CASE STUDY: Skills for Future Jobs - Supporting Learner Progression

What was the purpose of the project?

The ‘Skills for future jobs – supporting learner progression’ Outstanding Teaching, Learning and Assessment project undertaken from 2016 to 2017, was a partnership between Petroc College of Further and Higher Education and Plymouth College of Art.

The project explored how best to improve teachers’ and learners’ understanding of career options, and the need to develop employability skills to support student progression to higher levels of study and employment.

What did the project do?

The project focused on raising teachers’ and learners’ awareness of labour market intelligence (LMI) and its role in identifying skills gaps in various industries. It also explored how mindfulness might be a way of accessing soft-skill development.

It undertook these by:

* creating employability resources by researching and sharing LMI (including a Character Matrix, an Importance of Employability Skills document and an associated online collection of employability tools)
* embedding mindfulness practice for staff and students to support employability and soft skills development
* conducting action research and creating case studies focused on employability skill requirements and development, culminating in a document entitled ‘Action Research into Quality of Teaching, Learning and Assessment in terms of Employability, Skill Development of Learners and Careers Information, Advice and Guidance’.

What helped the project succeed?

All project elements were shared in various ways:

* both colleges received parallel continuing professional development (CPD) sessions in mindfulness, and worked together remotely to produce LMI and mindfulness resources, which were shared at a CPD day
* joint learning walks were conducted
* a webinar conference enabled further sharing of the resources and good news stories.

What challenges did the project face?

A key project lead left the organisation and another staff member had to undertake and reshape the project to make it achievable. This delayed the start and necessitated some changes. If the project was to begin again, a focus on either employability skills or mindfulness, rather than both, might embed approaches more deeply.

What difference did the project make?

The wide range of research and resource development was a success. The resources are accessible and easy to use and have been shared through CPD. Along with dual learning walks, action research and industry case studies, these have helped teachers strengthen their knowledge of their subject area and the skills needed in relevant industries. They also ensured that teaching practice was evidence based and continuously evaluated and improved.

At the end of the mindfulness course, all participants either agreed or strongly agreed with statements that it had improved learning and teaching, that students and staff could benefit, and that it could improve the mental health of learners and staff. Participating staff, like students, showed a post-course movement towards agreeing with the statements about mindfulness in education.

Project activity consolidated work between Petroc and Plymouth College of Art. This will be sustained beyond the life of the project.

Where can i find more information?

Further information is available from Jenn Fuller, Project Manager, Petroc College of Further and Higher Education, j.fuller@petroc.ac.uk

**“Mindfulness has helped me to…focus more on what is important and to ignore the ‘background noise’.” Learner comments**