

PDP Academy 11: INSTITUTIONAL CASE STUDY

<p>The title of your initiative:</p> <p>The Salford Student Life Award (Foundations) programme</p>
<p>Theme(s) (NB Case Studies may straddle themes)</p> <p>Designing and implementing a pre-entry intervention.</p>
<p>Your Aims and Objectives (Max. 50 words)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> To address the skills gap between learning methods at FE and HE level. To introduce students to independent learning. To use PDP activities and approaches to develop a range of progression pathways in academic and vocational areas.
<p>Your Approach(es) and Activity/ies (Short breakdown of your activities – Max. 200 words)</p> <p>The University of Salford has a compact agreements programme, Get Ahead, which supports the progression and transition of level three learners from disadvantaged backgrounds¹ into higher education, through the completion of a programme of outreach activities to raise aspirations and attainment and a preparation for HE module equivalent to two wider key skills and 40 UCAS tariff points.</p> <p>The delivery mode follows similar lines to an existing co-curricular award programme at the University of Salford, the Salford Student Life Award. The Award was developed in response to a University wide review of PDP activities. The review and subsequent report showed that there was variable engagement in the PDP process. Recommendations to address the issues of inconsistency included the development of an extra- curricular award to encourage students to engage with the PDP process. The new module therefore provides participating students with the opportunity to receive the Salford Student Life Award (Foundations) on successful completion.</p> <p>The two ASDAN Wider Key Skills qualifications assessed at Level 3 were Working with Others and Improving Own Learning and Performance. To achieve ASDAN’s qualifications, learners needed to meet specific assessment requirements and the achievement of the Wider Key Skills qualifications are achieved through an internally assessed/externally moderated portfolio of evidence.</p> <p>All activities are mapped against the ASDAN qualifications and provide evidence for assessment in the portfolio.</p> <p>Attendance at Skills Development Sessions and related reflections on each session attended are recorded in the portfolio of evidence. Work experience (unpaid, voluntary or part time employment) will be assessed by student presentation.</p>
<p>Outcomes so far (What is the result of your actions so far – max 100 words)</p>

¹ For the purpose of widening participation in higher education, disadvantaged backgrounds is defined as those learners from lower socio-economic groups (NS-SEC 4-8), and those from disadvantaged backgrounds who live in areas of relative deprivation where participation in higher education is low. In addition the University proactively supports access to higher education for disabled learners, care leavers and other groups under-represented in higher education. For further information see http://www.governance.salford.ac.uk/cms/resources/uploads/File/AQA/Admissions_and_Retention_Policy.pdf.

Intended

In our evaluation of the programme it was found that:

- the majority of students agreed that the self-assessment prior to compiling their personal development plan was useful in identifying their key strengths and areas for improvement
- the students talked about how the self-assessment and personal development plan had helped them develop insight into their own skills and how these skills can be applied
- they talked about how useful it is to have a documented process for identifying the skills they need to develop and how this helps focus their minds on refining those skills

Unintended

- students commented on the unexpected workload. It would appear that this may have been one reason for a number of students dropping out of the programme
- clashes with similar programmes being run by other universities and initiatives such as 'The Duke of Edinburgh Award'.
- students at one Sixth Form College were already doing a related ASDAN qualification and so were not able to do the two level 3 Wider Key Skills qualifications

Important moment(s) in the project (Max. 200 words)

The three day visit to the university appeared to have the most impact on the students. They had to carry out research and prepare a group presentation which was around some aspect of the university e.g. research and innovation, enterprise or community engagement. This ensured that they did some in-depth research into the university and the results of their efforts were very encouraging.

From their own perspective it appeared that they enjoyed the opportunity to mix with students from other colleges and in some cases provided a much needed wake-up call in terms of the types of students they are competing against when applying for a university place.

The calibre of the folders that the students have completed is of a much higher standard than those completed during the first pilot.

Impact (including evidence of impact – max. 200 words, qualitative and quantitative indicators if possible, in respect of some or all of)

Staff

- Difficult to evaluate as yet as these students have not yet applied or progressed to University

students

- At evaluation 100% of students agreed that they were gaining skills to study at University level
- 92% felt the self-assessment was useful in identifying areas for improvement
- Reflection on the skills sessions and the personal development plan was considered helpful in making them think about which of their skills had improved and which still required improvement

the HEI

- Increased profile within the Sixth Form and FE Colleges
- Increased insight into the skills and attitudes of year 12 students

Lessons learned (including what you might do differently on a future occasion, max. 400 words)

Personal level

- As the Skills for HE Tutor I need to network with and draw on the expertise of others.
- I need to gain a more indepth understanding of the skills of students at level 3.
- I need to find ways of maintaining quality **and** retaining learners.

Professional level

- Maintain the personal development planning aspect of the programme and the skills sessions elements as these appeared to be beneficial to the students.
- There are a number of alternative solutions to the overall mode of delivery being considered.

One of these is that we target students who have been given a conditional offer at the University of Salford and run summer school(s) prior to their starting in the September. Another is that we run a block of Saturday morning skills sessions involving academic staff.

- We need to review the award of UCAS points as we have a number of concerns over their impact on prospective students. It is felt that they may attract students onto the programme for the wrong reasons in that they may be interested in gaining a quick hit to boost their university applications rather than considering the value of the learning whilst on the programme.
- We have decided to develop a programme without the ASDAN level 3 Wider Key Skills elements as we felt that these compromised the creativity of the programme.
- Open up the facility to a larger number of potential students but, in line with that, develop a more stringent recruitment process.
- Re-visit the information session and only allow students to apply for a place on the programme once they have attended an information session run by personnel from the university (not an information session run by college personnel).
- Include more academic staff in the design and delivery of the programme.

Team level

- The project team and working team worked well with regular meetings and regular updates. We may have benefited from more liaison between 6th Form / FE college tutors and senior staff throughout the programme rather than just at the beginning. Some colleges were extremely helpful but in some colleges the engagement of the tutors was poor. In some cases the Skills for HE tutor was left to find out what room she was in and had to work out how to use equipment herself (or ask the students).

Institutional level

- There are a number of initiatives in the university relating to progression of learners from foundation degrees to 3rd year first degrees and progression of adult learners. Whilst we already have the valuable input of the adult learning tutor, we need to explore similar pockets of expertise within the university to maximise our potential.

Your next steps (max. 150 words)

- **What will happen next?**
 - Concentrate on recruiting quality students who are committed to learning rather than those who are purely interested in getting UCAS points.
 - We have already looked at what another institution does and we have a project team meeting planned in which we will discuss the way forward.

Your contact details

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