

Dissemination Partner Case Study (11)

Duchy College, Cornwall (part of the Cornwall College Group)

Tessa Counsell, HE Co-ordinator/Programme Manager
Val Walkden, College Careers Adviser

Background

Duchy College is a University of Plymouth partner, specifically in the Land, Food and Leisure subject area. In 1995 the college had 1 HE programme - in 2002/03 it ran 7 Foundation degrees and 4 HND programmes, recruiting nearly 200 HE students. The HNDs are now in the process of being totally replaced by FDs, supported by the college's excellent links with local and regional employers. In a number of the programmes, mature and part-time students are a significant part of the cohort and have found the SPAT materials, and similar, of great help.

Good Practice

Duchy College has run a variety of pre-planning events for students in the past and was seen as someone who could provide a major input into the SPAT project.

Use of Materials

As mentioned above, the College has been fully involved in the Widening Participation (WP) Agenda, and takes a proportion of students onto the HE programmes from non-traditional entry points. For some years a pre-induction HE Access week has been offered to these students and has proved very beneficial in preparing them for study at HND/FD level. This is backed up by continued tutorial support when on the programmes, and study skill input where necessary. These have been found to mesh very well with the SPAT materials also utilised for the project. Materials used were:

Pre-planning:

P2 Student Newsletter
P3 Checklist
P4 FAQs Leaflet

Key Skills:

K2 Student Leaflet
K3 Student FAQs

The Key Skills materials have been used with the Access week students and Year 1 students, being useful as part of their essential self-assessment at the start of the programmes. Students commented that they found the materials useful and a good trigger for further work on self-assessing their skills and planning how to improve performance and "fill the gaps". Pre-planning was found useful by Year 2 students because it encouraged them to identify for

themselves the things they really needed to know in order to make a balanced decision on when and where to apply for a top-up degree. Self-assessment is an important skill in the context of developing independent learning, management skills, reviewing performance, planning and target setting for improvement. So using the materials has also helped students to see this as a truly transferable skill that can be used to monitor and improve their academic progress as well as plan for successful progression.

Many of the questions prompted by the materials also apply to FE students thinking about applying to HE and attending HE conventions and open days. They found them a very useful starting point for discussion when used in sessions designed to consider the implications of moving to an HE environment.

These materials were delivered to HND Year 2 students, Foundation Degree - Year 1 students, Access students before entry to HND/Fd, and FE students. The college intends to introduce more glossy, customised leaflets, and fully incorporate the materials into the Professional Development module on the Foundation degrees, as well as using them for some Year 2, Level 3 FE students.