

Title - Region-specific learning for sustainable development

Keywords - Sustainable Development

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School / Department - Cornwall Business School

Institution - Cornwall College

Group - FdA Tourism (Sustainable Practice)

Activity - This example describes a new foundation degree programme that has been specifically developed to provide further learning opportunities for those already working to ensure the sustainable development of Cornwall.

Aim - This innovative programme has been designed to provide tourism work-related learning in line with national and international research and practice, but which also reflects the regional distinctiveness of Cornwall.

Context / Background - The FdA in Tourism (Sustainable Practice) is one of a suite of tourism-related foundation degrees validated by the University of Plymouth, and developed by the Cornwall Business School in consultation with industry employers.

The programme will be underpinned with tourism, regional distinctiveness and environmental issues. Learners will be involved in live projects, which is of paramount importance to the nature of foundation degrees and the increase of graduateship within the region. Further, it will work to support the economic viability of the region and, in line with the South West's vision for 2015, provide the training needed to develop the region as a premier holiday destination. In a region which is successfully rebuilding a sustainable economic base by using its industrial heritage, natural beauty and cultural legacies, this programme has been developed to provide the skills and knowledge needed to support the process.

There has been consultation with employers and public agencies about this programme, commencing with the content and design of modules, as well as identifying and committing activities for work experience, placement and graduate entry career opportunities. In particular, a lack of higher level training programmes in sustainable management has been raised as an issue within the region. Hence, this programme has been developed to address this need, whilst complementing and providing progression from existing programmes at FE level 2 and 3 in these areas.

As a result of consultation with the Cornish Tourism Focus Group the following points were identified as essential requirements by the industry:

- A high standard of practical and management skills
- A high level of customer service

- An awareness of regional distinctiveness
- Understanding and implementation of sustainable practices

A particular strength of the programme is that it will be within easy geographical reach of learners whilst it maximises flexibility in terms of learning opportunities. Often this enables learners to spend minimum time out of the work place and remain in employment, in line with the Government's initiative to "earn and learn". The team will actively work with learners who would want to claim credit for prior learning or experience.

Discussions with the industry have highlighted the need for training in these areas, however the need for flexibility in delivery and application to the working environment is paramount. Many of the employees interviewed have expressed enormous interest in studying at a higher level but felt excluded from attending college by their need to earn a living.

This programme has been designed to enable local employers from across the sector to become involved in activities such as local case studies of best practice and the opportunity to acquire skills in the workplace whilst researching for assignments and projects that will also support organisational operations.

It is expected that the course will be attractive to those already employed within the tourism industry; therefore, flexible delivery is a key feature. The course can be studied full- or part-time, or as credit-bearing short courses. Potentially, in the future, the modules may also be available within the workplace and as web-based blended learning options.

Example

The programme has been designed to encompass a comprehensive consideration of issues relating to the management and sustainability of tourism environments. In the first year, the course concentrates on core aspects of management, customer service, financial management, personal development, learning within the workplace and the structure and composition of the wider tourism industry. Sustainability is formally considered within a compulsory module - The Economics of Sustainable Tourism, which includes aspects such as globalisation, regional impact, policy, supply and demand and the efficient utilisation of resources. Optional modules in Cornish Tourism, Environmental Law, and Landscape Management and Protection enable individuals to also pursue their personal interests within sustainability.

In the second year, in addition to the requirement to develop and demonstrate skills in research and evaluation, the compulsory element of the programme concentrates on sustainable tourism management, education and interpretation of tourism environments. The programme will make extensive use of industry-related case studies, such as evaluating host versus visitor conflicts in Cornish resorts that are

popular with surf culture, eg Newquay and Porthtowan; investigating the need to develop the St Ives Tate education programmes; considering sustainable travel methods within the county, and developing interpretation and education within Cornwall's tourist attractions. The programme is concerned with building knowledge and understanding of the issues associated with sustainable tourism planning and development in local, regional, national and global contexts. The education and interpretation of tourism environments module requires students to investigate and develop the skills and knowledge necessary to design effectively interpretation mediums for various audiences and contexts. These compulsory courses are complemented with optional modules which offer the potential to further study ecosystems, regional culture and sustainable construction.

Teaching, learning and assessment methods

The main aims of this new programme is to take learning away from the confines of academic institutions and into the world of work and/or offer compressed block periods of study outside of the academic calendar.

The modules will be delivered via keynote lectures by experts within the tourism industry in Cornwall. Supported by workplace mentors, assessment will be based on learners' own experiences and work environments. The curriculum is being designed around real case studies based in the workplace, with students all contributing to the learning experience. Materials are being designed to be available electronically through the University of Plymouth student portal.

In *Education and Interpretation of Tourism Environments* learners will be required to design and deliver an educational environmental workshop including teaching materials for a specified client group.

In *Funding Issues* learners will be encouraged to work with a local organisation as part of a team to write a successful funding bid for touristic developments.

In *Cornish Tourism* learners will take a Cornish tourist destination and produce a portfolio to consider a variety of environmental and human impacts and recommend how those impacts can be managed.

In *Sustainable Construction* learners will be required to demonstrate knowledge of key issues in sustainable construction and the ability to present coherent, well argued plans for a building project that uses sustainable methods.

In *Sustainable Tourism Management* learners will debate, in an essay, the importance of strategic planning for sustainable management, including practical approaches to minimise impacts within a designated area.

Results / Feedback - The course will run for the first time in September 2005.

Individual modules which are part of the 'Pick and Pack' programme will be run as block study for a number of days, or can be studied as individual CPD modules or as a softer entry into a full foundation degree.

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www.cornwall.ac.uk/cbs/ for further information on the range of Tourism programmes and the 'Pick and Pack' programmes.