



Student Transitions: City Lab

Title: Aberdeen CityLab! Where the city is the classroom

Transition(s) the practice supports: Aberdeen CityLab! seeks to enable students to better understand their subject skills in levels three and four by placing them in a multidisciplinary group of students from Aberdeen's two universities. In this situation they will see how their skills contribute to a common project, while also gaining wider skills from other subjects. This supports the transition of the student moving towards their exit from the university as it gives them a better understanding of what they have to offer upon graduation.

Abstract: Aberdeen CityLab! brings students together from the University of Aberdeen and Robert Gordon University in order to work with a local organisation to develop new services for the organisation or one of its partner organisations. Students are guided through their projects using a human centred design approach which provides them with the skills to gather information and apply it while also being able to deploy their subject skills as required. Each team is mentored by academic staff and assisted by an appropriate staff member from the organisation who can provide assistance for the projects.

Description:

The students on the course come from both the University of Aberdeen and Robert Gordon University. This credit-bearing course is for students on either level three or level four in their degree and is designed to offer a work-related-learning component to students within which they have an opportunity to apply current skills and subject knowledge while also learning and developing professional skills.

Students work in multidisciplinary teams on live client projects with external organisations such as Aberdeen City Council or the NHS. The projects are envisioned and developed by students based on ideas from brainstorming sessions in a range of areas identified by the host organisation. Each student team works with an academic mentor and has access to specialist advisors from the host organisation and from a participating partnership voluntary organisation if that is appropriate. Projects will be continued by the host organisation, or the partnership organisation at the end of term. Students will gain live client experience in the working world while helping to create sustainable projects to develop a better city and community.

We are currently running this as a pilot this term between January and April 2016 with sixteen students. Ten are from the University of Aberdeen and six from Robert Gordon University and are divided into teams focused on projects around cycle paths, park lighting and usage, food waste, cultural activities and event finding. Each week the students meet and learn a new skill before working on their project and determining when they will meet again later in the week to continue work. The new skills are associated with the design

process enabling students from all disciplines to engage and enhance their employability skills.

We expect the course to continue as the different stakeholders are impressed with results to date. Although early days, the project is meeting the expectations of the two academic Institutions involved. The current cohort of students is enthusiastic about the projects and has found each session stimulating and challenging. They have developed a good understanding of the materials and are making good progress with their ideas. The projects are seen as a way to gain valuable experience and a better understanding of how the city works and the intricacies of managing change in organisations. The City Council also values the input from the students on the course and is building the continuation of the project into plans for the future as it can see this as suitable means to help create ideas and capabilities for the city.

The course also has the potential to inspire work-related-learning postgraduate courses in this area across the Institutions as they become more familiar with each other's work and doors are opened across the city's organisations. These courses could either replicate this three-hour per week model, or could be modified to become summer project courses. This would give better opportunities for longer interaction with city organisations at a more intense pace, in order to achieve larger visions.

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All examples provided will be posted to the Enhancement Themes website with the intention of including them in the National Transitions map.