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Engaging employers in the hair and beauty industry in enriching learning through industry week: Southampton City College

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Brief description

Employers facilitate an industry week when students learn specialist, up-to-date hairdressing and beauty therapy techniques, provided alongside informative careers and higher education talks, and culminating in the chance to compete in an exciting show.

Overview – the provider’s message

‘The hair and beauty industry allows for a diverse and varied career where many professionals choose to specialise in a particular area, whether this be as a nail technician for beauty or a colour technician in hair. Industry week lets students experience a wide range of possible career pathways and exposes them to the wider aspects of the industry. We use the week to inject passion and ambition, by showing students what is achievable and available to them. It is also an opportunity to gain experience of their chosen progression route, or to help them make up their minds by providing a flavour of what the next step entails!’



Sarah Bennett, Head of Faculty

The good practice in detail

Engaging employers to play a part in training is an area that many colleges find difficult. Hairdressing and beauty therapy staff at the college have built their industry links over a number of years, placing students with local employers for work experience and future employment. Many ex-students have themselves become employers and use the college to train their own staff. This, along with invitations to attend college events, has helped build good local relations with the industry locally.

A strong focus on helping students to gain employment led to action to form links with larger employers in the beauty industry, such as cruise liner on board beauty therapists, national hotel chains and spa centres. Links with a range of product and specialist equipment manufacturers have also been developed beyond what is normally seen in a college. National

product manufacturers have used college facilities to put on shows for local employers. Staff and students attend these sessions to learn how to use new products and to see advanced techniques in action. Besides highlighting progression routes to employment, links with a local university were also promoted to students who might be interested in higher education. The university gave a talk on areas such as foundation degrees which could be followed up by a visit to see what studying at university would entail.

All of these industry links are brought together each year in the spring, when the normal college timetable is suspended for a week for full-time, part-time and 14-16-year-old students, along with apprentices, in favour of a programme of full- and half-day events that let students experience the full breadth of the industry in which they aspire to work. The industry week, which has been held on six occasions, has grown over time. Every student selects the workshops they wish to attend and completes a [journal](#) in which they record notes about what they have learnt.

This year, hairdressing students were given the chance to choose from nine options including: African-Caribbean hairdressing demonstrations (by a specialist local employer); colour techniques from specialist manufacturers; hair up; barbering; hair extensions and weaving; and advanced-cutting workshops featuring an employer from an internationally well known hairdressing group.

Students enjoyed the wide range of activities they could take part in and developed new skills. Some of the hairdressing students said:



'I've gained so much confidence in a few hours'

'I now know that cutting is the area that really excites me and that I will specialise in when I work in a salon'

'I really want to learn more about the different techniques used on African-Caribbean hair next year by moving onto the combined hairdressing course'

'I managed to get a job this week for when I leave in the summer!'

The employer who facilitated a cutting workshop with staff for students said:

'It is really nice to give something back to the industry by helping to inspire students and to show what's possible when cutting hair.'

Beauty therapy students could choose from 14 options including: threading; reflexology; Reki; nail art; fashion makeup; spray tanning; and advanced waxing. Some of the skills learnt will form the foundation for further training and students felt that the extra knowledge would help when seeking employment, because they could offer an employer additional skills. The sessions observed during the visit, taught by specialists including technicians from large companies, were interesting and lively, and held the attention of learners well.



Some of the beauty students said:



'I've learnt several new skills that are not part of the NVQ which will help me to get a job ahead of others'

'I have a much clearer idea of what I want to do in the future following this week'

'This week has made the different types of places I can work in come alive for me.'

One of the highlights of the week for students was the chance to let their creativity run riot in a 'the seasons - total look' show that allowed them to cut, colour and style hair, and to design makeup and costumes to create innovative styles. School links students had a theme of 'hair through the ages'. All students took an active part, whether they had been at the college for six or 30 months. The finished models were shown on a raised stage in front of a large and appreciative audience of students and employers. Newer students were making notes for the following year on how they could improve further. Employers said that the skills shown were of a high standard and would help students to find employment when they had finished their courses.

Following the show, students evaluate their work to see what they could have done differently. They also evaluate each workshop so that staff can improve what is offered in the next industry week. Several part-time students gained employment from participating employers during the event.

Provider background

[Southampton City College](#) is a medium-sized general further education college based on a main site in central Southampton. To meet local needs it also offers courses from a range of other venues. The curriculum is almost wholly vocational, along with significant provision in basic skills, providing courses in 12 subject areas. The college's mission is to enable individuals and businesses to thrive and succeed.

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