

Hartpury Head Start: raising aspiration and attainment through a programme of in-reach

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INTRODUCTION: Widening Participation aims to improve access to Higher Education (HE), involving Outreach activities in collaboration with schools/ colleges/ communities/ employers, and In-reach activity promoting access via for example alternative entry tests or customised programmes of pre-access activity (Osborne and Young, 2006).



BACKGROUND: Progression into HE for Hartpury Animal Management BTEC students was lower compared to other BTEC subject groups. Student demographic data suggested that the majority of students who were not applying would be readily identified within multiple widening participation target groups. A structured programme of in-reach (see table below) was thus designed with the following aims:

1. To help students make informed decisions about progressing onto Higher Education study
2. To develop confidence in relation to future study/ employment goals
3. To offer additional study skills sessions aimed at improving student attainment

Incentives to engage: a certificate of completion (80% total attendance across 1st & 2nd years of the programme) and potentially an unconditional offer reserved for students showing exceptional capability and attitude during engagement with the programme, which also requires a reference from tutor.

When	1 st year student workshops	2 nd years student workshops
September	1. Introduction to Hartpury Head Start and HE; experiences and perceptions vs. reality	6. Welcome back to Head Start – first year attendance certificates and launch assessment
October	2. Study Skills – time management	7a. HE and beyond – reintroduction to HE with an employment focus, and 7b. How to do HE Open days
November	3. Coping strategies – identifying potential problems and how to overcome these	8. Study Skills – writing covering letters and or UCAS personal statement including 1:1 drop-in opportunities.
December	4. (Self) Motivation & Confidence – what drives success and how this can be influenced	
January	FE Parents Evening – Head Start Coordinator in attendance	9. Study Skills – HE learning support, & using information and evidence (referencing)
March	Worcester UCAS event attendance	
May	5. Day of subject specific taster activities	10a. Portfolio preparatory session 10b. Preparing for the Future reflective portfolio

‘Student confidence in personal capability and future goals appeared low at the start of the programme, but this along with engagement with sessions has improved’

‘Positive reception from FE tutors and students alike, specifically the incentives’

‘Students report a variety of perceptions around HE which we explore, however HE is not the main theme of each session and activities are contextualized to current studies’

FUTURE STEPS: Work with FE tutors to schedule delivery for second year students with effect from September 2018/ evaluate relative successes of first year against attendance and attainment/ appraise content of first year sessions/ review learning gain surveys administered in first year.

References: Osborne, M. & Young, D. (2006) Flexibility an Widening Participation. The Higher Education Academy – Subject Centre for Education . <https://www.heacademy.ac.uk/system/files/2499.pdf>