



Community Planning Aberdeen

Progress Report	Project End Report 3.5: 80% of young people will successfully complete their Modern Apprenticeship programme by 2022
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Governance Group	CPA Board – 28 June 2023

Purpose of the Report

This report presents the results of the LOIP Improvement Project Aim 3.5 that sought for 80% of young people will successfully complete their Modern Apprenticeship programme by 2022 and seeks approval to close the project.

Summary of Key Information

1 BACKGROUND

- 1.1 The baseline data for this project was taken from 2018-19, pre-COVID-19, 68.4%, which represents the success rate of all NESCol Modern Apprenticeships. The project aim was to increase the baseline success to 80%.
- 1.2 This project piloted tests of change with Hairdressing Modern Apprentices at NESCol, with a view to incorporating successful changes in other frameworks. Hairdressing was chosen as a framework which traditionally performs more poorly with regards to completion rates than other courses. There is a higher level of early withdrawal (for reasons such as complexity of course, change of employer, change of career, financial difficulties associated with low-income employment). In terms of success rates, AY2020-21 figures indicate an average completion success rate of 60.8% in hairdressing. The only industry group with a lower success rate is Automotive with 60.3%.

2 IMPROVEMENT PROJECT AIM

- 2.1 Against this background, on 21 April 2022, the CPA Board approved the [project charter](#) for the initiation of an improvement project which aimed to ensure that 80% of young people will successfully achieve their Modern Apprenticeship programme by 2022.

2.2 As a test of change, this project considered low successful completions focussing on MA Hairdressing apprenticeships over the past few years.

3 WHAT CHANGES DID WE MAKE?

3.1 A project group was formed comprising curriculum staff, an SDS representative, a DYWNE representative, and through a work-based assessor, candidates and employers. The project tested the following:

1. Initially, the project focused on financial incentives for MA Hairdressing students. The cost of kit and supplies was identified as a barrier to achievement. It was agreed to test:
2. Developing a mechanism to refund the cost of kits on completion of milestones, or the course in its entirety, and providing access to industry discounts for MA students through suppliers. Suppliers provided input to the project group through the College's External Engagement Co-ordinator (Hairdressing). This also led to discounts on supplies, for MA students, being negotiated and put in place.
3. Aberdeen City Council and SDS provided information on public funding streams for trainees and employers. This was incorporated into promotional materials for prospective MAs and employers – to ensure that they were aware of the commitment to the hairdressing course content, funding streams and the wider MA programme.
4. Promotion of MA as a route to pupils at Northfield Academy and St Machar Academy.
5. Event for Employers - It was identified that there were very low numbers of hairdressing apprentices despite there being over 100 salons in the City (of varying sizes). Many employers do not provide or require formal training, choosing to do in-house uncertified training. In order to boost the uptake of apprenticeships, an open evening to promote MA Hairdressing, incorporating a skills development session, for employers was held at the NESCol City campus. This was targeted at employers and potential MA students.
6. Review of Core Skills - It became apparent from discussion with assessors, candidates and employers, that the SVQ (practical) units were not an issue for completion. Core Skills, which are delivered discretely, caused a major concern and led to non-completion of the MA. Work is being undertaken to review the delivery of core skills. Therefore, the importance of core skills development (and the impact of this on the award of the MA qualification) is now highlighted (i) in the contract and signed by the employer and trainee; and (ii) in the employer and trainee induction pack so that it was no longer seen as a bolt-on to the qualification.

4 HAVE OUR CHANGES RESULTED IN IMPROVEMENT?

4.1 The project has not met the target of 80%, and in fact looking at the figures for AY2022-23, there has been significant decrease in MA success, across the board, despite the changes made. In AY2018-19 (baseline), the overall success rate for Modern Apprenticeships delivered by the College was of 68.4%. MA achievement over time is shown, by framework on the table below. This is believed to be COVID-related – assessment mitigations and furlough of employment which affected completion.

Modern Apprenticeship Success Rates 2018-2023*					
	Academic Year				
	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23
	%	%	%	%	%
Hairdressing	75	71.4	20	76.47	50
Automotive	100	56.3	40	73.68	42.9
Business and Admin	66.7	91.7	91.7	72.73	71.4
Management	0	0	100	100	0
Care	0	50	100	62.5	63
Engineering	98.2	84.8	80	63.89	62.2
Logistics	100	92.3	83	88.89	100
Total percentages	68.4	79.9	78.6	68.42	57.1

4.2 Data overall has shown a significant decline in the success rate of modern apprenticeships from baseline to year AY2022-3. Where we had a significant increase during AY2019-20, this was followed by consecutive reductions in the next three years. The reduction in success in AY2021-22 is likely to relate to COVID-19 mitigations and furlough, and this relates particularly to hairdressing where many businesses had to close. There was a significant drop in overall success for automotive and management. There is a low uptake for management, which no candidates registered in AY2022-23. The reduction in success in Automotive is believed to be COVID-related, for the reasons noted in 4.1 above.

4.3 The significant decline in success in hairdressing apprenticeships in AY2022-23 is mainly due to several candidates leaving the course before completion. Although this does happen on occasion, AY2022-23 has seen more withdrawals from the course than would have been expected, resulting in the much lower success rate, and despite the aims of this project. The reasons for withdrawal could be attributed to impacts of COVID (mental health, security of employment, cost of living crisis). It has to be noted that this trend has not only affected hairdressing, with decline throughout most of the apprenticeships and all due to candidates leaving early and not completing. While the College contacts students who are withdrawing, structured exit interviews (similar to full-time students) will be put in place, moving forward, to gather reasons for leaving.

- 4.4 From contact with withdrawing students, the after-effects of COVID-19 has left a significant number of young potential apprentices not completing College courses or a skilled career path. It may take a number of years for this to align with pre-COVID success rates.
- 4.5 In terms of the changes tested, an event for employers was held on 2 November 2022, to promote the MA Hairdressing and provide information on funding (including the Employer Recruitment Incentive). An industry demonstration/event was also incorporated to add value and encourage attendance. At this event, there were 6 employers, 5 trainees and one industry representative present. This is relevant to Charter 3.4 (to increase the number of Modern and Graduate Apprenticeships by 5% by 2022) and has been shared with the project manager. Feedback from employers was positive with many stating that they would like to employ apprentices if it was viable for their business. Apprentice time spent at college training was mentioned as a barrier.
- 4.6 As well as the event, MAs (including hairdressing) have been promoted through DYW in secondary schools, with the view that increasing the number of students commencing an MA which will support higher completion rates. Higher numbers of starters, with a good induction, should increase the number completions.
- 4.7 The low number of hairdressing learners (6 in Aberdeen City), on this programme, made it difficult to establish the impact of any change.
- 4.8 Recognising the impact of the cost of living, incentives information and information relating to the support available for students encountering hardship has been added to the induction material and promoted on an ongoing basis throughout the academic year. This has led to a small increase in students seeking support. In terms of incentives, the College worked with suppliers of hairdressing kits and consumables to develop discounts for those undertaking an MA programme. This saw a positive outcome with a discount on the kit negotiated through Salon Services, Wella and Ellisons, for trainees who have joined the MA programme at NESCol. The kit was valued at £265 (with discount). The arrangement in place is that Apprentices will purchase the kit and be refunded the cost at key milestones of their course.
- 4.9 In response to feedback from students and employers at the event, the information pack for employers and students has been updated, along with the induction material to ensure both parties have the required information and access to support to enable students to successfully continue and complete their course regardless of their circumstances. This has been received positively to date and the College is confident that achievement rates can be improved in the next academic year. The impact of change, in relation to Hairdressing, will not be available until the current cohort completes in June 2024. There was a slight increase in hairdressing success during AY2021-22, but a reduction in funded places impacted on opportunities in AY2022-23. This appears set to continue throughout AY2023-24.

- 4.10 Although the tests of change have failed to show any positive effect in terms of data, the tests of change and lessons learned were shared with curriculum staff at NESCol, including the Curriculum Managers Forum to share practice. It was noted that funding restrictions, would not allow incentives to be paid to trainees in most other sectors. However, these tests of change and lessons learned will be considered in future planning of programmes and embedded, where appropriate, in induction and learning materials.

5 HOW WILL WE SUSTAIN THESE IMPROVEMENTS?

- 5.1 Induction materials have been enhanced, for employers and trainees, which integrate core skills, and early delivery of core skills, and this will be applied to other frameworks (e.g. Automotive and Hospitality) and will be reviewed annually to ensure currency and effectiveness.

- 5.2 The other changes (incentives and employer events to promote MAs) have been embedded as business as usual where applicable to the Framework.

6 HOW WILL WE MONITOR THESE IMPROVEMENTS?

- 6.1 These improvements will be monitored by the College's curriculum team and SDS Administrator, and data will be provided as soon as possible.

- 6.2 Should it be agreed that the project is ended, the data recorded will continue to be monitored and reported to Aberdeen Prospers, as well as added to the Outcomes Framework/Improvement programme Dashboard.

7 OPPORTUNITIES FOR SCALE UP AND SPREAD

- 7.1 The outcomes and learning have been shared across NESCOL and will be shared with other apprenticeship training providers for their consideration.

- 7.2 The approach to core skills could be applied to other frameworks, e.g. Automotive, Hospitality.

- 7.3 Incentives could be further developed and could be available for the following, within budget restraints:

- Contribution towards travel costs
- Contribution towards equipment/PPE,
- Raising awareness of MA Graduation events and prizes/awards (to trainees and employers).

Recommendations for Action

It is recommended that the CPA Board:

- i) Agree that testing is concluded and that this improvement project is brought to an end on the basis that while the overall aim has not been achieved, the changes have been embedded and will continue to be monitored.
- ii) Note the opportunities for scale up and spread as detailed at section 7.
- iii) Note that the dataset for the overall aim will continue to be reported via the Improvement Programme dashboard to ensure progress is monitored
- iv) Note that Aberdeen Prospers will consider any further improvement activity in this area as part of the refresh of the LOIP.

Opportunities and Risks

The project has not achieved its aim. Some of the tests of change will be applied to future cohorts (particularly around the delivery of core skills). These experiences will be shared with curriculum areas/other frameworks to inform future planning.

Some of the good practice identified in Section 3 (marketing materials, employer events, up-front core skills information) could be applied to the recruitment of future MA students and this will be shared with the Project Manager for Charter 3.4 (Increasing the number MA and GA by 5% in 2022).

Consultation

Skills Development Scotland
DYW North East
Local employers
Current MA Hairdressing Trainees
Current MA employers
Aberdeen Prospers
CPA Management Group

Background Papers

The following papers were used in the preparation of this report.

Refreshed LOIP:

<https://communityplanningaberdeen.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/07/Final-LOIP-2016-26-Refreshed-July-21.pdf>

Skills Development Scotland MA Activity Reports

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