

Activity name	Pre-16 My Perfect Degree
Date	9 individual dates delivered throughout Tranche 6 (September 2021 to June 2022)
Total number of students	947
Total number of target students	283
Institutions involved <i>* Institutions that completed surveys</i>	Bideford College, Brannel School*, Chilton Trinity*, Honiton Community College, Plympton Academy*, Teign School*, The Blue School, The Ifracombe Academy*, Tor Bridge High*,

Introduction

This report outlines the impact of the My Perfect Degree sessions delivered by Next Steps South West (NSSW) staff. The sessions were delivered to Year 9 students across nine NSSW target schools throughout the 2021-22 academic year; the Tranche 6 (T6) period for NSSW. Sessions were delivered in person.

Aims

The Pre-16 My Perfect Degree sessions aimed to develop students' presentation and communication skills and raise awareness of Higher Education (HE) through a fun and interactive workshop. These aims align with one of the key barriers to HE progression identified by NSSW: lack of *Soft Skills*. Table 1 details the anticipated outcomes of the Pre-16 My Perfect Degree sessions.

Table 1. Anticipated outcomes of the Personal Statement sessions

Barrier to HE	Short-term outcomes	Indicators
<i>Soft Skills</i>	Increased confidence when working in a small group Increased confidence presenting information to an audience their peers	Increased awareness of transferable skills for future study and employment

Evaluation Design and Data Collection

The My Perfect Degree workshops were evaluated using anonymous 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.

Results

This section presents the analysis of findings gathered from 335 student surveys collected throughout T6, and the impact these sessions had on addressing the Soft Skills barrier to HE progression.

Students were asked their level of agreement on a number of statements about their teamwork and presenting soft skills (see Figure 1).

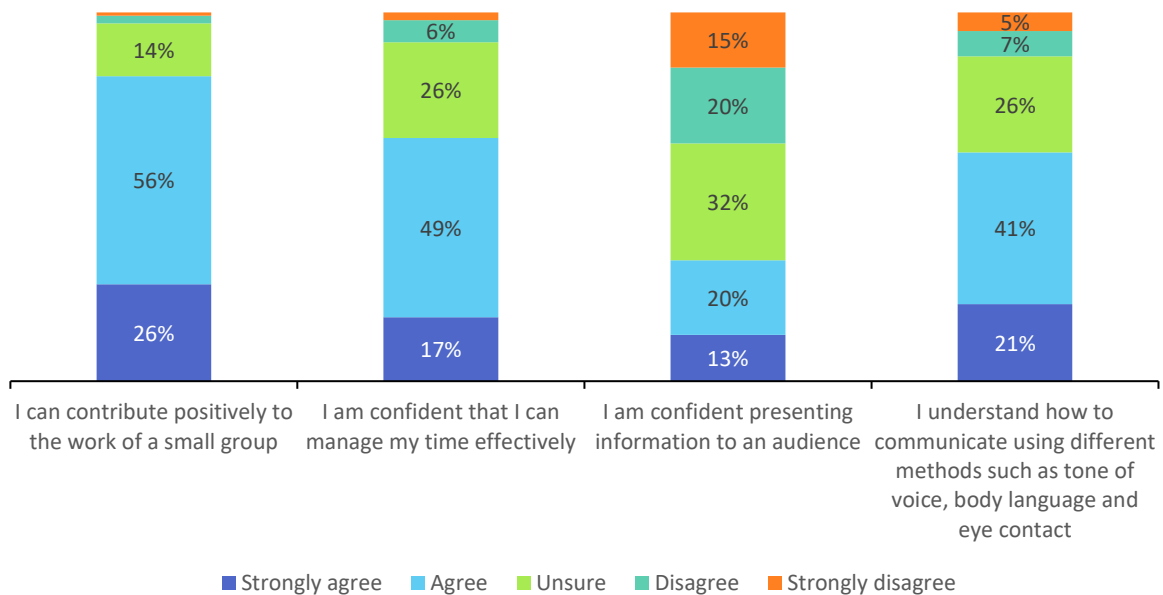


Figure 1. Statements relating to teamwork and presenting soft skills.

At the end of the session, 82% of students either strongly agreed or agreed that they could contribute positively to the work of a small group. 66% of students strongly agreed or agreed that they were confident that they could manage their time effectively. 62% of students strongly agreed or agreed that they understood how to communicate using different methods such as tone of voice, body language and eye contact. These results show that the sessions equipped students with the skills to contribute positively to the work of a small group, manage their time effectively and understand how to communicate using different communication methods.

For the statement about whether they were confident when presenting information to an audience, 33% of students strongly agreed or agreed, 32% were unsure and 35% disagreed or strongly disagreed. The sessions do not appear to have had such a big impact on whether students felt confident presenting information to an audience, with only a third of students saying they agreed. From the data, it is difficult to determine why this may be the case. However, it must be noted that the students had only just learnt these presenting skills and it is likely that they would require more practise in order to become more confident, building on this introduction.

Figure 2 shows the results to the question of whether students understood how the skills they had learnt today would be useful in the future.

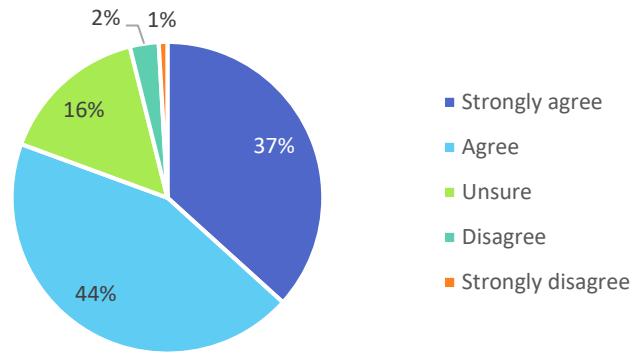


Figure 2. Students' understanding of the use of transferable skills

The majority of students (81%) said they strongly agreed or agreed that they understood how the skills they had learnt during the My Perfect Degree session would be useful in the future. This suggests that the intervention increased the majority of students' awareness of transferable skills for future study and employment.

Students were asked what they thought the most useful thing was that they had gained from the session. Figure 3 shows the results of the responses given by the 263 students that answered this question. Students may have given more than one answer.



Figure 3. Count responses to the most useful thing gained from the session

97% of students who answered this question said that they had come away from the session learning something useful. Presentation/public speaking skills was the most popular response with 109 students stating they had come away from the session gaining these. Students also came away gaining information about the different degrees and careers that are available (40 students), teamwork skills (27 students) and time management skills (22 students). 7 students said they were unsure whether they had gained anything useful. However, it is evident that for the vast majority of students this session was useful.

Conclusion

To monitor the success of the My Perfect Degree sessions, results were evaluated against short-term targets and outcomes as presented in Table 2. The table illustrates that two out of three targets were achieved, indicating that the sessions have been successful in increasing students' confidence when it comes to working in small groups and understanding how the skills they had learnt would be useful in the future. NSSW has previously run intensive, five-day workshops for Year 9 students to develop their presentation skills, delivered by Articulacy Ltd. Due to funding cuts, NSSW was not able to offer this provision in Tranche 6. Comparing these results with Articulacy reports from previous tranches, it can be concluded that the My Perfect Degree sessions have been less impactful in addressing the barrier of a lack of soft skills when considering students' confidence in their presentation skills.

Table 2. My Perfect Degree sessions – Outcomes achieved in T6

Barriers of HE	Short-term Outcomes and Targets	Indicators, we are able to report:	Evidence	Target Outcome
<i>Soft Skills</i>	Increased confidence when working in a small group for ≥ 60% students	Students report: - Increased confidence working in a group	82% of students reported feeling more confident that they could contribute positively to the work of a small group Target 60%: T6 achievement 82%	Achieved
	Increased confidence presenting information to an audience of their peers for ≥ 60% students	- Increased confidence in presentation skills	33% of students reported feeling more confident presenting information to an audience Target 60%: T6 achievement 33%	Not achieved
	Increased understanding that the skill(s) learnt will be beneficial for future study or employment for ≥ 60% students	- Increased understanding that these skills will be useful in the future education and employment	81% of students said they understood how the skills they had learnt during the My Perfect Degree session would be useful in the future. Target 60%: T6 achievement 81%	Achieved

Recommendations

In order to have more impact on improving students' presenting skills, the intervention needs to be more intensive and sustained.