

OUTSTANDING TEACHING, LEARNING AND ASSESSMENT TECHNICAL SKILLS NATIONAL PROGRAMME

1. BSix Project Summary

Created by: John Ruskin College, BSix Sixth Form College

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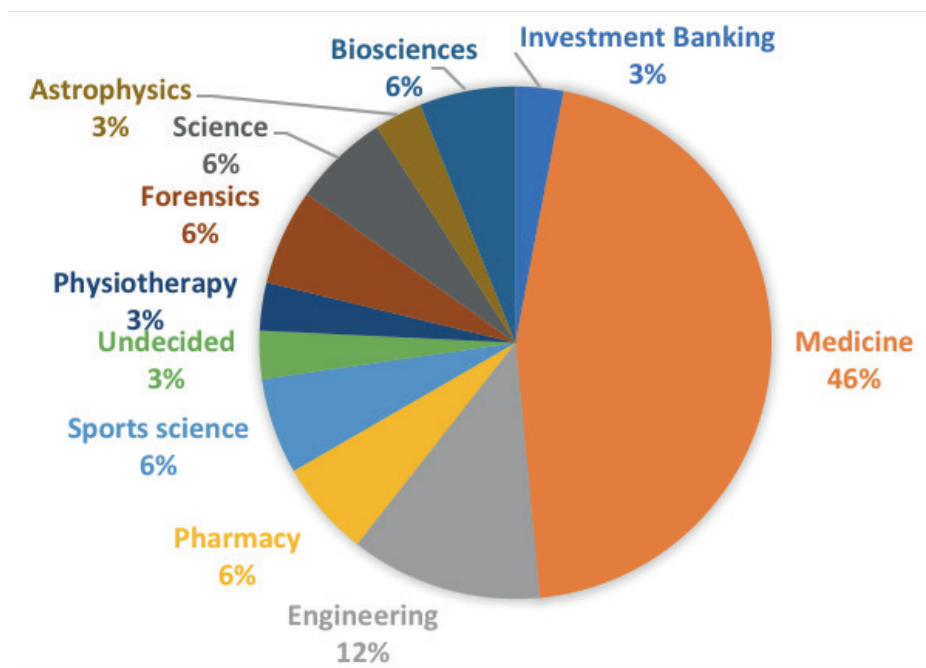
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Scope

BSix is a college where students are given the opportunity to take A level subjects with national entrance requirements – five c grades, or equivalent, at GCSE. Few of the students realise the merit of a vocational qualification as they think would not facilitate getting them to university to study engineering or medicine. Those who are on a vocational course still often see university as the only route and the purpose of this project was to challenge that attitude and to enable all students to see the career opportunities though the vocational route through apprenticeships.

Some students were therefore given some time to do some careers research that would direct them towards different pathways, and to let them hear from employers about the full range of careers in various industries. This task involved initial planning and then five teachers took on a role leading sessions on the day and a further 3 teachers joined in the discussion afterwards on outcomes of the project.

Statistics – before careers research



The majority of our students are mainly interested in medicine and engineering. When asked what they need to achieve at college to do this, 80% simply said ‘high grades’. They wanted to follow these careers as they are interested in them, but also because they would like a career that would be a benefit to society.

“High grades” is concerning, as students do not seem to have done any research into what grades are required for the next step in their career. It seems that by stating that achieving high grades is the key to their success, the students have not done any research into exactly what grades are required for the next step in their careers.

Interestingly, the biggest influence on the students’ career choices was their family. Many of their parents had not been educated in the UK and place a huge value on the education available to their children here, but they do not always understand the system. One student in particular, from a Somali family, spoke about how their parents deferred to the oldest sibling, and all the others had to follow the same path through education. Around 63% of our students said they wanted to go to university after college, but were not able to identify a specific course. Only 9% said they were considering an apprenticeship.

The event

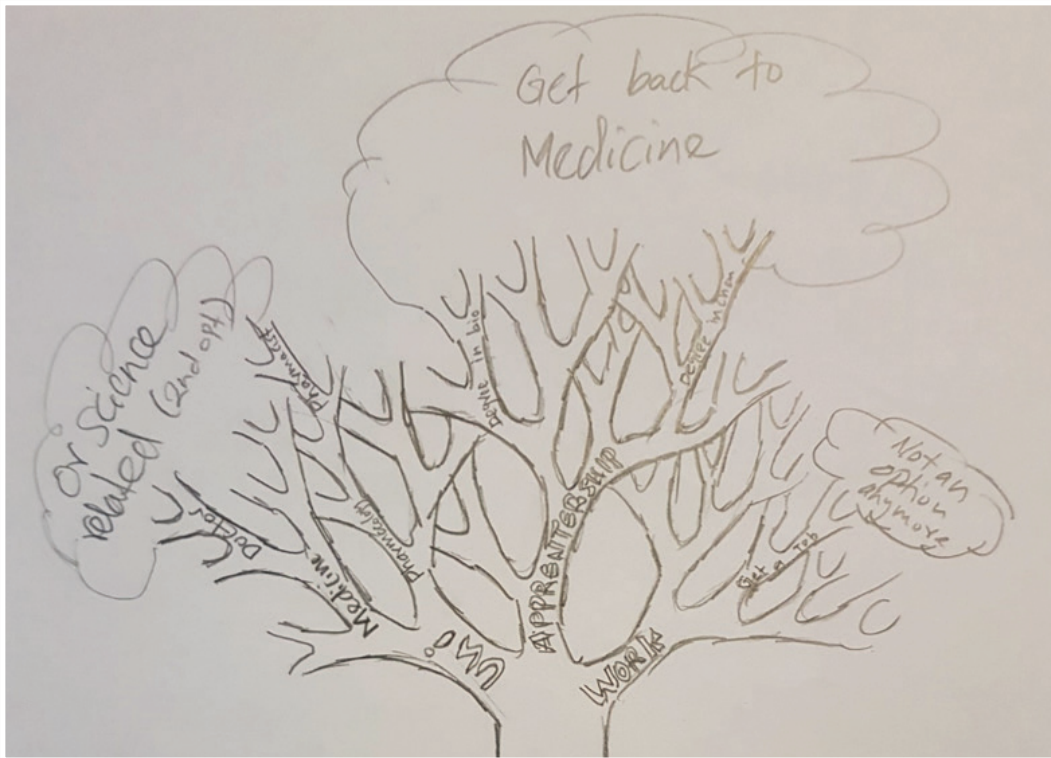
Ordinary lessons were postponed on 9th November, in order for students to conduct their research. They started off with some statistics – that there are 6000 medical school places available each year, and if the same proportion of students from the 93 sixth form colleges in the UK applied as want to from BSix, there would be 43,000 applications. This does not include applications from school sixth forms. They also watched a video about how the life of a junior doctor.

The raw realisation of how hard it is to get into medical school was followed up by asking students to research different careers available in science and health, with a list of examples provided by staff if prompting were required. The students were then shown a video from Manchester Metropolitan University about degree apprenticeships as an alternative to traditional university courses. They were then given a work sheet to answer some structured questions about apprenticeships.

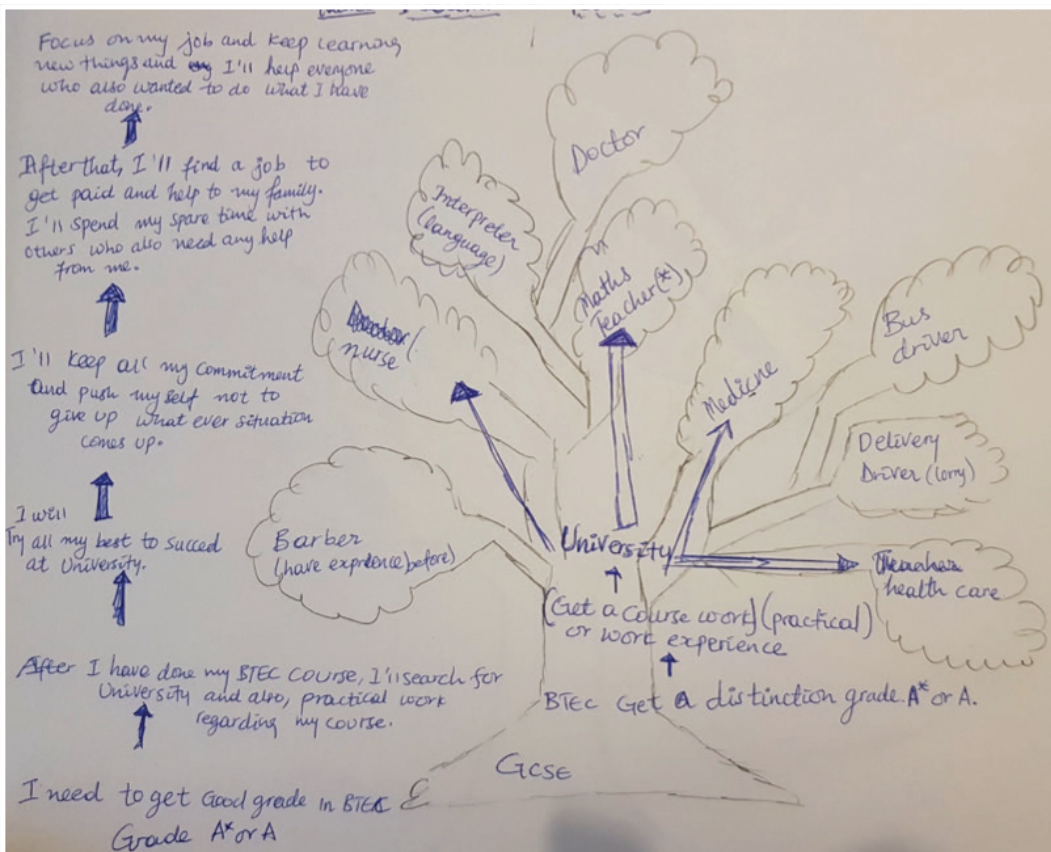
Most found the research opportunity really useful and engaged in the research. It prompted really useful discussions with teachers, who also really enjoyed the opportunity to have time to talk to students about realistic career options for them. The last task was to create a 'careers tree' or map, demonstrating all the different pathways that they could take following their BTEC course. This was started by the majority of students, who understood different progressions but much more time was needed to do this, which was then allocated during tutorials. Most students mapped two pathways for getting their chosen job after university, but few then mapped progressions and further training through that job.

In the afternoon, students were able to engage directly with employers. The visiting employers were invited in on the basis of their background in specific industries and they were asked to speak about how they got into their role, and what it now involves.

- A research and development scientist from Reckitt Benckiser who was determined to do medicine at university, but after realising she would need to do a graduate medical degree, settled on a career in research and development in the health sector as it was more rewarding, and still encompassed all the moral values she has which made her want to do medicine in the first place
- A graduate programme engineer from local company Thames Water who spoke about the different branches of engineering students could enter into, and also the apprenticeship scheme run locally by Thames Water
- A technical manager at Marriage Millers, who left school at 16 and went straight into an entry level role working in a food lab, and was later offered training and completed a L3 BTEC qualification through work, and now has a senior role in the company
- A visitor who trained as a nutritionist at university, then worked for the NHS and eventually the British Nutrition Foundation. She now works with the media including national newspapers as a consultant nutritionist, as well as conducting research into how nutrition affects the development of diseases such as Alzheimer's.

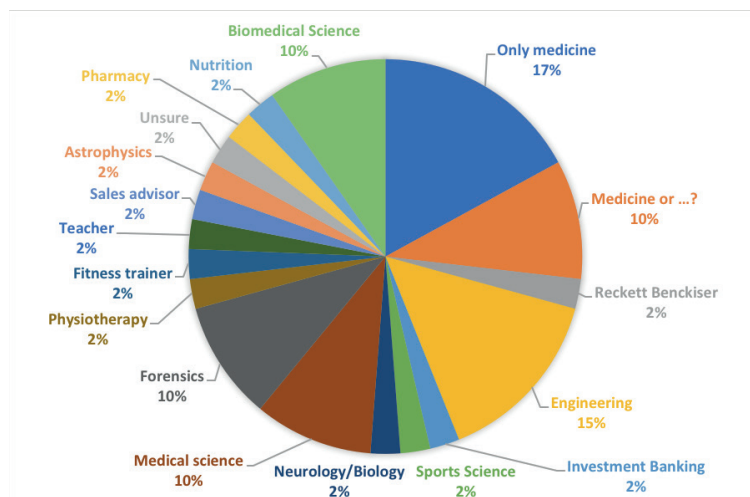


Careers tree by student #2 showing various different options, and that there is a back-up plan to medicine



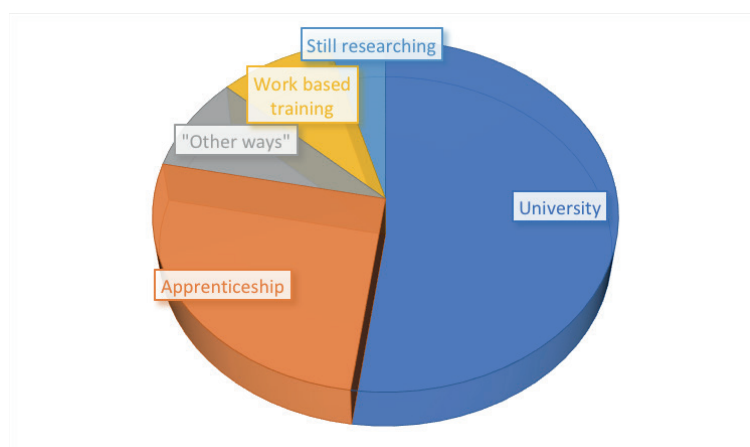
Careers tree from student #3 with a considered plan and many different options

Statistics – after careers research

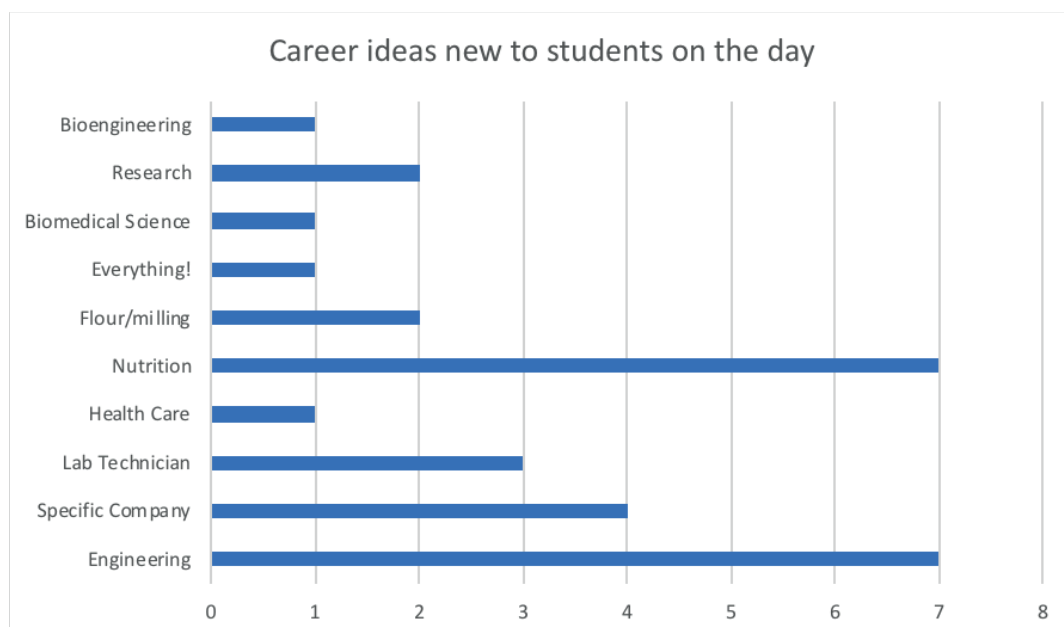


After being given time to research different careers, students had a far greater and more realistic view of careers they could achieve.

Students were again asked what they could do after university, and the number of students considering apprenticeships doubled, with some students also considering work based training to gain specific vocational qualifications. It is very pleasing to see some saying they still want to do more research, and this will be facilitated for them.



Only 47% of students put that they simply needed to achieve high grades in college, compared to 80% beforehand, with 26% now stating specific grades and 10% saying they needed work place experience. Students also highlighted many careers they had not thought of previous to the event.



Outcomes

The project has proven that there is a need to spend time with students working on careers, and actively engage in personal discussions with them. As a result of this, science staff planned a scheme of tutorial events they felt would be useful as a result of the discussion and statistics from this event.

Initially this will be part of the college-wide tutorial system, with the first four weeks of 2018 dedicated to discussing careers.

1. Kola, our careers advisor will talk to students about the statistics of various careers, and what might be realistic to do
2. Jane, our work experience co-ordinator is going to talk to students about how they can approach companies to do work experience, and how the college can support them in doing this. This links in with the companies we have contacted as part of the OTLA project
3. Visitors will be invited in to have a whole session dedicated to apprenticeships, where students can speak to apprentices and providers
4. Students have a tutor led session in an IT room where they are able to research careers and work-experience.

College staff have now planned a 13-week tutorial module where more time is given to allow students to research specific careers. This will be rolled-out cross college, and, with the help of senior tutors, can be made relevant to different subject areas, not just health and science. Due to time constraints this is unlikely to be done this academic year, as it would hit the time when students are starting exams, but is a viable plan for 2018/19 having trialled it with four weeks.

The employers contacted will continue to be involved with the tutorial plan, some will be asked to come back and speak in person. One of the visitor's interesting view of how her career encompasses the same values and benefits to society that accompanies medicine will be made into a video to share with students. All employers have been asked to fill in a questionnaire on their career progression, to be shared with students as part of the tutorial program. We will also continue to use the careers organisation Inspiring the Future which links educators with many different areas of industry.

Future work

1. There is a definite need to involve parents and families in these kind of discussion, and to examine the cultural influence and barriers to our students. There is a big push from families for the students to do A-levels and go to university, and a huge importance and sense of pride places in taking science and maths. Not all students want to be on the science course, but tend to follow their families' views
2. More work needs to be done to bring apprenticeship providers into college, and getting students out of college and to see these workplaces
3. The tutorial system can be evolved to give tutors and tutees 1:1 time to talk about career options, as this may be far more effective and personal than with the college careers advisor, and referrals to professional careers advisers should be made where necessary. Students with clear careers goals may be more motivated to do well on their course, allowing time spent dealing with pastoral and attendance issues to be spent looking at careers
4. The college work experience provision could be evaluated to assess its impact on supporting students' career choices. All our L3 BTEC students have been offered work experience organised by an independent company, but not all students have chosen the placements themselves or made initial contact with organisations themselves. Far more interpersonal skills could be taught if students were to write their CV, submit it to a company and arrange a placement themselves, with the college supporting to make sure health and safety and safeguarding measures are in place. Our young people are awesome and they need to learn to show employers that before they are applying for jobs for life.