

New College Nottingham

New College Nottingham (**ncn**) is one of the largest Further Education colleges in the UK and offers a wide range of full, part time and work based learning provision. The college has achieved considerable success with its hospitality and catering Apprenticeship programmes, increasing completion rates to 89 percent at level 2 and 80 percent at level 3, well above the national benchmarks.



This case study describes how **ncn** deliver Apprenticeships and highlights examples of best practice delivery. The case study is based on interviews held with Adrian Pratt, Director of Lifestyle and Faye Boucher, Curriculum Leader.

Hospitality and Catering Apprenticeships at ncn

There are approximately 100 learners completing hospitality and catering Apprenticeship programmes at **ncn**. The college offers a range of routes at levels 2 and 3, with Professional Cookery proving the most popular route.

Learners can choose to either complete their Apprenticeship by attending college one day a week or they can do a purely work based programme. The day release programme is very popular with students and employers, with approximately 70 percent of Apprentices completing their Apprenticeship in this way.

1) Day release Apprenticeship programme

On the day release programme, learners go to college one day a week where they attend a combination of key skills, practical and theory lessons. The course follows the NVQ qualification and runs on a three weekly basis during which the learner will be assessed in both the workplace and at college. Frequent workplace visits are carried out, along with a 12 weekly review in the workplace with the learner and employer.

The day release Professional Cookery Apprenticeship programme is very popular as it provides learners with additional training to what their employer offers, helps them develop their confidence and gives them the opportunity to work on menus outside their own restaurant.

Completion rates are very high for the day release programme and, although this may be a more costly way of delivering the programme, the benefits outweigh the cost.



"In terms of the equation between the cost of delivery and the rate at which we're funded for the Apprentices, some would argue that it's not cost effective but it is in my argument because our timely success rates are very high. The reasons for them coming to college does

actually get them through the programme quicker and make them more employable and give them promotion and encourage them to go onto level 3. This outweighs the cost of delivering." (Adrian Pratt)

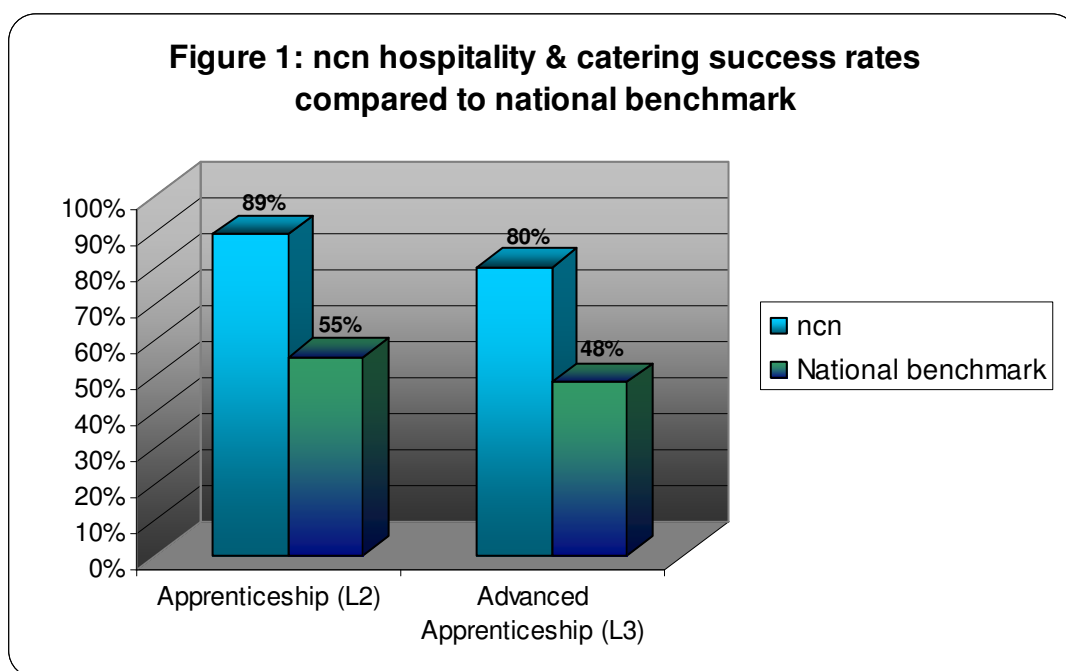
2) Workbased programme

Approximately 30 percent of hospitality and catering Apprentices undertake their training and assessment entirely in the workplace. An assessor is assigned to the learner and goes to visit them on their premises to complete the diagnostic testing and sign up process. A training plan is then produced which aims to develop their skills and four weekly visits for assessments are planned.

"We want to see their training aspect develop them, rather than them doing the same thing day in day out as part of their role. So it's about identifying areas in which they can develop their skills further." (Faye Boucher)

Improving completion rates – examples of best practice

Success rates for hospitality and catering Apprenticeships are much higher at **ncn** than across the country as a whole (see figure 1). At level 2, 89 percent of **ncn** students complete the full framework, compared to a national benchmark of 55 percent¹. At level 3, 80 percent complete at **ncn** compared to 48 percent nationally. Success rates have also increased at **ncn** during 2008/9 by 9.2 percent at level 2 and 1.5 percent at level 3.



Source: LSC 2006/7 Individualised Learning Records

The following sections highlight examples of best practice delivery at **ncn** which contribute towards achieving high completion rates.

¹ LSC 2006/7 Individualised Learning Records

Matching supply to demand

ncn run their hospitality and catering Apprenticeship programmes throughout the year according to demand from employers. Over the last five years, the team have developed excellent relationships with employers in the region and, as their reputation has grown, employers increasingly contact the college to request an Apprentice or to put a member of staff forward for the programme.

"The team have developed a relationship with head chefs particularly and second chefs where they know where apprentices are, when a chef has been promoted and there's a possible vacancy coming up so interviews are always going on all year round. We don't stop interviewing for apprentices, it's a live programme. We always recruit to what industry requires and have reached a situation where supply and demand is in equilibrium." (Adrian Pratt)

Recruit with integrity

"It's being robust with your interviews and it's making sure you've got the right learner on the right course. It's about appropriate advice and guidance." (Faye Boucher)

Having a rigorous interview and selection process is essential for achieving high completion rates. The college interviews for full, part time and work based at the same time and provide appropriate advice and guidance to the learner to ensure that they are on the right course for them.

A range of methods are used to help them determine the appropriate course for the learner. Diagnostic testing helps to determine the learner's literacy and numeracy levels and identify anyone who requires additional support. A personality test is used to identify their learning styles. An interview is then held with experienced members of the team to explore the intangibles such as maturity, attitude, confidence and the aspirations or goals of the learner.

"They've got to be willing. It's not always about confidence, confidence obviously does help, but it also develops with time as well for a lot of our apprentices. Within a couple of weeks of being in the workplace they spring out of themselves. It's about having aspirations for the future, having goals and wanting to reach those goals, rather than being led." (Faye Boucher)

Progression onto level 3 is not automatic, instead **ncn** interview again to assess their suitability for the programme.

"We do interview for level 3 again. We don't just say you're guaranteed a place just because you've passed your level 2. We interview and we discuss the requirements for level 3, because they are different, you have a lot more responsibility and standards are much more complex" (Faye Boucher)

Clear expectations

From the start the college is very clear about the standards and commitment they expect from learners. The college has a Code of Practice which includes clear guidelines on attendance and punctuality which are reflective of the world of work.

"We make sure it's applied rigorously, so learners understand what the policy is if they are late / consistently late and understand what actions will be taken against them if it continues. Because my remit is that we are employing them for the world of work, if you're late for work, you're going to face disciplinary action, it's the same here" (Adrian Pratt)

Key skills lessons

Key skills lessons are timetabled for first thing in the morning to encourage learners to complete this element early on in the programme.

"We use it as a bit of a motivator - if you get your key skills finished, you don't have to come in until later and if you've worked late the night before obviously you can have a bit of a lie-in so it is a bit of a carrot for them" (Faye Boucher)

There are designated key skills tutors who support the hospitality and catering apprentices and have worked with the department for a number of years. This consistency helps ensure that they have a good understanding of the industry and are able to make the sessions industry relevant.

"We've got and have had for considerable amount of time, designated key skills and additional learning support staff linked to the work based learning team. This means that it's always vocationally relevant and there's continuity because the same persons worked with the team for the last 3 years so they understand what we need, they understand what the learner needs and they're the experts in key skills so they understand how it should be delivered." (Adrian Pratt)

Industry involvement

ncn involve industry when producing the schemes of work to ensure that dishes are industry relevant and quality driven. This is vital for gaining employer buy-in to the Apprenticeship programme and ensures that Apprentices receive up-to-date training which is driven by quality and standards.

"We work with industry in terms of devising dishes which the chefs prepare at L2 and L3 whilst they're at college a) to make sure that they're industry relevant and contemporary and b) to make sure that the assessment opportunities we're offering in the kitchen environment are up-to-date and the schemes of work are actually written and developed with a team of industry Head Chefs." (Adrian Pratt)

ncn regularly run masterclasses by guest chefs in the demonstration theatre. This raises aspirations and is a win-win for both the learners and guest chefs. They also receive a lot of support from Michelin starred College Ambassador Sat Bains:

"We also bring in guest chefs. We've got a very close Ambassador in Sat Bains. Sat is our College Ambassador - he's a Michelin starred chef and is very very supportive. Sat and his Head Chef, John Freeman come in and do at least two masterclass demonstrations for Apprentices each year. There's a win-win there because the Apprentices get to see his interpretation, his language, his work and standards and



Michelin star chef Sat Bains demonstrating practical skills to Apprentices

they get to quiz him. At the same time if they see someone with talent and integrity who's really switched on he'll say 'I'll try that youngster for six weeks as an Apprentice'. That's upping the ante."

Communication and support

Frequent, open communication between learner, assessor, employer and teaching staff helps to ensure that everyone is aware of how a learner is progressing with the programme and any problems or issues can be identified and resolved early on.

At **ncn**, four consecutive absences instigate an 'at risk' policy for the learner and the college immediately investigates why the learner is missing. Often it can be a fairly small or minor problem but to the individual it may become a major problem. However with early intervention and support from the college any problems can usually be overcome.

"Communication is the key. Good communication with your learners and employers is absolutely vital throughout the process... It's about intervention, if there's something going wrong we want to know. With young people and even 19+ sometimes the smallest problem, relationship problem, personal problem, money problem - to them it's the end of the world, whereas to us we have the resources, experience and people in place to try and sort that problem out."

A common reason why individuals do not complete the programme is that they move away from the area or their job takes them to another location. **ncn** are flexible in their delivery and will fast-track a learner where possible so that they can complete the programme before they leave the area.

"We work with them and yes it means extra visits in the workplace, more commitment from the employer to do more training, they may come in and do an extra session at college with some of our HE or FE staff to develop their skills so we've got that opportunity to make sure we don't lose them and instead bring them in and get their training done and get them completed" (Faye Boucher)

Where this is not possible, **ncn** refers them to another provider in the new location so that they can continue with their programme.

"Loads have moved to London and we've put them onto Westminster Kingsway and vice versa - that's a model of best practice where someone takes ownership and contacts another provider." (Adrian Pratt)

Financial incentive at level 3

ncn have a financial incentive scheme to help encourage completion at level 3 and to support Advanced Apprentices to stay within the industry. It's often at this point, as people start to have greater financial commitments and become attracted by better paid jobs that there is leakage from the industry.

The incentive of up to £250, is made in different stages and is used to reward and motivate the learner, for example if they achieve promotion or are ahead of their assessments. The incentive scheme has had a positive impact on completion rates and is popular with employers.

“The ethos is around incentives, retaining them, giving them monetary incentives to stay on programme and to gain promotion in the workplace and to stay in the industry. It’s a model which is quite unique but it does work and this year we’ve only lost one.” (Adrian Pratt)

Resourcing and team structure

A key strength is the way the team is structured. The team is essentially a private training provider based within the college. The work based team have business support contracts and don’t teach or have class input, however they sit in the same structure as the curriculum team and are managed by the same Head of Department. This means that the teaching staff and assessors work closely together with good communication and sharing of expertise across the department:

“The team sit in the same structure as the curriculum so there’s a very cross-fertilising link between the curriculum staff that delivers the practical elements of the course. So that’s been quite successful in terms of a model of delivery which sits within a college model but is slightly outside of it but is managed by the same Head of School that manages the curriculum. That staffing structure is critical to successful delivery.” (Adrian Pratt)

The work based team has grown from two members of staff to nine over the last five years and is set to expand further. All staff recruited to work on the Apprenticeship programme have at least three years industry experience and the A1 and preferably V1 Award.

Staff are required to update their skills every two years by working in industry for two weeks and also complete ongoing CPD such as reading journals and keeping up-to-date with training from the awarding body etc. The college has a fund to support staff development which the department bids into and also has a staff development week.

Adrian believes it’s vital that staff are well paid and given opportunities to develop and progress within the college.

"As an organisation you really do have to look at contracts of employment and the salary scale which are good here. I’m very very pro succession planning so for example Faye’s come up from Assessor to Co-ordinator so there are opportunities for progression" (Adrian Pratt)

Summary of best practice

As this case study has shown, recruiting with integrity, involving industry in the programme, communicating effectively and having a well resourced and developed team are just some of the main ingredients **ncn** believe have helped them to achieve high success rates with their Apprenticeship programmes.

The box overleaf summarises the top best practice tips from **ncn** which other providers can adopt to help them achieve high completion rates and successful delivery of their Apprenticeship programme too.

Best practice tips

- Develop a strong relationship with employers in the area, especially Head Chefs, so you have a good understanding of demand and can develop and supply Apprentices meet this demand.
- Build a good reputation with industry and they will come to you for Apprentices and promote the programme to other employers across the industry.
- Recruit with integrity – don't just recruit for the Apprenticeship programme, instead determine the most suitable programme for that learner and provide appropriate advice and guidance.
- Use a range of methods to determine the learners literary and numeracy levels, their learning styles and their goals and commitment. This will help to identify the appropriate course for the learner.
- Bringing learners into college provides them with additional training and allows them to develop their confidence and work on new menu ideas outside of their own place of work.
- Make sure learners are clear from the start on the expectations from the college and course e.g. attendance and punctuality and the commitment required. Have a Code of Practice which they sign up to and make sure its applied.
- Do key skills at the start of the day – this acts as a carrot to complete it as students can then come into college later.
- Use the same key skills tutors year-on-year where possible – the consistency will help them to better understand the industry and make key skills lessons industry relevant
- Get industry involved in producing the schemes of work to ensure the dishes are relevant.
- Getting industry actively involved in the programme through masterclasses and / or having an ambassador from industry helps to raise aspirations and ups the ante.
- Regular open communication is vital to ensure any issues or problems are identified and can be resolved early on.
- Have a process in place for identifying learners 'at risk' of dropping out from the programme.
- If learners are relocating, see if you can fastrack them through the programme or identify and refer them to another provider so that they can continue with the programme.
- Consider offering incentives at level 3 to encourage retention on the programme and in the industry
- Have a well resourced and well paid team, with industry experience which is updated regularly who have opportunities to develop and progress.
- Structure the team so that business support and curriculum staff sit under the same team.

Further information

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