



Activity Name	Higher and Degree Apprenticeships
Date	57 workshops delivered throughout Tranche 5 (September 2020 to June 2021)
Total number of students	1,334
Total number of target students	216
Institutions involved <i>*Institutions that completed surveys</i>	*All Saints Academy, Bridgwater and Taunton College, *Coombe Dean School, *Cornwall College, *Exeter College, *Holyrood Academy, Petroc, *Plymouth College of Art, Plympton Academy, *Queen Elizabeth's Academy Trust, St Ives, *Strode College, Teign School, *Teignmouth Community School, *Torpoint Community College, Torquay Academy, *UTC Plymouth and *Yeovil College.

Introduction

This report outlines the impact of the Higher and Degree Apprenticeships sessions organised by Next Steps South West (NSSW) staff. These workshops were delivered to Year 10 to Year 13 students across the South West throughout the 2020-21 academic year; the Tranche 5 (T5) period for NSSW. Higher and Degree Apprenticeships sessions were an opportunity for students to understand how this level of Apprenticeship works, the benefits of studying one and challenging any preconceived ideas.

Aims

The Higher and Degree Apprenticeship sessions aimed to broaden students' knowledge of HE, helping them identify the differences between studying an HE course through a traditional route, and through a Higher/Degree apprenticeship, as well as the differences between Higher and Degree apprenticeships. These aims align with two of the key barriers to HE progression identified by NSSW: lack of *Knowledge of HE* and lack of *Soft Skills*.

Evaluation Design and Data Collection

Higher and Degree Apprenticeship sessions 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 illustrated in Table 1, below.



Table 1. Anticipated outcomes for Higher and Degree Apprenticeship sessions

Barrier to HE	Short-term outcomes	Indicators
<i>Knowledge of HE</i>	<p>Increased understanding of HE pathways and personally relevant options for ≥ 70% students</p> <p>Increased ability to choose relevant HE pathway for ≥ 70% students</p>	<p>Students are able to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Identify differences between Higher and Degree Apprenticeships - Outline key things to consider in choosing between different HE routes
<i>Soft Skills</i>	<p>Increased confidence in ability to make informed decisions about their future for ≥ 60% of students</p>	<p>Students report increase in confidence to make informed decisions about their future</p>

Results

This section presents the analysis of findings gathered from 237 student surveys. They were collected from session attendees to evaluate the sessions’ impact against the barriers to HE progression. Figure 1, below, shows that overall the information passed on in these sessions increased students’ knowledge of HE.

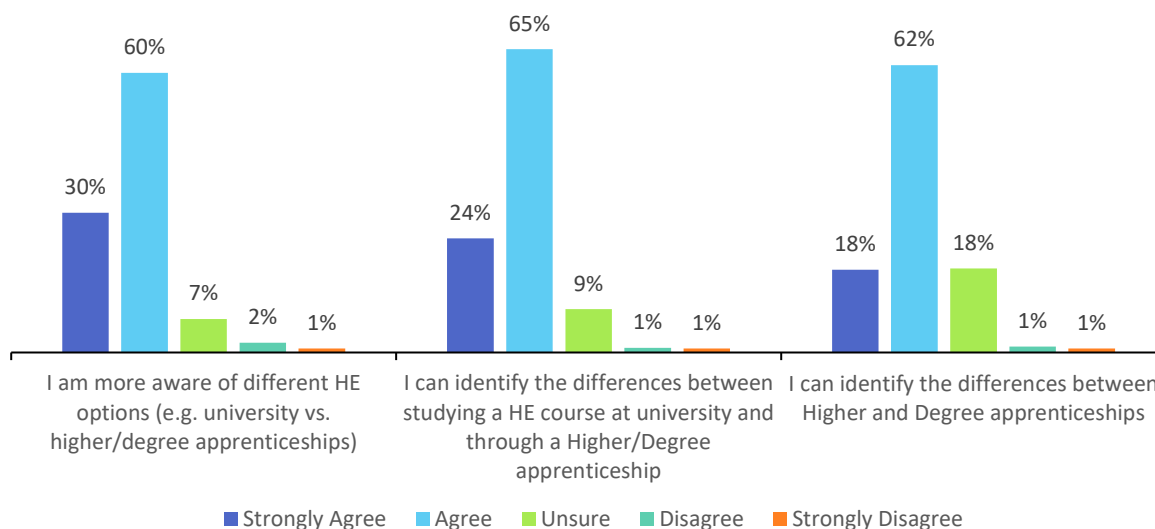


Figure 1. Increased Knowledge of HE

At the end of the sessions, 90% of students reported that they *agreed* or *strongly agreed* that they were *more aware of different HE options (e.g. HE course vs. higher/degree apprenticeships)*. Similarly, 89% said they could *identify the differences between studying an HE course at university and through a Higher/Degree apprenticeship* and 80% of students said they could *identify the difference between Higher and Degree apprenticeships*. These results indicate the very positive outcomes that the sessions had in supporting students’ understanding of HE pathway options.

Figure 2, below, indicates how successful the sessions have been at helping students better understand the personally relevant options open to them.

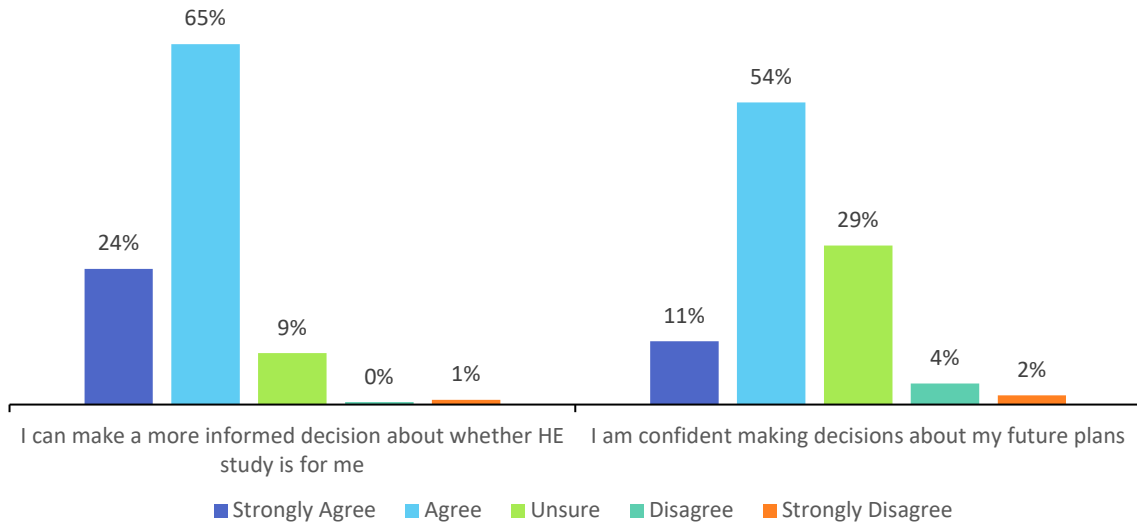


Figure 2. Understanding of personally relevant options

At the end of the sessions, 89% of students reported they *agreed* or *strongly agreed* that they could *make a more informed decision about whether HE study is for [them]*. Fewer students (65%) reported that they *agreed* or *strongly agreed* that they were *confident making decisions about [their] future plans*. It may be that now students were able to make a more informed decision about whether HE study was for them, they felt a little less sure about decisions for their future plans. The results suggest this to be the case with 29% of students reporting they were *unsure* about *making decisions about [their] future plans*. Only 6% of students reported that they *disagreed* or *strongly disagreed* that they were *confident making decisions about [their] future plans*.

Overall, these indicators suggest the sessions have increased the students' confidence in their ability to make informed decisions about their future, which is likely to help them overcome the barrier of lack of *Soft Skills*.



Figure 3, below, shows that after the sessions 91% of students were able to correctly choose the best definition of a Higher or Degree apprenticeship.

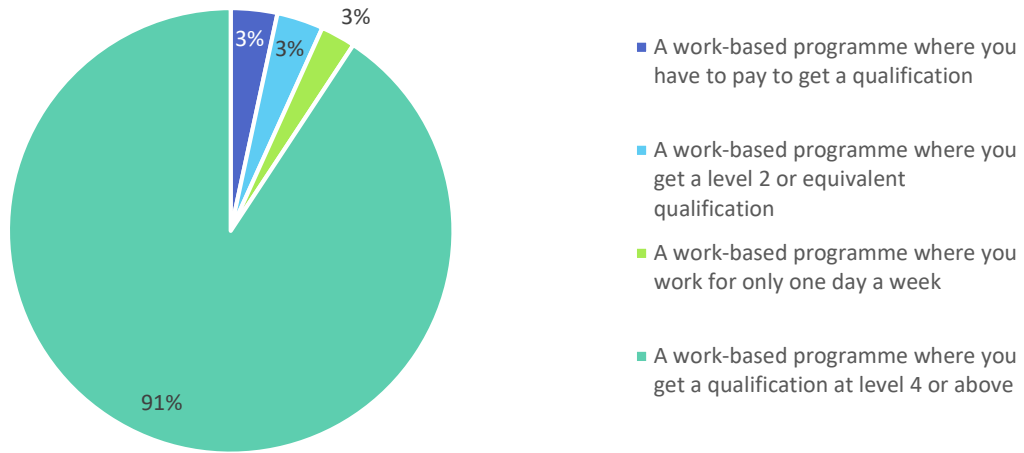


Figure 3. Defining Higher and Degree apprenticeships

Students were asked to provide at least two things they had learnt about Higher and Degree apprenticeships. For the qualitative analysis, the count of thematic responses (TR) is not always equivalent to the total number of individual responses (IR) as there may be more than one thematic response within an individual comment. Table 2, below, gives examples of comments to illustrate the emergent categories from the feedback. The most common responses were about being able to earn money whilst studying and the rate of pay. Second to that was an understanding about how fees and funding work for Higher and Degree apprenticeships.

Table 2. Students’ feedback on what they had learnt about Higher and Degree apprenticeships

Thematic category	Number of responses	Quote from comments
Get paid whilst studying/rate of pay	159	<p><i>“That you can get paid whilst doing you degree.”</i></p> <p><i>“You get paid but at a lower minimum wage except when you’re over 19 years old.”</i></p> <p><i>“You can learn and be paid at the same time.”</i></p> <p><i>“Minimum wage is £4.15.”</i></p>
The level of qualifications for H&D apprenticeships	63	<p><i>“They can be equivalent to a degree qualification.”</i></p> <p><i>“You can study from Level 4-7.”</i></p> <p><i>“Level 7 is a Masters degree.”</i></p>
General information about H&D Apprenticeships	58	<p><i>“The difference between the apprenticeships.”</i></p> <p><i>“Apprenticeships are very competitive to apply to because of the number of people who can apply.”</i></p> <p><i>“It’s not for people who do bad in school.”</i></p> <p><i>“You apply through the company doing the apprenticeship.”</i></p> <p><i>“You have an exam depending in course.”</i></p> <p><i>“You can use a website to find them.”</i></p>



Range of industries	44	<i>"They do higher degree apprenticeship for police." "There's over 1500 types of jobs you can do as an apprentice."</i>
Understanding of fees and funding for H&D apprenticeships	75	<i>"You earn money but don't get access to bursaries." "Government and company pays for the education fees." "Uni is £9k+." "No student debt." "There's no student financial support."</i>
Benefits of H&D Apprenticeships	68	<i>"67% of people stay with the same employer after their apprenticeship." "They are much better as you are more likely to understand the workplace and the real world." "They can give you higher management skills." "90% remain in work after their apprenticeship."</i>
Awareness of how H&D apprenticeships are delivered	52	<i>"Have a dedicated mentor." "20% study and 80% learn on the job." "Block vs blended study."</i>
Negative aspects of H&D Apprenticeships- poor pay, not a proper university experience	16	<i>"No university experience." "Could limit options for future." "Little pay." "You can get lots of experience from it but not necessarily a university life."</i>
Personal insight	24	<i>"It made me look into what I want to do in the future which I never really considered." "It's hard work." "Future career - will a degree get you a job or is an apprenticeship better." "Making sure you're opening your options instead of restricting them when choosing a higher level education." "If the career interests you and if right for you." "What will make you happiest long term."</i>
Nothing learnt/don't know	14	<i>"I knew it all already."</i>

Students were asked what they thought was most important to consider when choosing an HE or future study/career pathway. The count of thematic responses (TR) is not always equivalent to the total number of individual responses (IR). Table 3, below, gives examples of comments to illustrate the emergent categories from the feedback. The most common responses were about finding something they enjoyed and what they wanted to do. Second to that was considering their plans for future careers, jobs or lifestyles.



Table 3. Students' feedback about the most important thing to consider for future study/career pathway

Thematic category	Number of responses	Quote from comments
Employability	3	<i>"The potential to get a good career straight out of education."</i>
To find something they enjoy or that is right for them	51	<i>"Do what you love." "To make sure it is the right decision for me." "I'd chose a path I think I would get the most out of, enjoyment, experience etc."</i>
Earning potential	11	<i>"How much money you will make in the future." "Financial status."</i>
Location	13	<i>"Whether you can afford to move closer to the employment." "Place of study."</i>
How they learn best	10	<i>"The way that you learn best; practical or theory." "The way you learn, whether it is practically (hands on) or by studying and note-taking." "What fits your learning style."</i>
What they want from the experience	2	<i>"What you want to get out of it, and what benefits or works based for your mental/physical/emotional health too."</i>
Deciding between university and an apprenticeship	7	<i>"Whether you want to earn while learn." "University if you're confident in your career path as it gives more opportunities, while apprenticeships help to get a foot hold in the industry while getting first-hand experience in the industry."</i>
Type or level of qualification	8	<i>"Qualification level available."</i>
Career progression	3	<i>"The potential rise and excel in the domain fast and thoroughly." "Which one will get you furthest in the future."</i>
Course/subject	7	<i>"The subject you are studying." "Whether there's any good apprenticeships for film."</i>
Finances	14	<i>"Cost of it." "No debt."</i>
Plans for future career/jobs/lifestyle	34	<i>"That you're committed to the job and want to be in that career in the future." "Considering what you want to do with your life." "Whether the pathway leads to the style of life and employment one wishes for, or whether it leads to the level of qualification one wants."</i>
How hard it is to get onto course	1	<i>"How hard it is to get in."</i>
How to apply	1	<i>"How to apply."</i>
Supportive and friendly environment	2	<i>"...mental health support, lgbtq+ friendly, mostly friendly staff."</i>
Don't know/not sure	2	<i>"I'm not sure."</i>



Conclusion

To monitor the success of the Higher & Degree Apprenticeship sessions, results were evaluated against short-term targets and outcomes as presented in Table 4, below. The table illustrates that all three targets were met, indicating that the Higher & Degree Apprenticeship sessions have been successful in increasing student knowledge about HE, as well as addressing a potential lack in soft skills.

Table 4. Higher & Degree Apprenticeships – Outcomes achieved in T5

Activity Title and HE Barriers (italics)	Short-term Outcomes & Outcome Targets (bold)	Indicators Students report/are able to	Evidence	Target Outcome Achievement
Higher & Degree Apprenticeships <i>Knowledge of HE Soft Skills</i>	Increased understanding of HE pathways and personally relevant options for $\geq 70\%$ of students	Identify differences between Higher and Degree Apprenticeships	80% agreed they could identify difference between Higher and Degree Apprenticeships Target 70%: T5 achievement 80%	Achieved
	Increased ability to choose relevant HE pathway for $\geq 70\%$ of students	Outline key things to consider in choosing between different HE routes	90% reported they agreed they were more aware of different HE options (e.g. university vs. higher/degree apprenticeships). The data identified that students were able to outline 15 key things to consider in choosing between different HE routes. Target 70%: T5 achievement 90%	Achieved
	Increased confidence in ability to make informed decisions about their future for $\geq 60\%$ of students	Increase in confidence to make informed decisions about their future	65% agreed they were confident making decisions about their future plans 89% reported they could make a more informed decision about whether HE study is for them Target 60%: T5 achievement 65% and over	Achieved



Recommendations

The results of the surveys indicate that the Higher & Degree Apprenticeship sessions had a positive effect on the students. There were a small minority who came away undecided about whether HE is for them. It is recommended that these students continue to have more engagement with the activities that NSSW offers so that they are better equipped to make an informed decision about whether it is right for them.