



Case Study:

Embedding competition into learning activities raises achievement.



Derwen College has a history of embracing competition as a means of developing learner's skills and aspirations to raise achievement.

It has been common practice amongst some teachers at the college to encourage a degree of constructive competitiveness, for example adding time challenges to tasks or running weekly team challenges. This is in addition to developing Inclusive Skills competitions nationally. These competitions are available for young people in further education who are not at the skills level required for mainstream competitions.

Here is an overview of external competition activity Derwen has participated in so far:

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2010 internal restaurant service skills, using official skills criteria as the basis. Industry experts came to judge. This was the start.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2011 First external competition. Assett Skills 'team clean' competition. This was mainstream. Though they didn't win (as they hadn't been working to industry standards) this led to further development within Derwen of industry standards and a recognition of the potential for going much further.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2011 showcased performance at World Skills London
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2011/12 First national NATSPEC Competition - 'Going for Gold' art competition - the first of its kind within Natspec
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2012/13 - Welsh Culinary Association mainstream table laying competition. Came away with 3 silvers. Learners from Creative Arts entered external Art for Autism competition.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2012/13 Derwen led a group of NATSPEC colleges to develop inclusive skills competitions for Natspec group members. Groups from Derwen competed in animal care competition – House Keeping for Hens, presentation competition – Gift of the Gab and visual merchandising competition - Display your Wares. A group from Derwen won gold in the Display your Wares competition.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2012/13 ESF funding for a NATSPEC stand at the national Skills Show in Birmingham + showcased performance at Skills Show
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2013/14 Derwen working with Natspec and North Warwickshire and Hinckley College (NWHC) to develop national competitions , that are widely publicised, and are available for young people in further education who are not at the skills levels required for mainstream competitions (mostly for entry level or level 1 learners).
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2013/14 – Skills Show: NATSPEC stand – ESF area Derwen, NATSPEC and NWHC Inclusive Skills Competition stand Derwen in showcase area – primetime slot on Saturday promoting visual merchandising skills/ inclusive skills competitions Showcased 2 performances at Skills Show
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2013/14 working with NWHC to lobby for space in the 2013 Skills Show

During October / November 2013 Derwen College participated in the Vocational Masterclass Programme run by the Institute for Learning (IfL).



The main purposes of this CPD were to develop and experience competition as a means of boosting learners' motivation and performance. Teachers to recognise and develop further their coaching and training skills which have proved effective in WorldSkills competitions.

Staff involved in the training worked with the Vocational Masterclass Team to adapt the Masterclass model and approach for use with learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities (LLDD).

Teachers from each vocational curriculum area took part in the 2 day Masterclass focused on coaching skills, embedding competition and developing competition briefs.

Mini competitions were hosted within departments which allows more learners to experience participating in competition activity.

Here are some thoughts from learners who took part:

Arts, Media and Business: Entry Level 3, Poster to promote the Derwen Christmas Show 2013:

'I thought it was interesting, good teamwork. Competitions are good because they show your skills and what your good at', Peter.



Catering: Entry Level 3, Safe Food Storage:

'It felt really good. It is good evidence for my catering course and in the future because I want to get a job and work', Simon.



Hospitality and Retail: Entry Level 2, Visual Merchandising:

'It was good. The display was good, it made me feel happy. I felt good about showing off my work', Oliver.



Landbased: Entry Level 1, Design and plant a winter basket or tub for sale in the garden shop:

'It was good in the gardens, I liked doing the compost', Ben.



The Director of Learning and Quality at the college commented on how the training is positive for quality in assessment:

"Everything we do here is about knowing the students' levels then setting clear targets and breaking down the tasks into simple and clear steps-very small steps sometimes. It sounds very simple but it isn't. That's exactly what writing those competition briefs is about so that is where quality improvement will impact. It means they get the process right and then can use that as their assessment criteria."

Teachers who attended the training also clearly recognised the benefits of this CPD and competition:

'Excellent training—hard work but worth it!'



'Very informative and useful—will use competition more in planning'

'I can now put energizers and coaching techniques into practice within my teaching. All students benefited and achieved'



'Will help to prepare my learners for competition next year'

'Excellent course—really enjoyable. Learnt lots of coaching techniques that will be used promptly within my teaching and will also be passed on to work colleagues.'