

Skills for Work and DeskSpace Case Study

St George's School



About DeskSpace

The DeskSpace e-portfolio is available to all SQA Skills for Work candidates and is currently available to centres free of charge.

It allows candidates to record the evidence for their course online, keeping everything together and accessible to tutors even at more than one centre.

Work can be uploaded and submitted online and the user friendly interface helps candidates structure their learning through the use of online templates. Materials are available for all Skills for Work courses, including the assessor and candidate checklists.

St George's School, Edinburgh

St George's School exists to promote educational excellence for girls.

Founded in 1888 to provide a full education for girls and to take the lead in the movement for women's education in Scotland, it remains committed to these aspirations.

The school works in partnership with parents to provide learning opportunities, excellent teaching and individual support for the personal, social and intellectual development of young women of independent mind, who will each be prepared according to individual talent, need and interest for university and college education, lifelong learning, adult life and work and to make her contribution to society.

St George's School works in partnership within Scottish education in a global context and is open to change and improvement in every aspect of its activities as a flexible and open learning centre.

Overview

The Skills for Work - Financial Services Intermediate 2 course was successfully piloted at St George's after the school identified a gap in its curriculum in personal financial awareness.

To make the course interesting and alive, the school sought to create hands-on experiences at every opportunity plus an interactive approach to teaching and learning.





Rationale

Introducing DeskSpace was deemed to be a sensible and logical extension to the Skills for Work course, run for S5 and S6 pupils. The school found the e-portfolio application straightforward to implement and reports that it quickly became popular with students.

Teaching staff, too, welcomed this “valuable tool” that combined set tasks with the option for pupils to customise and personalise their own e-portfolios.

The school uses the DeskSpace tool, which has been in use for over two years, to focus on specific units within the Skills for Work - Financial Services Intermediate 2 course:

- The personal finance awareness-training unit encourages students to research on line for information to find ways of borrowing and saving;
- The introduction to the financial sector unit covers issues such as legislation, financial institutions, the Stock Market and general financial rules and regulations at a time when this sector has never been more prominent in the news worldwide.

Clearly, the work and the Internet-based approaches appealed to students as staff confirmed that the students thrived using DeskSpace, uploading spreadsheets, video files or images, when required.

Practical Issues

Few practical issues have been encountered by the school, which strongly supports IT projects for its pupils. Staff confirm that DeskSpace was easily introduced as it offers a state-of-the art network that the school manages, controls and fixes, when necessary.

BENEFITS

SHORT AND LONG TERM

All in all, St George’s believes DeskSpace is a stable, highly useful product, underpinned by easy-to-follow procedures. The school says that DeskSpace is effective as it has a standard website access. St George’s has been delighted to give demonstrations to other schools considering the introduction of the e-portfolio model to their curriculum.

For pupils, the DeskSpace application allows them not only to learn but also to personalise their web folios and customise their own space at any time. In addition, the work completed ties into future projects allowing the pupils’ self evaluation to be continued and updated.

When work projects are set, pupils can see at a glance on their e-portfolios when it should be completed – and if they have any queries, they can email their teacher for clarification, explanation or comment.

Teachers like the e-portfolio application as it helps them keep track of a pupils’ work - without bits of paper going missing.



Advice For Other Potential Centres

St George's is in no doubt about the benefits of DeskSpace and recommends others try it, especially as it is free to introduce and implement on all Skills for Work courses. Teaching staff from other Scottish schools have visited St George's to see DeskSpace in action.

The school suggests that staff with an IT interest can readily introduce DeskSpace to help students to progress in a controlled, step-by-step manner via this easy-to-use programme.

Comments

Sandra Stenhouse, Head of Business and Enterprise, is very pleased with what she describes as a "valuable product" and the way it helps pupils progress through the course and facilitates her interaction with them.

“ DeskSpace ticks all the right boxes, definitely. It offers checklists, the chance for pupils to customise their e-portfolios and a great way for pupils and teachers to communicate, not necessarily confined to classroom time. ”

“ It's an extremely helpful and effective evaluation tool that pupils clearly enjoy using. Sometimes I'm surprised by just how quickly they become familiar and creative with it as they personalise their web space. ”

“ It is easy to introduce and to understand yet opens up so many possibilities via the Internet for appropriate research and other tools. ”

S5 pupil:

“ Updating information and making sure projects are on time are really useful features. And making our own-e-portfolios personal, with our own touch, is fun. ”

S6 pupil:

“ The course included personal finance and the financial sector so the e-portfolio application helped me research quickly lots of material. It was a step-by-step form of learning online and I found it all very interesting and am glad I got the chance to be involved. ”



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