

Working together in Dorset to create a lasting legacy among HE students and young people beyond 2012

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Introduction

RELAYS (Regional Educational Legacy in Arts and Youth Sport) is one of the programmes designed to create a positive and lasting legacy beyond 2012. Funded by Legacy Trust UK, an independent charity set up to build a lasting cultural and sporting legacy from the 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games and the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE), it is supported by a range of partners, including 13 of the region's universities (Universities South West, 2010). Here the partnership formed by the RELAYS School Events Coordinator, and the Events and Sports Management tutors from the School of Services Management at Bournemouth University is described. Through this collaboration, opportunities are being created to enhance the student experience both within the curricula and external to it, throughout the period of study.

RELAYS Mission statement is

‘To create a lasting legacy with young people and their communities in the South West, inspired by the London 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games, by raising aspirations through participation in innovative cultural and sporting activity; developing knowledge and skills; and establishing distinctive sustainable festivals and events.’ (HERDA-SW, 2008).

The programme aims specifically to:

- Create a range of sustainable events.
- Inspire young people and enhance their confidence and aspirations.
- Up-skill young people through events and educationally-based activities.
- Engage with local businesses.
- Create an enhanced regional tourism offer.

The School of Services Management Undergraduate Framework has courses in tourism, events, hospitality, leisure, sports and, retail. The Framework is designed to offer students the opportunity to develop professional, intellectual and inter-personal skills in a programme which is both academic and sector specific. The programme is delivered over four years.

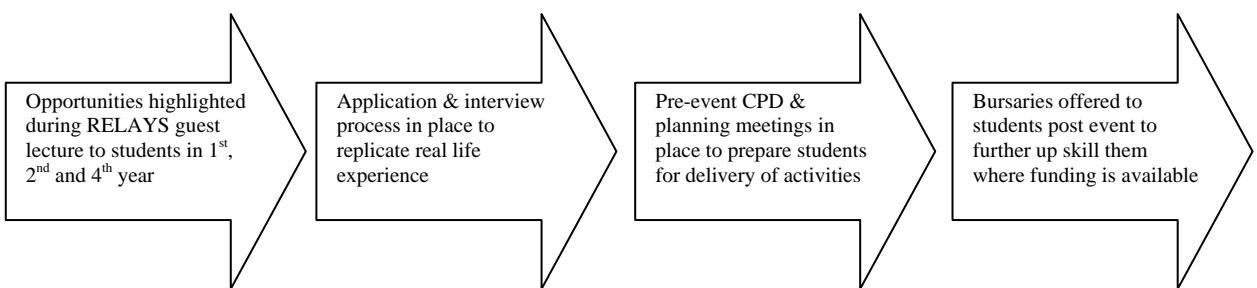
The first year at certificate level is designed to provide a foundation period of study. A key feature of the year is to offer a high level of practical involvement to develop technical skills. During the second or intermediate level, the emphasis is on management at an operational level and so the students are expected to apply knowledge of the major theories to management. The industrial placement in the 3rd year provides an opportunity for the student to contextualise the first two years and to gain first-hand experience of a professional environment. On return to the 4th year of study, at honours level, the students are expected to integrate the learning of the

previous years whilst developing knowledge and skills, including the completion of a dissertation.

RELAYS works closely with tutors on the BA (Hons) Events Management, BSc (Hons) Sports Development and Coaching Sciences and BSc (Hons) Sports Management programmes in five areas and activities undertaken over the academic year 2009-10 are described here.

Coaching and leading activity sessions

Working with the Sports Management team, over forty 1st, 2nd and 4th year students have engaged in coaching and leadership opportunities. This has ranged from small events with as few as 60 school pupils, to larger scale events with up to 450 children. Offered to all students with the support and backing of the academic team, the students' time is given up on a voluntary basis, above and beyond their course. As part of the preparation for the festivals and events, students are provided with training and Continuing Professional Development (CPD) enhancing their academic learning further. The diagram below shows the process that the students go through to volunteer for the project.



A participant emailed afterwards:

The Relays training gave me lots of new and interesting ideas for coaching and increased my overall confidence, leadership and coaching ability... The festival has widened my experience as a coach and has sparked a passion for further volunteering.

Organising and planning events

In the second year of study, students within the management cohorts experience the practical implementation of the different methods and theories relevant to event management. The principal learning outcome is that they are expected to have planned and executed an event within a team and a specific time frame. Jarvis (2006) distinguishes between a context '*that approximates the practice world... a virtual world, relatively free of pressures, distractions, and the risks of the real one to which, nevertheless, it refers'* [quoting Schön, 1987] and '*practice-based learning...in the real-world, under slightly sheltered conditions*' (Jarvis, 2006, p. 147). It is the latter that these events emulate.

Each group of students work with a client, such as a charity, school or other public sector group, and RELAYS undertook this role for 2 Sports Management teams and one from the Events Management cohort. RELAYS met the teams regularly and

provided each group with a small budget to kick start the planning process, as well as affording access to different partners such as Youth Services, Dorset Police, School Sports Partnerships, Nacro (the crime reduction charity), Connexions, as well as private activity providers.

The Sports Management students undertook the task of organising a festival for a social inclusion project run by the Police and local authorities from across Dorset. With football at the heart of the festival, the group was tasked with organising a number of other activities to take place throughout the day, encouraging the children aged between 12 and 17 to try out other activities such as street dance, DJ workshops and kick boxing as well as being given the opportunity to talk to health professionals about issues around sexual health and healthy eating. The event was granted the Inspire Mark and post event kick boxing and street dance sessions are now taking place in a number of different youth centres across the county.

Meanwhile the Events Management group worked with the Physical Education Coordinator at a Dorset primary school to organise an Olympic themed festival based around the Olympic value ‘Friendship’. The brief was to organise an event with the objectives of raising awareness of RELAYS through the concept of linking sports and arts and thereby encouraging primary school children to take part in extracurricular activities and promoting a healthy lifestyle.

Ninety years 3 and 4 pupils took part in a number of activities throughout the course of a normal school day, at the event named, Get, Set, Friendship. Four activities were organised, a dance workshop, drama, team building and Quad Kids athletics. The students engaged professionals to run the workshops on dance and drama requesting an activity based around the theme of friendship. They divided the children into four groups and encouraged them to support each other throughout the day.

The students are required to undertake all the functions of organising an event including, finance, operations, risk management etc. Their final assignment is to evaluate the event and reflect on their personal contribution. One student wrote ‘As a group I think we were professional, ambitious, and achieved a successful event as a result of careful forethought and well executed operational management... Although there are things I would have liked to change, the experience was something that I will treasure for a long time.’

Volunteering

Throughout their degree, the students are encouraged to volunteer to help at RELAYS’ events by the tutors posting information on the virtual learning environment. Fourth year students volunteered for example to deliver the Quad Kids and Team Building workshop at the Get Set, Friendship event.

Placement opportunities

RELAYS has offered a number of placement opportunities to Sports Management students over the past year. The most substantial of these is a full time voluntary placement to work alongside not only the School Events Coordinator at Bournemouth University but also the Cultural Coordinator at the Arts University College

Bournemouth. The aim of sharing the role across both universities was to involve the student in working with many different partners from both the sporting and cultural world, exposing them to creative and alternative ways on how both sport and art can be used to inspire and engage young people. Additionally, the student was given the responsibility to organise an event to take place in April 2010. The end product was a highly successful mental health festival “Smile” and planning has already begun to run a second festival in September 2010.

Dissertation research

A student submitted a dissertation proposal form suggesting that she undertake research into the expectations of 18-30 year olds with respect to the 2012 Olympics. Before proceeding it was suggested by the Events tutor at the initial supervisory meeting that she speak to RELAYS. Subsequently it was agreed between the three parties that her research would ascertain the contribution of events to achieving a sport participation legacy.

The student used a mixed method, consisting of an interactive survey of 180 children at an Aim Higher event for local schools together with group and individual interviews with children and teachers at a RELAYS Urbanise Festival, in December 2009. From this data she was able to develop a theoretical framework on how the Olympics and RELAYS can be used to help improve sport participation levels among school children.

Conclusion

The collaboration between RELAYS and Bournemouth University has successfully created a legacy not only for school children through established festivals and events, but also for HE students, through enhancing their academic studies, with access to training, qualifications and valuable experience. Since the partnership began in February 2009, over 200 students have registered to volunteer in various ways. Furthermore, opportunities for lasting partnerships with professionals across the county have been established.

The project is supported by the RELAYS office being placed within the area of the tutors’ offices encouraging informal as well as more formal meetings. In the coming academic year the partnership will be repeated and enhanced through new approaches, including access by students to an electronic events resource guide, the sharing of equipment provided by the School with RELAYS and the extension of the leadership programme to the team leaders from the Events Management cohort.

References

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