

HE4ME - USW & Coleg y Cymoedd

Christopher Edwards, Student Recruitment and Outreach Manager, University of South Wales

Beth Giles, Creative Media Lecturer, Coleg y Cymoedd

Context and background

The University of South Wales (USW) in collaboration with Reaching Wider has developed HE4ME – an initiative to raise aspirations of Level 3 college students to progress into higher education (HE). The HE4ME initiative comprises a series of four tailored interactive workshops designed to explore HE opportunities and provide practical guidance on accessing university education. The HE4ME programme commenced in 2024/25 and is delivered to Level 3 students studying Creative Arts courses at Coleg y Cymoedd, as well as other partner colleges of USW.

Programme delivery

HE4ME was delivered to all Level 3 Creative Arts students at Coleg y Cymoedd at its Aberdare campus. The workshops were led by USW staff and supported by USW student ambassadors who shared their personal experiences.

1

The initial workshop introduced students to various post-Level 3 options and encouraged them to reflect on their current career goals.

2

The second session delved deeper into the advantages of higher education, university choices and the benefits of earning a degree. Addressing financial concerns and providing essential information on student finance really helped to break down barriers that often deter students from pursuing higher education. By the end of these discussions, many previously hesitant students began actively exploring degree programmes and those who were initially uncertain about their future found this session enlightening, realising that HE could be a viable and beneficial choice.

3

The third workshop assisted students in key aspects of HE applications, such as writing personal statements, resulting in significantly boosted student confidence.

4

The final session was a trip to USW's Atrium campus, allowing students to immerse themselves in university life. Engaging in subject-specific activities, interacting with academic staff and learning more about student life. This first-hand experience was brilliant for them and helped to ease any anxieties about the transition to HE.

A key aspect of the workshops was the delivery of information and activities in a fun and engaging way. The anecdotes from student ambassadors helped to personalise the process for the participants in a way that added greater value than hearing the information from their college tutors.

Student feedback highlights the value of the programme especially in providing clarity on the process as a whole. Many expressed gratitude for the structured guidance and real-world insights that made the prospect of university education more accessible and appealing. Provided is some of the feedback from first year Level 3 students.

“The HE4ME course convinced me that going to university is possible for me because it gave me information about grants and eased my worries about money. It also informed me about how university can be fun, how to apply and that writing a personal statement isn't as bad as it seems.”

Tia

“Scott's visits really helped me with deciding to go to university as I wasn't 100% sure at the time. He helped by talking about finance, uni life and applying to uni and how to write a good personal statement. He also made it fun which kept me intrigued.”

Lowri

“The HE4ME was useful because of the variety of information presented during the sessions, from the different path opportunities for post-college to different aspects of the University experience. I was already planning to go to university, but the sessions helped reinforce my desire to go to university after college.”

Kinsgley

“I think Scott coming in helped me learn more about applying for university and he also got me thinking about if I want to go to university or if I want to try to get an apprenticeship.”

Jaysen

Impact

The HE4ME project has had a significantly positive impact on the Level 3 creative learners at Aberdare Campus. Learners have shown an increased awareness of HE options and greater confidence in decision-making regarding their future education. They've gained valuable clarity regarding student finance and the application processes. So far there has

been a significantly higher number of students showing interest in applying to university compared to previous years.

This project has been incredibly supportive in helping Level 3 creative learners at Coleg y Cymoedd Aberdare navigate their transition to higher education. By offering tailored workshops, mentoring, and providing hands-on university experiences, this initiative has helped to empower students to make informed choices about their academic and career futures.

Project team

Christopher Edwards, Student Recruitment and Outreach Manager, University of South Wales

Beth Giles, Creative Media Lecturer, Coleg y Cymoedd

Samantha Hobby, UCAS, Careers Support Administrative Co-ordinator, Coleg y Cymoedd

Scott Mahoney, Schools, Colleges, and Outreach Officer, University of South Wales

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Find out more about the project on the QAA Cymru [website](#).

