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Outstanding individual target setting: Highbury College

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Brief description

This example focuses on the outstanding use of target setting for students studying hair and beauty. It is a key feature of the outstanding teaching and learning in hair and beauty exemplified by high standards of work and a desire by learners to succeed.



Overview – the college’s message

‘The success of all our students is our overriding priority, and is underpinned by our belief that all our managers and staff are responsible for the leadership of learning. Our Centre for Excellence in Teaching and Learning supports our teachers to develop and deliver outstanding teaching and learning. Through its strong focus on encouraging teachers to be innovative, creative and reflective practitioners who share good practice, it also ensures that we continue to be leaders of learning’.

Stella Mbubaegbu CBE, Principal

The good practice in detail

Background – Assessment for Learning

All the curriculum areas at Highbury College have developed a framework, to guide the implementation of Assessment for Learning. ‘We believe that the personalisation of learning lies at the heart of outstanding teaching’, says Deborah See, Executive



Director Collegiate College. 'Personalising learning ensures that students are engaged and empowered, challenged and motivated to achieve their full potential – and our teachers use a range of active teaching, learning and assessment strategies, including Assessment for Learning, to support this'.

Hair and Beauty teachers and assessors demonstrate exemplary practice in their use of Assessment for Learning, supporting their students to take ownership of their learning. This case study focuses on how it has been achieved.

Outstanding teaching, learning and assessment

Teaching, learning and assessment in both hairdressing and beauty therapy at the time of the previous [inspection](#) were outstanding. Students not only enjoyed their learning but were fully engaged at all times. This was especially evident during practical training and assessment sessions. In a 'typical' practical lesson in a college of further education there are usually periods of time wasted by individual students, whether it is being slow in setting up at the beginning of a session, not being prepared to do something else in the time between clients or when there is time left at the end of a three-hour session. For example, if there is a 15-minute gap between clients it is all too easy for a student to 'drift' unproductively and waste that block of time.

Students at this college are challenged to make the most of every opportunity to learn. They develop both a work and a learning ethic that enables them to make good progress in developing their practical skills. And target setting is used well to keep learners fully engaged in the learning process at all times.

Establishing a work and learning ethic through target setting

From induction onwards students develop not only a 'can do' attitude to their studies, but a desire to achieve as much as possible in every teaching session. In the early sessions, the concept of students being involved in identifying their own strengths and areas for improvement is introduced in practical tasks, so students can identify where they are in their learning and training programme. Targets are introduced initially during induction using something as basic as bringing in a padlock for a locker to store their belongings securely. Personal targets, such as preparing for a driving test during the year, and long-term career goals are also introduced. Group targets, such as negotiating standardised timekeeping habits, attendance levels, wearing uniform correctly and bringing in the appropriate kit for practical sessions, develop a group identity and set behavioural standards. The right foundations for the course are laid.

All full-time and substantive part-time students have an electronic personal learning plan or [PLP](#) (often referred to as an ILP or individual learning plan). It is not just a document that sits on a computer, to be looked at once a month or quarter, but is in continuous use. Smaller targets, particularly for a practical session, are written down on paper and contribute to the larger targets that are recorded electronically. The electronic PLPs have been in use for over three years and the effectiveness of their use continues to be improved each year, particularly in response to consultations with student group representatives. The PLPs have become simpler to use, with more obvious guidance tabs and improvements to navigation. Students and staff use them in tutorials in the same way that they would prepare for a practical session.

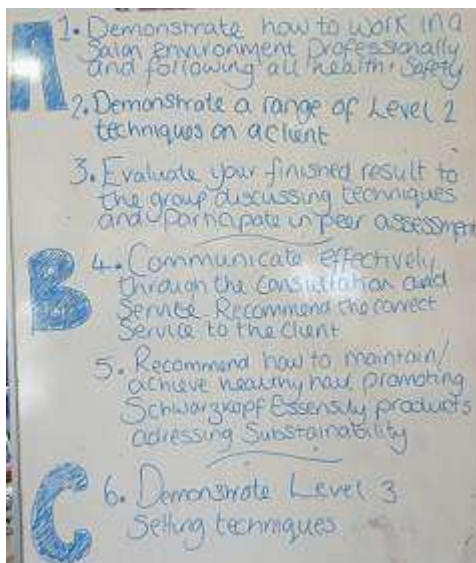
Students stay on task even when not attending college

If a student cannot attend college they can access their PLP from home and download resources to complete work. This helps students to keep on top of their work and tutors can easily track where students might otherwise have fallen behind. Where homework and assignments are set, staff can see at a glance who has handed in their work on time. Staff are confident in working with the college virtual learning environment (VLE) 'MyCourse' which helps develop the same degree of confidence in the students. Highbury provides teaching staff with good and quick technical support that is dedicated to each curriculum area. Students routinely upload assignments to the VLE for teachers to mark and also make podcasts of their work. Most feedback is electronic, and some learners opt for recorded audio feedback.



Students continually use the simple concept of asking themselves, 'What am I good at and what do I need to improve?' It acts as a driver for what they do in lessons.

Targets within lessons



Lessons start on time and students are ready to learn. Staff engage with their group early in each lesson to negotiate a set of three levels of target; simply attributed to an A, B or C banding. These are:

A – targets that everyone in the group will achieve

B – targets that most in the group will achieve

C – targets that some in the group will achieve (often as an extension activity to develop higher level practical skills or understanding, or to consolidate or practice previous knowledge or skills; particularly important in a practical subject where being able to demonstrate current skills to an employer can be key to gaining employment).

In early practical sessions there are general aims for all, but once into the course these are developed into more individual targets relating to skills and timings, helping students to develop commercial and employability skills. The idea of three levels of target is used in other colleges and work-based providers but Highbury students use them unusually well and it is a key part of gaining and consolidating practical skills and knowledge.

Using timelines in longer sessions

Once the targets are consolidated with students, 'timelines' are introduced in practical sessions. Planning takes place quickly at the beginning of each session and ensures that everyone knows what they are doing. If a session lasts three hours, each hour is broken down for every student to identify what they should be doing and completing in that hour.

This is done simply by drawing a series of 'bubbles' for each student on a piece of 'whiteboard' film that can be stuck to a window or wall in a prominent position. This simple concept gives direction to all the students, keeps them engaged and ensures a good pace of learning.

Because development of skills is dependent on having the right clients for each student, staff plan for all eventualities, so that if a client does not arrive there are extra tasks that can be substituted. The 'not wasting time, not falling behind' ethos comes at students from all angles. They know from the start of their course that it is an expectation that they keep busy in learning, setting and meeting their targets.

Learners like the approach. One hairdressing student says: 'This is so different from when I was at school. I have ownership of what I am doing and if I was to waste time there would only be one person to suffer. The attitude I have developed to my studies at college has transferred to my life outside and I feel that my life has improved as a result. I'm sure it will help me go on to further study and eventually to find a job that challenges me.'



Effective monitoring of tasks

Visual tracking grids with stickers show what has been achieved by students, so their progress is obvious to all. The focus on completing units reinforces the concept of encouraging and understanding progress. Students use a sticky tab to show where the recording paperwork is for each unit in their portfolios. On completion of a unit students move the tab to the top of the folder to reflect completion.

Competitions and external events

Competitions are used well to motivate students and to consolidate their learning. Students keep practising the skills they acquire rather than forgetting and not using them. There are regular visits to the local community; for example, visiting schools to demonstrate face painting, doing the hair and makeup for school productions and teaching 'over 50s makeup' to residents in care homes. Students receive certificates to recognise such work and benefit from developing confidence in dealing with people in a range of settings.

Sharing good practice

There is a well-embedded culture of identifying what is particularly good about teaching, whether for a single member of staff or an area of learning. Good practice is shared within the areas that can best adapt it first, and then more widely. For example, hair and beauty staff have adapted good practice from their construction counterparts, and vice versa.

College background

[Highbury College](#) is a large general further education college in Portsmouth. It offers provision in 13 of the 15 sector subject areas. Programmes range from entry level to higher education courses. There are around 11,000 students of whom 9% are of minority ethnic heritage. 13% have learning disabilities.



Are you thinking of putting these ideas into practice; or already doing something similar that could help other providers; or just interested? We'd welcome your views and ideas. Get in touch [here](#).

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