

Case Study: Collecting information from learners so that appropriate support can be put in place more effectively.

'Assessment and learning: involving the learner'. LSC funded project.



The context:

Here at City of Sunderland College, we offer support and mentoring on a wide range of courses for a wide range of students in the post compulsory sector. It is therefore important to us to set up the most appropriate support for our students. We can do that if we have as much information as we can about student needs and his/her background

The challenge:

I would like to be able to examine how we can gather as much information as we can about a student, whom, in some cases, we may not know at all.

What I did:

In order to develop the challenge, a series of actions were carried out:

- I looked at the enrolment form to see if there were any other questions I could ask which may help us to build up a picture of our prospective student.
- I looked at the interview stage of enrolment – how could I find out more about the student?

The outcomes:

- I found that the enrolment form always has to have a certain number of compulsory questions included which cannot be changed.
- I went to the internet and to the college library looking for interviewing and questioning skills. I found that there were skills which I could practise, such as listening skills and questioning.
- It seemed to be important how we framed the question so as to show understanding and acceptance. For example
 - How do you feel we can help you?


- When you were at school, did you receive any support? If so, what kind of support?
- Did you have support in exams?
- Do you feel comfortable using a computer?
- Did you use any IT packages at school to help you complete your course work and task sheets?
- Do you favour any font size or style?
- Do you find it difficult to understand some of the tasks you are asked to do, if they are written down?
- Do you write slowly?
- Would you like help with writing up work in lessons?
- Would you like help with putting down ideas on paper or answering task sheets?
- When you have to work with numbers, which of these do you find the easiest - multiply, take-away, divide, adding up?
- Do you find it easy to organise yourself?
- For how long can you concentrate on a task?
- Did you find it easy to access the college buildings?
- Is there anything else which you feel you would want to tell us which can help us to put the most appropriate support in place for you?

The impact:

Impact was measured using a range of strategies:

- I was able to see how important the interview stage is. I will be talking through the enrolment forms more carefully with the students, explaining various points mentioned on the form.
- I was able to look more empathically at prospective students and ask more questions which would be helpful to us and, in turn, to them. I viewed the process of meeting new students in a way which might help them to feel more relaxed in a new situation. When they feel more at ease, they will, hopefully, talk more easily about the kind of help they may want. I have an increased awareness.

Hopefully, these strategies will have an impact on how we conduct our interview process and how we ensure that learners have an opportunity to receive the most appropriate support arrangement for them.

	<p>For further information contact:</p> <p>Pamela Savage, City of Sunderland College, Shiney Row, Durham DH4 4TL</p> <p>0191 511 6145</p>
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