Sharing Innovative Approaches to Implementing 16 – 19 Study Programmes

Middlesbrough College
“Skills 21 is integral to the College’s 16-19 Study Programme offer. It is an exciting and challenging initiative which we have developed and continue to evolve in partnership with employers and our university partners. It is designed to equip our learners with the skills, aptitudes and experiences that will ready them for the world of work or the next stage of their academic career.”

Mike Hopkins, Principal & Chief Executive.

About the College

Middlesbrough College is the largest provider of post-16 education and training in the Tees Valley, offering a wide range of academic, vocational and Access courses for young people and adults. In 2008 the college opened its new main campus at Middlehaven in Middlesbrough, followed in 2012 by a new ‘A’ Level Centre (MC6) which also provides excellent additional sports facilities. Most recently, the college has announced its plans to invest in a major new facility serving Science, Technology, Engineering and maths (STEM).

The college offers further education courses in 14 of the 15 sector subject areas; apprenticeships; and higher education (HE) franchised from Teesside University. Courses are also offered to school pupils aged 14 to 16. There are substantial programmes for employers in the workplace. During 2012 / 2013 the college recruited 13,500 learners, of whom 3,850 were aged 16 to 18. Enrolments for this age group on long qualifications were significantly higher at Level 3 than at other levels.

GCSE attainment is low at 16. In 2012, the percentage of Year 11 learners achieving five GCSE grades A* to C in Middlesbrough, including English and Mathematics, was 47.6% compared with the national average of 59.4%.

The college serves an area of considerable deprivation. The 2010 Index of Multiple Deprivation shows that Middlesbrough is ranked the eighth most deprived local authority out of 326 local authority areas. The overall level of unemployment in the Tees Valley remains high, at 6.6% compared to the national rate of 3.7% (April 2013). The unemployment claimant rate for people aged 18-24 in the Tees Valley was 12.6% compared to the national rate of 6.7% at that time.

Middlesbrough College is a member of the Gazelle Colleges Group and is committed to nurturing entrepreneurship and enterprise. A wide range of entitlement activities for young people is supported by Student Engagement Officers¹, who also work with vulnerable students or those in need of extra

¹ http://www.mbro.ac.uk/home/index/studentservices/studentengage.aspx
support, assisting them in gaining access to the college and to succeed on their programmes.

**Study Programmes**

In creating its Study Programmes the college is planning 540 to 600 hours, over a 34 week course. At each level (1 to 3) the core qualification will comprise a minimum of 350 hours, complemented by either Functional Skills in maths and English or GCSEs in these subjects as needed, for up to 102 hours. Initial assessment and diagnostic testing is done utilising bksb\(^2\), which is also utilised for some teaching resources.

Work experience and tutorials will also be timetabled, alongside 34 hours of the “Skills 21” programme: Personal development, enterprise, employability and entrepreneurship (see below). The requirements of the Study Programme have enabled the college to be more flexible in the entitlements offered to full-time students, particularly in the non-qualification based elements.

**Work experience and employability**

“Skills 21” is the college's branding for the professional skills required in the 21st century for successful employment, and progression to HE. The programme also encompasses personal safety, wellbeing, tolerance of others and social skills.

A dedicated team of 12 full and part time Skills 21 facilitators are embedded throughout college directorates, delivering approximately 200+ sessions each week.

Facilitators plan activities to ensure students have ample opportunities to learn, develop and practice these skills. Activities can include researching, planning and delivery of presentations, creating a “pop-up” business, working with industry guest speakers or health care specialists, or organising a charity event. This is achieved by creating energetic, fast-paced and ultimately student-driven learning environments that incorporate the use of mobile technology for independent and or collaborative learning.

Skills 21 facilitators aim to develop the students’ ability to be work-ready and able to demonstrate professionalism, creativity, resourcefulness and resilience.

There is a Work Experience Charter which sets out the responsibilities of the student, college and employer.

\(^2\) http://www.bsksb.co.uk
The intended Skills 21 outcomes for students on Study Programmes are:

- To add value to the student experience whilst studying at Middlesbrough College.
- To give students’ a competitive advantage both vocationally and academically.
- To promote good citizenship.
- To inspire and foster independence and curiosity.
- To promote open-mindedness and tolerance of others and other cultures.
- To engage learners in enterprising and entrepreneurial activities, to develop key business and employability skills.
- To promote and foster positive life style choices, for healthier wellbeing.

The college is developing business ventures which it will own itself or create in collaboration with local partners, with the intention of providing its students with a wider range of realistic work opportunities. Among other activities the college runs MC BUILD, a not-for-profit company aimed at providing students with work experience on real projects in the community.