

OUTSTANDING TEACHING, LEARNING AND ASSESSMENT TECHNICAL SKILLS NATIONAL PROGRAMME

4. The Care Academy - Introduction

Created by: John Ruskin College, Leyton Sixth Form College

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Introduction

The Care Academy is a concept which was designed to bring together both Health and Science subjects. Previously we found that students had struggled to gain places to study nursing and midwifery at university. The idea was to give students the opportunities to develop skills, knowledge and qualities that would better prepare them for university and the work place. Some of the feedback from the universities suggested that the students applying from BTEC Health and Social Care required more of a scientific background and the students from BTEC Science needed opportunities to care for patients/residents. At the same time, it was clearly apparent that whilst our students were receiving rejections for nursing courses, recruiting nurses in the local hospitals had been challenging due to housing costs in the local area. The local NHS Clinical Commissioning Group for Waltham Forest was supportive in our endeavour and this helped to give our project impetus and momentum within the local community.

Our OTLA project enabled us to start thinking about our vocational provision in a traditionally academic setting. Sixth Form Colleges are typically known for the variety of A level subjects on offer but for the last few years the number of vocational students have been higher than the A Level students at LSC. Vocational education has sat comfortably within FE colleges for many years with many staff having been recruited from industry, whereas sixth form colleges tend to recruit subject specialist teacher who can lend their subject knowledge to a vocational context. This project enabled us to think about how we deliver a true vocational experience to Health and Science students where they will develop technical skills and relevant employability skills within a Sixth Form College. We therefore, decided to work alongside employers to find out what they felt was important that students were learning whilst they were at College. Through many meetings with employers and our local university we were able to develop a curriculum that fulfilled its purpose and will hopefully guarantee students an interview for university.

The Care Academy has enjoyed the flexibility that study programmes have to offer. We recruited students from BTEC Health and Social Care and BTEC Applied Science. To fit into the timetable, we had to ensure that students already had GCSE maths and English as we timetabled the Care Academy in two lessons a week (140 minutes). For the first 6 weeks of the college term students engaged in lessons that developed communication skills, listening skills, Team work, 6Cs of nursing and activities designed to thoroughly prepare students for the placement. After the first six week of preparation the Care Academy students were assigned a placement at one of our two employers 'TwinGlobes Care Homes' and 'Albany House'. Students spent an afternoon a week at their placement for six weeks. We were able to free up an afternoon a week by combining a Care Academy lesson with a free period on a Wednesday afternoon. This placement period took us to the end of the OTLA project, but the Care Academy curriculum continues and will do so for the full academic year. The students will have a chance to complete a second placement in a second setting, they will have guest speakers to guest lecture, visiting university lectures from nursing staff and more science based lessons taught in an applied context. We will also dedicate a significant portion of time to university preparation.

The Care Academy gives students the opportunities needed to explore aspects of care beyond the scope of the BTEC curriculum. Through closer and better working relationships with employers, students have benefitted from more practical experiences on placement than they usually would. In one setting, students received the same training as staff and are now qualified in manual handling and basic life savings skills. Our student believe that they are involved in a unique opportunity.

Resources

As part of the OTLA project we also wanted to review the type of evidence that students collected whilst on placement. We did decide that we would like students to collect evidence of experiences on their placement and post online. This is something that we are still developing. We produced a workbook (see below) for students to use and included some QR codes for students to use for guidance and support when they were away from college and out in the setting. This has been annotated to include instructions on how and when the workbook can be used by students.