



Activity name	KS5 Academic Masterclass
Date	29 Academic Masterclasses delivered throughout TraY10nche 5 (September 2020 to June 2021)
Total number of students	474
Total number of target students	148
Institutions involved <i>* Institutions that completed surveys</i>	Bodmin College*, Bridgwater and Taunton College*, Coombe Dean School*, Callywith College, Cornwall College*, Exeter College*, Great Torrington*, Haygrove School*, ISCA Academy*, Notre Dame Plymouth*, Plymouth College of Art, South Devon College, Stoke Damerel Community College, Torpoint Community College, Truro and Penwith College* and Yeovil College*.

Introduction

This report outlines the impact of various masterclasses organised by Next Steps South West (NSSW) staff. Masterclasses covered topics such as robotics, illustration, creative IT, sport and leadership in healthcare. Masterclasses were delivered to students from Years 10 to 13 across the South West throughout the 2020-21 academic year; the Tranche 5 (T5) period for NSSW. KS5 Academic Masterclasses were an opportunity for students to learn about student life, the study style of higher education (HE), as well as careers and courses available. In addition, masterclasses provided an opportunity to motivate students by offering a hands-on experience of HE study led by HE academic staff.

Aims

Masterclasses aimed to broaden students' knowledge of HE pathways related to their chosen subject and support the development of skills. Subject-specific taster lessons and a positive experience of HE were delivered to encourage pupils that are already thinking about university as an option. They also presented new opportunities to those that are unaware or unsure about their options after school or college. These aims align with key barriers to HE progression identified by NSSW: lack of *Knowledge of HE*, lack of *Soft Skills*, *Socio-economic factors* and perceived *Geographical* barriers. Table 1, on the following page, details the anticipated outcomes for the KS5 Academic Masterclasses.

Table 1. Anticipated outcomes for KS5 Academic Masterclasses

Barrier to HE	Short-term outcomes	Indicators
<i>Knowledge of HE</i>	Increased exposure to HE opportunities in chosen subject area.	Students report more interest in HE opportunities in chosen subject area.
<i>Socioeconomic factors</i>	Increased aspiration to study chosen subject at HE level.	Students report increase in intention to study at HE.
<i>Soft Skills</i>	Increased ability to identify and use HE study skills and subject-specific knowledge.	Students are able to identify differences in HE and L3 study.
<i>Geography</i>	Increased awareness of local HE options in chosen subject.	Students are exposed to information on local HE options in chosen subject.

Evaluation Design and Data Collection

KS5 Academic Masterclasses were evaluated across the NSSW consortium in T5 with the use of post-activity evaluation surveys, including quantitative and qualitative questions. The surveys were designed to evaluate the short-term outcomes by using the indicators as outlined in Table 1 above.

Results

This section presents the analysis of findings gathered from 131 student surveys collected from masterclass attendees with a view to evaluating their impact against the barriers to HE progression. A range of different masterclasses were delivered to different year groups. Figure 1, below, shows that overall these masterclasses increased students' knowledge of HE.

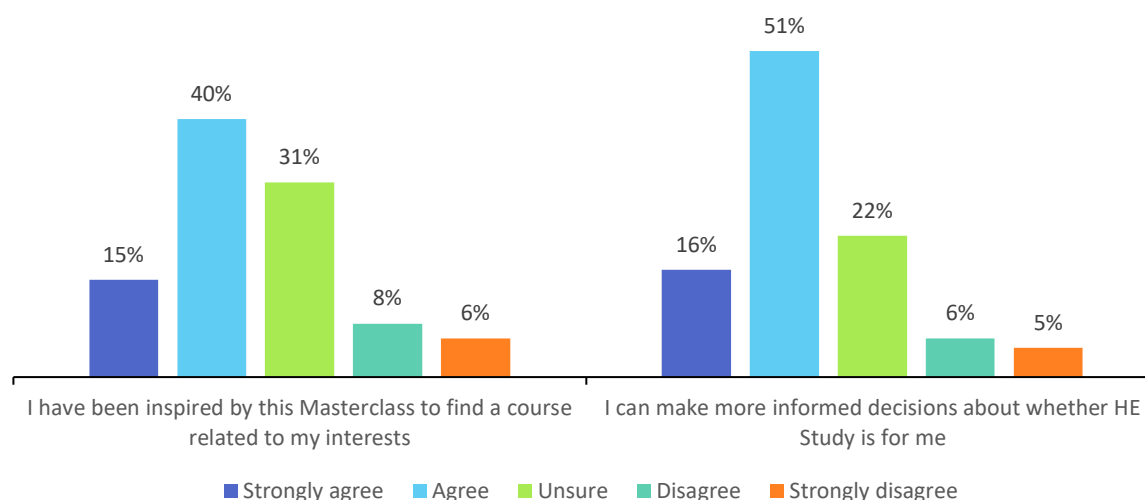


Figure 1. Increased Knowledge of HE

At the end of the masterclass, 55% of students reported that they *agreed* or *strongly agreed* that they were *inspired by the masterclass to find a course related to [their] interests*. Similarly, 67% said that they can *make more informed decisions about whether HE study is for [them]*. Although positive that more than half of the students reported this, there is scope to improve in this area.

Figure 2, below, indicates that after the masterclass 53% were able to *identify different national and local course options in [their] subject at higher education (HE) level*. This indicator highlights the masterclasses have broadened students' options, which is likely to help them overcome perceived geographical barriers. However, this percentage does also suggest that there is an opportunity to increase this impact.

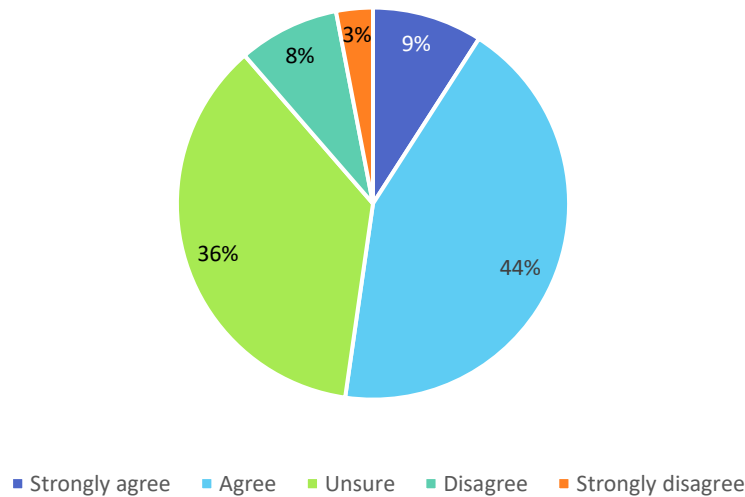


Figure 2. The impact on perceived Geographical barriers

Figure 3, below, illustrates the impact the masterclasses had in supporting participants' development of Soft Skills. The majority of respondents either strongly agreed or agreed that they could identify differences between studying at HE and at school/college level (71%), and that they had learnt skills/knowledge in [their] subject that they had not experienced at school or college (63%). This suggest that the masterclasses have been successful in helping students to identify the differences between HE and Level 3 study.

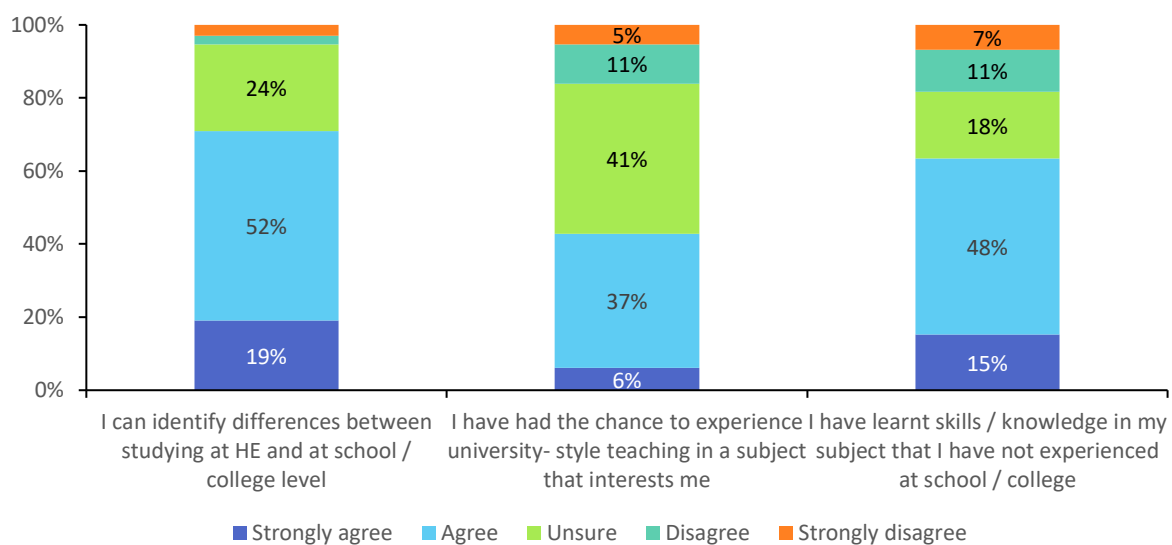
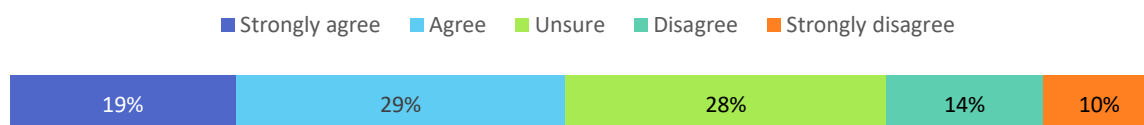


Figure 3. Development of Soft Skills

Figure 3, above, goes on to show that 43% of students reported that they had the *chance to experience university style teaching in a subject that interests them*. This may reflect that the sessions did not provide the correct opportunity, although, as this figure represents less than half of responses, it is also possible that students who gave negative responses to this question may have felt that they had been given the chance to experience HE teaching, but not in a subject that interested them. This question was asked based on the assumption that the student is interested in the subject. See Recommendations for further comment.

Attendees were asked to assess their likelihood of progressing and applying to HE and university (see Figure 4, below). Figure 4a indicates that 48% of students either *strongly agreed* or *agreed* they are more likely to consider going to university or study at Higher Education. This suggests that the masterclasses have had some impact on supporting students to raise their aspirations for HE progression. It has only narrowly missed the NSSW target to increase aspiration of students to study their chosen subject at HE level for 50% or more students. Figure 4b, however, shows a slightly larger percentage of students (58%) reporting that they are *likely to apply to HE in this or any other subject*, thereby exceeding the NSSW target.

(a) I am more likely to consider going to university /HE



(b) How likely are you to apply to HE in this or any other subject?

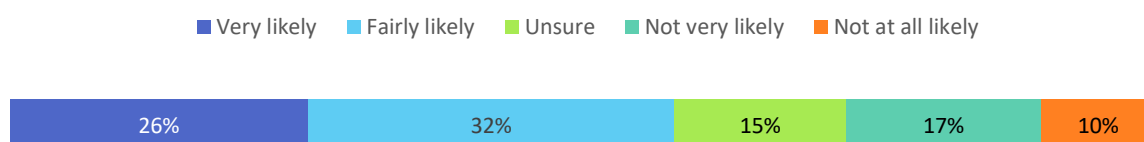
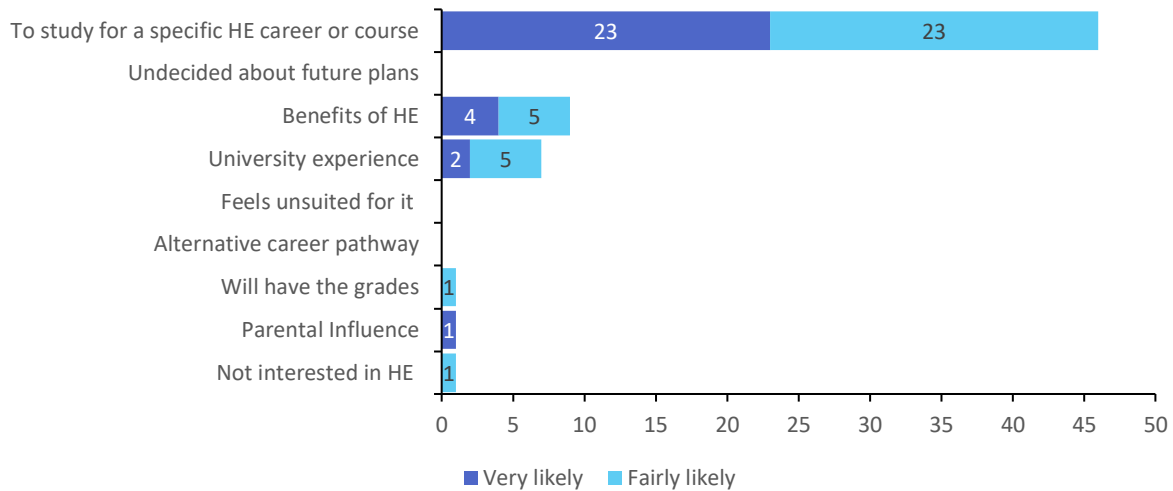


Figure 4. Likelihood of HE progression

To better understand these results, students were asked to provide a reason for their likelihood of applying to HE/University (see Figure 5). Figure 5a shows that the majority of those that are either *very likely* or *fairly likely* to apply to HE/University have a specific career pathway that requires a HE degree. Students, for example, reported wanting to become a midwife, paramedic or engineer.

(a) Reasons for likelihood of applying to HE from students who reported likely or very likely



(b) Reasons for likelihood of applying to HE of students who reported being unsure, not very likely or not at all likely

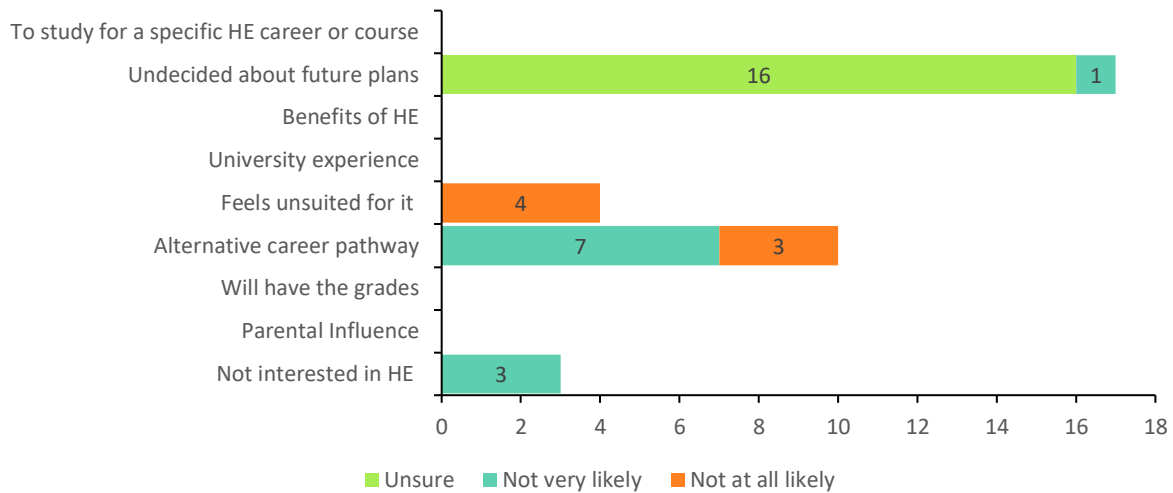


Figure 5. Underlying reasons for likelihood of applying to HE/university

Figure 5b shows that most of the students who stated they are *unlikely* to apply to HE are those considering a career pathway that does not require an HE degree, such as joining the Army or going straight in to a full-time job. The main reason given by students who were *unsure* was because they were still undecided about their future plans.

Finally, students were asked to provide two things that they would take away from the masterclass. For the qualitative analysis, it should be noted that in some cases a thematic area was coded twice within an individual comment. Hence, the count of thematic responses is not always equivalent to the total number of individual responses. Table 2 gives examples of comments to illustrate the emergent categories from their feedback. The most common comments were about the career and course insight they had gained. Second to that was the information they had received about different aspects of HE/University, such as course options, study style and the benefits of an HE degree.

Table 2. Students' feedback on what they would take from the masterclass



Thematic category	Number of responses	Quote from comments
Career/Course Insight	34	<p><i>"How to reflect and how it is useful within health and social care."</i></p> <p><i>"There is more to PE that I thought; PE is very heavily science based."</i></p> <p><i>"I will take away how to identify different kinds of leaders, and how important it is to maintain an individual's dignity, and quality of life for those with stoma bags."</i></p>
HE Knowledge, Uni Life, Career Pathways	22	<p><i>"What HE is and how it's different to FE."</i></p> <p><i>"Good to know how much is available to us in Newquay. Myself and the students didn't know this."</i></p> <p><i>"I think the facilities looked great and the Marjon community looked great."</i></p>
Positive comments	8	<p><i>"I think that the class today was interesting and I enjoyed hearing about other people's scenarios and opinions. I also found it interesting to hear the perspectives from two medical students."</i></p> <p><i>"I really like how they were honest about their experience with Uni life and how to deal with stress."</i></p> <p><i>"Good variety of topics covered."</i></p>
Suggestions to improve delivery	4	<p><i>"I think that SOME of the demonstrations were good but they could have improved on their organisation and demonstrations."</i></p> <p><i>"Maybe one more break because I was getting a bit tired by the end."</i></p> <p><i>"I found the way remote discussion worked wasn't very good, but that's COVIDs fault."</i></p>
Motivation to HE progression	3	<p><i>"Higher education is something that I am likely to do."</i></p> <p><i>"This has also helped me with gaining insight into what higher education is like which has lessened my nerves for the future."</i></p>
Barrier to HE to progress	4	<p><i>"I have found you don't have to have be an A grade student at school to pursue a career in medicine, however I do think higher education isn't for me personally."</i></p>
Development of personal skills	13	<p><i>"I have taken away a better understanding of ways in which I can positively reflect on situation and how I can deal with similar ones and take a proactive approach to better myself."</i></p>

Conclusions

To monitor the success of KS5 Subject Specific Masterclasses, results were evaluated against short-term targets and outcomes as presented in Table 3, on the following page.

Table 3. KS5 Subject-specific Masterclasses – Outcomes achieved in T5

Barriers of HE	Short-term Outcomes and Targets	Indicators, we are able to report:	Evidence	Target Outcome
<i>Knowledge of HE</i> <i>Socio-economic factors</i> <i>Soft Skills</i> <i>Geography</i>	Increased aspiration to study chosen subject at HE level for $\geq 50\%$ students	Increase in intention to study at HE	48% agreed they are more likely to consider going to university/HE 58% said they are either very likely or fairly likely to apply to HE Target 50%: T5 achievement 48% and over	Achieved
	Increased ability to identify and use HE study skills and subject-specific knowledge for $\geq 60\%$ students	Identify differences in HE and L3 study	71% are able to identify differences between studying at HE and at school/college level 43% said they had the opportunity to experience university-style teaching in their subject of interests 63% stated they have learnt skills/knowledge in their subject that they have not experienced at school/college Target 60%: T5 achievement 43% and over	Achieved
	Increased exposure to HE opportunities in chosen subject area for $\geq 90\%$ students	Identify different local HE options in chosen subject	67% reported they can make a more informed decision about whether HE is for them 55% said they are inspired by the Masterclass they attended to find a course related to their interests Target 90%: T5 achievement 55% and over	Not Achieved
	Increased awareness of local HE options in chosen subject for $\geq 60\%$ students	Increase in awareness of HE opportunities in subject area	53% said they can identify different national and local course options in their subject of interest at HE level Target 60%: T5 achievement 53%	Not Achieved

Table 3 above illustrates that two out of four targets were met. However, the targets for two outcomes – increased exposure to HE opportunities in chosen subject area and increased awareness of local HE options in chosen subject - were not achieved. This demonstrates that there is an opportunity to strengthen the impact that the masterclasses have on these areas.

Quantitative and qualitative data indicates that overall, most students reported an increased knowledge of different aspects of HE. The information shared in the masterclass is likely to have helped with the development of their soft skills. Furthermore, the sessions provided students with an opportunity to address concerns about HE which is likely to have raised their aspirations, addressing the barrier of Socio-economic factors. Although students might have already been interested in pursuing an HE career, it is likely the masterclass supported students with their decision-making process to reinforce whether HE study is for them (see Figure 1).

Recommendations

There is the scope for future masterclasses to deepen their impact on addressing all of the barriers, particularly *Knowledge of HE* and *Geographical barriers*. However, it should be noted that whilst NSSW staff facilitate access to the masterclasses, they do not control the content, format and delivery of them. They are run mostly by academics at partner institutions.

It has been assumed that students attending the masterclasses were interested in the subject matter. However, with only 43% of students reporting they had the opportunity to experience university-style teaching in their subject of interest (see Figure 3) it may suggest that students are attending who do not have this specific interest. If this is in fact the case, future promotional material and conversations with schools and colleges may need to place greater emphasis on who the masterclasses are aimed at.

It is worth considering reducing the target for “Increased exposure to HE opportunities in chosen subject area” as a target of 90% is very high and may be unrealistic to achieve. Based on some comments made by students (see Table 2), covid measures may have adversely affected the effectiveness of the delivery of these masterclasses. Hopefully with measures being lifted, the delivery of activities can be more effective, thereby having a greater impact on addressing the barriers to HE.