



Progress South Central Construction Report Level 3 Students' Survey

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Executive Summary

The overall objective of this research was to establish the background, current programmes of study and future plans of level 3 construction students within the LLN region. The information gathered will be used to make recommendations for future activities for the LLN which will encourage and facilitate greater progression for the students.

Over the course of the research, 45 male students and 1 female student from 4 FE colleges providing Level 3 construction-related courses were surveyed. Approximately half the students had entered FE straight from school and the majority of the students surveyed had left school having achieved Level 2 qualifications.

The main reason stated by students for wanting to study construction were enjoyment (17 students), that the work was practical (14 students) and hands on and for 12 students, money was stated as the primary reason for entering the industry. A total of 28 students said they would ideally continue a career in construction after their course of study.

Although the majority of the students stated that they would like to do further study, when asked if they knew what progression routes were available to them, the majority of the students were unaware of their options. Nearly all of the students were unaware of the 14-19 diplomas and only a couple of students had heard of Foundation Degrees. This could be because some of the progression routes are relatively new and the appropriate information is not available or because the colleges and employers have not promoted the courses in question. Many of the students surveyed were only at the beginning of their course which may explain some of the lack of progression knowledge.

Following completion of the survey, a large proportion of the students stated that they required further help or guidance. Taking part in the survey itself seemed to raise the students' realisation that they were lacking knowledge of the availability of suitable progression routes. This report shows the importance of setting up, maintaining and advertising suitable progression route for students studying construction.

The Survey has identified a need to carry out more awareness-raising activities working closely with colleges and other institutions so that students know what progression routes are available to them. Progress South Central should continue to set up progression agreements across the construction sector and should work closely with partners to develop suitable information advice and guidance to make progression routes clearer to students. The report will be disseminated to universities and all other partner organisations within the Network. An Action Plan will also be developed in order that the recommendations of this survey can be taken forward and the activities monitored.

Anna Price - Progress South Central

Background

Progress South Central is the Lifelong Learning Network (LLN) for Berkshire, Buckinghamshire, Oxfordshire and Surrey and is charged with increasing progression opportunities for vocational students into and within Higher Education. The LLN focuses primarily on four vocational strands: Creative Industries, Health and Social Care, Land Based Industries and Construction and the Built Environment.

In March 2008, Progress South Central undertook research to establish the background, current programmes of study and future plans of level 3 construction and built environment students within the LLN region. The researcher is an independent consultant, Karyn Buck of The Learning Ladder. The aim of the research is to gather greater intelligence on the type and background of students choosing to study construction and built environment programmes within the region and to make recommendations for future activities which will encourage and facilitate greater progression for the students.

The research will be repeated and associated actions monitored during academic years 2008/09 and 2009/10 in order to track improvements.

Methodology

The aim was to develop an interactive and fun research session that generated the required data and gave students information that may be useful in planning their future. The research sessions took place in the following colleges:

- Amersham & Wycombe College
- Aylesbury College
- Berkshire College of Agriculture
- Guildford College

Two additional colleges were approached but were unable to participate within the timescales of the project. These were:

- Oxford & Cherwell Valley College
- North East Surrey College of Technology

The research sessions considered the following areas:

- Students' background which included previous academic and other relevant history
- Details of current programme of study

- Future plans which included their goals and whether or not they felt they had sufficient information and support to achieve them

The research sessions took approximately one hour and followed a set format.

Firstly, students were asked to work in pairs and interview each other. They completed an interview sheet - see appendix 1. Students were then asked the following questions:

1. Do you know what progression routes are available to you?
2. Do you know what 14-19 Diplomas are?
3. Have you heard of Foundation Degrees?
4. Would you do further study if it meant you could progress in your career and earn more money?

The students were then split into groups and asked to complete a timed activity. Each group was given a set of numbered cards one to eight. They were also given a set of twenty-five cards each showing a different qualification. The aim was to see which group could match the qualifications to the levels in the shortest amount of time. When the first group had completed the task all groups were given a handout with the answers - see appendix 2. This handout was explained in detail to make sure that the students understood how flexible progression routes can be.

The session concluded with students completing an evaluation form - see appendix 3.

Each student has been sent a high street voucher to thank them for their participation.

Findings

Guildford College

College background and information

Guildford College views the construction and contracting industry as hugely varied and complex, providing employment for nearly one in ten people across the UK. As the industry grows and develops there is an increasing need for more qualified professionals. The industry relies heavily on craft skills and technicians, with over half of all workers qualified up to NVQ level 3.

The courses are designed to provide students with the practical and theoretical knowledge of their chosen subject. Construction courses include carpentry, plumbing, brickwork, painting & decorating and construction management.

Twelve students took part in the research and all were studying a Level 3 Plumbing course. They were all male and 4 appeared to be mature students.

Questionnaire Results

Nine of the students left school at the age of sixteen. One left at fifteen, one at seventeen and one at eighteen.

All of the students left school with some qualifications. Seven of these students appear to be at level 2 i.e. 5 GCSEs grade C or above.

Five of the students went straight to college after leaving school. Three that did not go straight to college continued with their study in subjects not directly related to the construction industry. The other students worked and three had construction related jobs.

The reasons why students chose to study construction can be split into three categories.

- Money
- To learn a trade
- To be a plumber

The reasons for wanting a career in construction include “financial rewards”, “enjoying practical work” and “enjoying the challenge of learning a trade”.

Their ideal jobs revealed a variety of results. Seven of the twelve stated jobs that related to the subject they were studying i.e. plumbing. Others stated careers that were not related to construction and included being a boxing coach, a lawyer and a church missionary.

The majority of students appeared to have some idea of how to achieve their ideal job but there were no clear plans stated.

All of the students stated that they intend to obtain work or continue working for their current employer at the end of the academic year. Five students stated that they aimed to become CORGI registered.

Group Questions

1. Do you know what progression routes are available to you?

Two students were unsure and ten students stated that they did not know what progression routes were available to them.

2. Do you know what 14-19 Diplomas are?

Only one of the students had heard of 14-19 diplomas.

3. Have you heard of Foundation Degrees?

Only one student had some idea of what a Foundation Degree was.

4. *Would you do further study if it meant you could progress in your career and earn more money?*

All of the students said that they would do further study to progress their career and earn more money.

The Progression Game - Academic Levels

The students were split into three groups and each group consisted of four students. The fastest group completed the activity in fourteen minutes but they did require a small amount of assistance.

All of the students found this interesting as they were not aware of the variety of academic options available to them.

Evaluation

Each score is out of a possible maximum of five and states the average score across the group.

Did you find the process easy?	3.5
Was the specialist professional?	4.3
Was the specialist knowledgeable?	4.7
Did you enjoy this experience?	3.0
Were you able to participate fully?	3.8
Was the information useful?	3.8
Do you need any further help or guidance?	2.8

Overall the group appeared to enjoy the session and participated well in the activities.

Aylesbury College

College background and information

Aylesbury College recognises that construction is one of the largest growing sectors in the U.K. Their courses are designed to train learners to give them the skills that will prepare them for industry. The college covers all levels and trades from entry to employment.

Seventeen male students took part in the research and were studying different courses. These were broken down into the following courses:

- Eight students - Level 3 Carpentry
- Six students - Level 3 Painting and Decorating
- Three students - Level 3 Bricklaying

Questionnaire Results

Eleven of the students left school at the age of sixteen. Two left at fifteen, two at seventeen and two at eighteen.

All of the students left school with GCSEs. Seven of the students appear to be at level 2.

Thirteen of the students went straight to college after leaving school. Two of those that did not go straight to college studied A levels and two students worked. One of the students that worked said

"I had started plumbing but left due to lack of work. I started a painting and decorating apprenticeship and have been doing this for three years".

All of the reasons given for wanting to study construction focus on learning a trade or working within a specific area of the industry and gaining a qualification.

Nearly all of the students stated that they wanted a career in construction because it was something they enjoyed doing. The others wanted a trade.

Their ideal jobs revealed a variety of results. Twelve students stated goals that related to the subject they were studying and five of those wanted to start their own business. The remaining students stated careers that were not related to construction and ranged from being a graphic designer to being an astronaut.

Only two students were not able to state how they planned to achieve their ideal job. The majority stated that this may require further education or training.

All of the students stated that they intend to work in the area that they have been studying.

Group Questions

1. Do you know what progression routes are available to you?

Three students stated that they did know what progression routes were available. Four students were unsure, and ten students stated that they had no idea of what progression routes were available to them.

2. Do you know what 14-19 Diplomas are?

All of the students said "No".

3. Have you heard of Foundation Degrees?

Only one student had some idea of what a Foundation Degree was.

4. Would you do further study if it meant you could progress in your career and earn more money?

Eleven students stated that they would do further study to progress their career and earn more money.

The Progression Game - Academic Levels

The students were split into four groups and three groups consisted of four students and one of five. The fastest group completed the activity in seventeen minutes but they did require a small amount of assistance.

All of the students found this interesting as they were not aware of the variety of academic options available to them.

Evaluation

Each score stated is out of a possible maximum of five and states the average score across the group.

Did you find the process easy?	4.5
Was the specialist professional?	4.7
Was the specialist knowledgeable?	4.8
Did you enjoy this experience?	4.2
Were you able to participate fully?	4.3
Was the information useful?	4.4
Do you need any further help or guidance?	3.6

Overall the group appeared to enjoy the session and participated well in the activities.

Amersham and Wycombe College

College background and information

The College offers relevant, hands-on training in realistic working environments. Most courses are available either during the day or evenings. Electrical Technology courses run at the College's Cressex Centre, in central High Wycombe, while Electronic & Computer Technology courses run at the High Wycombe campus in Flackwell Heath. Gas Installation courses run at the Chesham campus and Plumbing courses at both Chesham and High Wycombe campuses. The College is a Centre of Vocational Excellence for Construction & Building Services, in partnership with Milton Keynes College and Oxford & Cherwell Valley College.

Twelve students took part in the research, eleven male and one female. Eight of the students appeared to be mature students, including the female student. They were all studying Level 3 Plumbing

Questionnaire Results

Seven of the students left school at the age of sixteen. Two left at seventeen and three at eighteen.

Only one student left school without any qualifications. The rest left with GCSEs or O' levels and the majority appear to have reached level 2.

Only two students went to college straight from school and both studied Health and Social Care. The rest entered into a variety of occupations. These included retail, the police force, engineering and office work. None of the students appear to have worked in the construction industry prior to study apart from one who seemed to now run his own business.

A variety of reasons were given for wanting to go to college and study construction. Two of the students were at a point in their life that required a change of career. Some wanted to improve their prospects and others wanted security.

Nearly all of the students stated that they wanted a career in construction because they enjoyed the practical element of the job.

Nine of the students stated goals that related to the subject they were studying and two of those wanted have their own business. The remaining students stated careers that were not related to construction, and included a physical training for the RAF, teacher and an artist.

Only one student was not able to state how they planned to achieve their ideal job.

At the end of the academic year all of the students stated that they intend to work or continue with their studies in the area that they have been studying or related areas. One of the students hopes to do this in New Zealand.

Group Questions

1. Do you know what progression routes are available to you?

Nine students stated that they did know what progression routes were available and three were unsure.

2. Do you know what 14-19 Diplomas are?

All of the students said "No".

3. Have you heard of Foundation Degrees?

None of the students were aware of Foundation Degrees.

4. Would you do further study if it meant you could progress in your career and earn more money?

All twelve students stated that they would do further study to progress their career and earn more money.

The Progression Game - Academic Levels

The students were split into three groups with four students in each group. The fastest group completed the activity in ten minutes and required some assistance.

All of the students found this interesting as they were not aware of the variety of academic options available to them.

Evaluation

Each score is out of a possible maximum of five and states the average score across the group.

Did you find the process easy?	3.8
Was the specialist professional?	4.4
Was the specialist knowledgeable?	4.4
Did you enjoy this experience?	3.3
Were you able to participate fully?	3.5
Was the information useful?	3.6
Do you need any further help or guidance?	3.3

Berkshire College of Agriculture

College background and information

The Construction Department at BCA offers a range of programmes for learners wishing to enter the Construction Industry and is ideally situated in the main college campus surrounded by beautiful countryside. At present they offer full-time courses covering Decorative and Trowel Occupations, as well as BTEC First and National Diploma. Trowel Occupations is a more practical route and is offered at Foundation and Intermediate Construction Awards level. Decorative Occupations is offered as a Foundation construction award, and next year they will also be offering Intermediate for learners wishing to progress. For learners who wish to enter the Construction Industry in a supervisory, Technician capacity, they are running the BTEC First and National diplomas. For learners wishing to take an entry qualification, they now have the NPTC-Skills for working life Construction qualification. This course will allow progression into the learner's chosen foundation course in the future.

Five male students took part in the research. They were all studying the National Diploma in Construction.

Questionnaire Results

All five students left school at the age of sixteen and they all went straight to college after leaving school.

All five students left school with some qualifications and three of the students had reached level 2.

All of the students chose to study construction because they were interested in the subject and one had chosen this course as he had aspirations to be a Quantity Surveyor.

All of the students wanted a career in construction as they felt it would give them a good career with job security and the ability to earn a good wage.

All five students had ambitions within construction. The stated jobs were:

- Quantity Surveyor
- Construction Manager
- Structural or Civil Engineer
- Project Manager

They all stated that they knew how to achieve their ideal job.

At the end of the academic year they all intend to continue their study as this is the first year of a two year course. One of the students aims to go to University.

Group Questions

1. *Do you know what progression routes are available to you?*

None of the students were aware of the progression routes available to them.

2. *Do you know what 14-19 Diplomas are?*

All of the students said "No".

3. *Have you heard of Foundation Degrees?*

One student had heard of Foundation Degrees. The other four had never heard of them.

4. *Would you do further study if it meant you could progress in your career and earn more money?*

All five students stated that they would do further study to progress their career and earn more money.

The Progression Game - Academic Levels

The students were split into two groups. One group consisted of three students and the other group of two students and their lecturer. The fastest group completed the activity in eight minutes. They took a very logical and practical approach to the exercise and required very little assistance.

All of the students found this interesting as they were not aware of the variety of academic options available to them.

Evaluation

Each score is out of a possible maximum of five and states the average score across the group.

Did you find the process easy?	4.4
Was the specialist professional?	4.6
Was the specialist knowledgeable?	4.8
Did you enjoy this experience?	4.4
Were you able to participate fully?	4.6
Was the information useful?	4.8
Do you need any further help or guidance?	2.6

Overall the group appeared to enjoy the session and participated well in the activities.

Summary

Questionnaire Results

The majority of students left school at the age of sixteen.

Nearly all students left school with GCSEs and with a high proportion achieving level 2.

Students who did not go straight to college either studied in non related subjects or worked. Some of the students that worked had jobs within the construction industry whilst others had jobs that had no relevance at all.

Most of the students chose to go to college and study construction to further their career and earn more money.

Students appeared to want to work in construction as they enjoyed the practical elements and wanted a trade.

The majority of students seemed to have thought carefully about the future goals and ambitions whilst others appeared not to have yet reached a point in their life where they felt they needed to give their career planning serious consideration. Some students had ambitions of running their own business.

Most students felt they knew how to achieve their goals and ambitions.

The majority of students aimed to work in construction or the built environment and some wanted to progress into higher education.

Group Questions

1. Do you know what progression routes are available to you?

The majority of students were not aware of the progression routes available.

2. Do you know what 14-19 Diplomas are?

Nearly all of the students stated "No" to this question.

3. Have you heard of Foundation Degrees?

Only a couple of students had heard of Foundation Degrees.

4. Would you do further study if it meant you could progress in your career and earn more money?

In three of the research groups all of the students stated that they would do further study to progress their career and earn more money with the majority of the fourth group.

The Progression Game - Academic Levels

The group that completed the activity in the fastest time completed it in eight minutes. The groups required assistance because they had not heard of some of the qualifications before.

All of the students found this interesting as they were not aware of the variety of academic options available to them.

Evaluation

Across the four groups the average scores are as follows:

Did you find the process easy?	4.1
Was the specialist professional?	4.6
Was the specialist knowledgeable?	4.6
Did you enjoy this experience?	3.7
Were you able to participate fully?	4.1
Was the information useful?	4.1
Do you need any further help or guidance?	3.1

The students appear to have enjoyed the process and found it worthwhile. There also appears to be a need to provide further help and guidance to students in planning their future careers.

Next steps

This report suggests that the majority of students believed that they were clear about their progression routes because they were not fully aware of what was available to them. Although the research carried out appears to have raised awareness, it has also identified a need to carry out more awareness-raising interventions. Progress South Central will continue to set up progression agreements.

The key reasons for students wanting to continue with their study appear to be progression within their chosen career and earning more money. Colleges and other institutions may benefit from stating this in their marketing material to encourage students to enrol. Progress South Central intends to develop case studies and work with schools delivering relevant 14-19 Diplomas.

Progress South Central will disseminate this report to Colleges, Universities, Aimhigher, Schools and other partner organisations.

Appendix 1 - Questionnaire for Construction Students



Questionnaire for Construction Students

Questionnaire for Construction Students	
Date	
College	
Course	
Interviewer name	
Subject name	

Questions
1. At what age did you leave school?
2. What qualifications did you leave school with?
3. Did you go straight to college after leaving school?

4. If not, what did you do and for how long?

5. Why did you choose to go to college and study Construction?

6. Why do you want a career in Construction?

7. What would be your ideal job?

8. Do you know how to achieve your ideal job?

9. What do you intend to do at the end of this academic year?

Appendix 2 - Academic Levels



Appendix 3 - Evaluation Form



Evaluation Form

Information

Thank you for helping Progress South Central. To receive your voucher, please give us your address.	
Name	
e-mail address:	
Address:	

Evaluation

Scoring: 5 = Excellent, 4 = Very Good, 3 = Good, 2 = Satisfactory, 1 = Not Really <i>(Please circle the number and comment)</i>					
Process					
Did you find the process easy?	5	4	3	2	1
Please comment:					
Research Specialist					
Was the specialist professional?	5	4	3	2	1
Please comment:					
Was the specialist knowledgeable?	5	4	3	2	1
Please comment:					
You					

Did you enjoy this experience?	5	4	3	2	1
Please comment:					
Were you able to participate fully?	5	4	3	2	1
Please comment:					
Was the information useful?	5	4	3	2	1
Please comment:					
Do you need any further help or guidance?	5	4	3	2	1
Please comment:					

We fully comply with the data Protection Act 1998. All information is used for evaluation only and will be treated as strictly private and confidential, and will not be passed on to any other party. Thank you for your cooperation.