to cover the wider themes of climate and sustainability. There will be a specific focus on the industry relevant to each Academy. Students will be challenged to look at the impact of their behavior on their department and the wider college in terms of sustainability.

**Supported Internships**

The college was part of the DfE's national pilot for supported internships in 2012/13. The purpose of this programme is to help young people with complex learning difficulties to move into employment.
The key principles underpinning the delivery of supported internships are that:
- Jobs must work for the young person and the employer
- The work placement is to last for a substantive amount of time
- There should be some form of structured learning alongside the time spent with the employer
- Support is given to both the employer and the young person

Bicton’s pilot year was successful and there is a waiting list of students wishing to take this route to employment in 2013/14. The Study Programme for these students will comprise substantial supported work experience together with Functional Skills, personal and social development and employability skills.

Key features in the success of the pilot will be applied to the Study Programmes for students with complex learning difficulties. These include:

- An initial period in college to allow detailed assessments to be made of the individual student’s needs and capabilities
- A planned move into a 16 hour per week work experience placement after this assessment period
- One day per week in college to enhance students’ employability through further learning, personal development and improved Functional Skills. The City & Guilds Certificate/Award in Employability & Personal Development will be utilised.

There were a number of important elements to the success of the pilot, such as the backing of the young person’s family, the job matching process, employer engagement, job coach training, benefits advice, linking with other agencies and travel training. Students have been placed in a range of businesses such as an adventure park, hotel, supermarket, nursery, care home, plant nursery and council offices.

Key to the success of the internship programme was the role of the job coaches. Job coaches are the link between the young person, the employer and the college. They provide personalized support to the learner and to the employer, dealing with concerns, offering advice and assisting the young person to meet the standards that are required to achieve paid work. Bicton employs 3 job coaches and also worked with Pluss2, a local supported employment provider for people with disabilities which sourced most of the opportunities for work placements.

These success factors will be taken forward into Study Programmes for students with complex needs in 2013/14.

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Quote from Sharnaa Morgan, an Intern in the pilot:

‘I’ve come out of my shell much more since I’ve been there and the other people there really do respect me – they don’t look at me as someone with a disability. That’s one of the things I’m really happy about.’