Sharing Innovative Approaches to Implementing 16 – 19 Study Programmes

North Warwickshire and Hinckley College
“The college has integrated the use of Skills Competitions to enhance, stretch and develop students’ skills and experience within new Study Programmes beyond their expectations”

Martin Shelton, Interim Vice Principal Curriculum

About the College

North Warwickshire & Hinckley College is a large Further Education college in the heart of the Midlands. The college has five campuses in the two local authority areas of Warwickshire and Leicestershire. The largest campus is in Nuneaton serving a wide range of technical and service area programmes. The Hinckley campus specialises in Creative Arts, Media, Fashion & Computing.

The college provides courses at all levels from pre-entry to higher education (HE) and in all sector subject areas. There are 2,600 full-time 16-18 year old students and a large cohort of apprentices, as well as over 4,000 adult learners. Workplace learning is supported locally, regionally and nationally.

The college is also the sponsor of four Academy Schools, two studio colleges and is a Federation partner of South Leicestershire College. All school educational partners are under an umbrella organisation - The Midlands Academy Trust. Some 800 pupils aged 14 to 16 attend the college as part of their school Key Stage 4 programme.

The areas served by the college contain both rural and urban districts where levels of multiple deprivation and unemployment are high. Less than half of the pupils in the college’s main feeder schools achieve five GCSEs at grades A* to C including English and mathematics. Taking account of students’ views is a key element of curriculum development for the college; at its inspection1 Ofsted found user engagement to be outstanding. The college actively seeks views on how well it is doing from students and its educational, community and business partners. The Student Parliament is well-attended and seen as an excellent forum for gathering opinions and feedback.

Vocational skills are honed through competitions, which provide a focus and motivation for all skill-based programmes, in areas such as engineering, construction, horticulture/floristry, hospitality and hair & beauty. The college is an active supporter of World Skills and UK Skills, with students competing at the annual UK Skills Show.2

1 http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/inspection-reports/find-inspection-report/provider/ELS/130836
2 http://worldskillsuk.apprenticeships.org.uk
Study Programmes

Study Programmes at the College have been designed to ensure students at all levels experience a learning programme which include high quality qualifications alongside an enriched opportunity to develop their skills and employment potential.

Study Programmes feature a core qualification, Functional Skills, tutorials and specific individualised opportunities for work placement. A distinctive feature is the residential educational visits planned in every subject area, along with a programme of volunteering in the community.

The average annualised hours for a Study Programme are around 620, although these will vary dependent on the time committed to work experience. There is little variance between Study Programme annualised hours at different levels of study.

The College has built further on its key strengths of “stretch and challenge” within its programmes through its well established Competition Strategy, which has three main aims:

- To improve teaching and learning through the integration of competitions into all delivery;
- To further engage with employers through Apprentices’ participation in competitions; and
- To widen participation through inclusive skills competitions.

In many areas learners can develop their skills beyond qualification boundaries through attendance in Competition Clubs. These provide the opportunity within Study Programmes for students to extend their skills in a coached environment, in preparation for entry into a variety of local, regional and national competitions, including Worldskills UK. Students participating in Study Programmes will be prepared to enter a wide variety of competitions, including UK Skills.

Level 3 vocational students will be able to take this further through the use of extension activities within workshop sessions with employer partners supporting individualised training plans. Study Programmes at Level 3 also afford the College the opportunity to improve its “Value Added” score through stretching students’ abilities. The application of live skills development into unit assignments will promote a higher grade profile potential for each student.

At all levels, Competition Club workshops give students the experience of industry- delivered coaching which complements their vocational programmes. Training for competition, alongside vocational qualification learning, is based on building students’ subject skills as well as their softer skills, such as: confidence
building, time management, improving performance under pressure, team work and reflective practice. In addition, students benefit by filling any particular gaps in their knowledge and accessing specific opportunities to focus on key employability elements.

The college enjoys excellent relationships with its local employer partners, from large businesses such as Mira and Triumph to many smaller employers in every subject sector. Through a combination of sponsorship, work experience and competition preparation via technical training and support for teaching and learning, employers play a key role in development and enhanced experience within students’ Study Programmes.

Supported Internships. The college has been in the DfE pilot for providing these internships to students with complex learning needs. The internships have been set within the college’s inclusive employer engagement strategy; 70% of Internships have been with industry partners, with 60% of the interns offered paid, sustainable employment upon completion of the project.

Employment sectors included Hospitality, Local Authorities, Horticulture and Transport. The key element of the project’s success was the close co-ordination and support shared between the learner, employer and college.

This approach will be carried forward into Study Programmes in 2013/14 to ensure a fully inclusive curriculum.