

Skills for Work CASE STUDY

Construction Crafts Intermediate One

West Lothian College in partnership with West Lothian Council, Education and Cultural Services provides Skills for Work courses for S3/S4 students, which are delivered in college or on an outreach basis, this one in Inveralmond Community High School.

Rationale

The partners were keen to meet the need in communities and the economy for young people to gain vocational skills.

College staff have supported schools with lecturers providing real workplace experience to help develop skills and knowledge relevant to industry.



Partnership Arrangements

Regular meetings between delivery staff and management have been established, allowing the course to be delivered and managed successfully.

Student input and feedback was critical in ensuring the success of the course with challenges addressed and managed.

The school has involved parents/carers in course choices and feedback on student progress is provided by a college report bi-annually and at its parents' evening.

Delivery Approaches

The area in the school set aside for the project was designated and operated as a work environment with a workplace ethos, not a school one.

Students were allowed to call the lecturer by his/her first name and a working relationship developed so that the team drove the process.

The lecturer managed the process in order that the requirements were met, standards achieved and health and safety practices maintained. The group working as a team achieved them.

The school carried out selection assisted by college staff who highlighted the type of student most suited to this model of delivery and activity.

One positive effect came from students being fully matriculated to the college and receiving a student card, although the course was not delivered in college and students were not in college very often. Clearly, they wanted to be college students rather than school pupils.

The school fitted timetabling into its existing one and also complied with the college system. Wednesday morning was the most suitable time.

Students were involved in planning and recording their work with photographs used to show progression and completion of projects. A diary recorded the progress made in the manufacture of larger products.

Students recorded and signed for feedback as it was deemed important to encourage them to take responsibility for the documented information.



SQA and SFEU support materials were very useful and provided the platform on which to build the Skills for Work delivery and assessment.

The challenges involved pupils taking more control of their learning and making positive decisions based on their learning experiences and judgments. With staff and students partners in the process, the students accepted the methods much more readily and were then able to voice their opinion openly, confidently and honestly. At this point they realised the importance of their own contribution to the process and continued to develop.



Employability Skills

Understanding the skills required for employment was a new concept for the students who were not yet near the employability stage.

The approach adopted through this course was to allow the students to make mistakes using them as a learning platform and to relate their effect on employability.

Consequences and actions proved another useful approach if something went wrong. The students were able to self reflect and to learn from their own experiences in a relaxed, constructive setting.

Many discussions took place so that students could learn about time management and contingency planning. When a task was set for an assignment it was time bound so that the student could experience the realistic pressures of the workplace.

Centre Evaluation

Students carried out evaluation themselves by looking at the course, their own progress and the work of peers. The college and school were also involved in this process.

School reports were completed for each student so that feedback could be provided to the parents or carers and further meetings with lecturers were available.

Charting their own progress allowed students to see where they needed more development, support or help.

Feedback sessions gave students the chance to air their own feelings about their progress and discuss the lecturer's input to the process. If there were disagreements, discussions led to mutual decisions on the way forward for the student.

The process has worked very well and students have been extremely positive about everything.

One finding was the benefit of students coming out of the school environment to carry out activities. The progress appears to be much better and more effective in the more realistic and work-orientated college environment.

“This is much better than being in class.” ”

(He was in a class but could not identify it as such because the atmosphere was totally different.)

View from a candidate



Future Delivery Plans

Future delivery plans are to offer the next level of Skills for Work course at Intermediate 2 and also to give the students a wider choice by introducing a greater variety of tasks.

Advice

Delivering the course in college wherever possible is advised. Moving people out of the school has the greatest impact of all, letting them experience an environment that is different to what they are used to.

The college provides a more grown-up adult environment and the young people participate much more successfully as a student rather than a pupil.

Careful recruitment and selection to ensure that candidates are suited to the course and are interested in its content cannot be over-emphasised. Providing comprehensive information, explaining the course in detail, outlining what is expected of students with school visits by college staff gives a loud and clear message.

“ It’s great being part of a team that delivers a course to support and develop useful employability skills in S3 students. It’s a course of development that is rewarding for the students as well as a challenging, rewarding teaching and learning experience. ”

View from a lecturer