Sharing Innovative Approaches to Delivering 16-19 Study Programmes

City College Southampton
“It was core to our values that we found a solution which put the student not just in control of their work experience but also made them responsible for the electronic log book. This is so that students become disciplined in understanding their own responsibility in moulding their futures.”

Ivan Gregory, Vice Principal

About the college

City College Southampton is a medium sized GFE college based on a main site in Southampton, serving Hampshire and further afield. The college provides education and training across 12 SSA areas for up to 8,000 students a year. In 2013/14 the college has approximately 1,400 full time students undertaking the Study Programmes.

City College Southampton has been judged by Ofsted to be a “good” college, with some outstanding features, including care, guidance and support. The quality of teaching, learning and assessment is good, and more emphasis on aspiration and stretch and challenge for able students will move this forward. The college is in the top 5% of colleges in the country for success rates.

As well as offering a wide range of career-led courses and qualifications for school leavers, the college also provides apprenticeships, training for businesses, short courses, adult learning programmes and advanced qualifications, including higher education.

The college has established close links with employers in the city, resulting in our students having excellent access to jobs and apprenticeships. There are also close links with local universities, which promote student progression to degree level studies.

To ensure students have access to the very best equipment and learning environments, the college has recently invested around £48m in its campus and facilities are among the best in the region.

Southampton, a unitary authority, has a population of nearly 240,000. Southampton is judged the 91st most deprived local authority according to the economic deprivation index. Around half of the college’s young students come from the city’s Priority Neighbourhood Areas.

Study Programmes
Study Programmes have been developed as a comprehensive vehicle for our students to achieve their progression goals.

In this case study we will look at two major developments in the Study Programme at City College. The first describes a project developing an electronic work experience log book and the second sets out how Marine Industry employers were persuaded to take more students on work experience.

**Example 1 - A new standard for work experience: the “Work Experience +” Log**

It was identified in developing the new Study Programmes that there is a requirement to monitor and record the number of full time students engaging in work experience activities during the academic year. This required a change to previous practice, leading to the “Work Experience +” concept.

The Business Case for Work Experience + was made with the implementation of the new Study Programme requirements in 2013/14. The new system will enable the college to more accurately plan its provision and the resources required to deliver this part of the Study Programme.

Work Experience + provides the opportunity to monitor closely the work engagement activities taking place in an effective and timely manner within all faculties. The reporting system will be able to identify areas of concern and ensure that appropriate interventions can take place.

In reforming the previous arrangements the impact of not having a standardised system to record/monitor work engagement activities was recognised to be as follows:

- Additional time being spent by quality teams on checking provision within each faculty
- Areas of risk not being highlighted at earlier stages
- Good provision not being identified at early stages
- Lack of data on the quality of arrangements.

This year standardised work experience activities in Study Programmes can cover the following topic areas:

- Employer led Projects
- Employer talks
- Traditional work experience
- Visits to organisations/exhibitions
- Enterprise activities
In order to capture, record and analyse this information a new in-house system is being developed called “Work Experience +”. This system has been created within City Bit (College VLE) and is available to all students. Essentially this is an online log that can be viewed by both student and staff. Students record their work related activity within the log. The tutor has a drop-down list of options for verification. The verification tabs link to the seven elements list above as the topic areas. This allows various reports to be created at whole college level as well as individual to measure the amount of activity taking place.

**Objectives**

It is anticipated that by Easter 2014 all students will be using this system and curriculum staff will be reviewing this on a regular basis with their students. All records are verified by the tutor at six weekly reviews to ensure that the experiences have taken place and meet the requirements of the Study Programme. At the end of February 78% of full time students had assessed and used the logs.

By using Work Experience + to record work engagement activities the college can feel confident that it is meeting the Study Programme requirements and can deliver the programme in an effective manner, benefiting students and making efficient use of employers’ time and resources.

**Progress to date**

- Work Experience + has been set up and is been used by students
- The training of appropriate staff has taken place
- The development and testing of live data for reporting is in place
- Systems and processes will develop further as the system is used
- The roll out of the system to all curriculum areas will have taken place by Easter 2014

The uptake by students has been impressive. It is hoped that by the end of the academic year we will be in a position to run activity reports by curriculum areas and the different facets of work related activity as defined in the topic areas. This will be invaluable in measuring student progress but will give a wealth of data to help planning and provide information for the Self-Assessment Process and, ultimately, Ofsted.
The arrival of Study Programmes prompted the Marine Skills Centre at City College Southampton to work differently with marine employers, to improve both the experience of full-time learners who would like to enter the marine industry and to benefit those employers who employ apprentices.

In many instances the employers are SMEs who need their workshops to remain operational, but this has led to situations whereby the employers find it difficult to release their apprentice for the “off the job training element” of their apprenticeship.

In Marine they have defined this project with employers to the students as their work study programme. This is so that learners understand they are also studying the business they are attending as well as getting the work experience; it’s a more holistic way for them to review their chosen career paths. As part of the work study programme, on the normal day of attendance for the apprentice, the Marine Skills Centre has arranged for full time students to take their place at the boatyard. This dual timetabling has provided several advantages. Firstly, it has improved the attendance of apprentices at college. Secondly, it provides the full time student with a real experience of working in the marine industry. Finally, it provides both the employer and the full time student with an opportunity to see if the role is right for them and they are right for the role. In many cases employers view this as a “try before you buy” arrangement.

We have always encouraged the use of work experience for learners on full time programmes and this just formalises it a little more. The longer term benefits - which we know from this type of initiative - will be that those learners who move into an apprenticeship after completing a full time programme with work experience are far more likely to complete that apprenticeship successfully. At the Marine Skills Centre we have not had an apprentice trained in this way leave their apprenticeship early.

The benefits for the employer are that they can take on an apprentice with some marine skills and have had an opportunity to have a work trial for them. This enables them to be as confident as they can be that the apprentice they have chosen is right for them! There are comparable benefits for the apprentice in making the right carer decision.

We see the Work Study Programme as an essential part of our education and training offer. It has become so popular that we have employers who contact us to ask for full time students to come for a work trial, with a view to employment on an apprenticeship, and we are now finding that demand is outstripping supply.