Recommendations

This was a difficult project to manage in terms of time and organisation. It was run at a time of year when staff and students are exceptionally busy and it was trialled for the first time, without the opportunity to iron out any mistakes or difficulties.

The sample population was small and results from questionnaires and focus groups represent only a proportion of an already small group.

However, there are some positive outcomes:

All students who had persistently missed deadlines met at least one deadline for this project and there was an improvement in rating of 2.86 (57%) on average hand-in rates. For all students, the average hand-in rate before interventions was assessed at 3.23, reflecting a student population generally poor at handing in work. After interventions, the hand-in rate for this project was assessed at 1.88, an improvement of 1.35 (a rise of 42%). There was a higher increase in the population of students who persistently missed deadlines. Although none of these students met all deadlines for the project, they did meet most.

There was an increase in the number of students who met the deadline and there was a general increase in the number of students who met the pass criteria for this assignment on first submission.

Given that this was a difficult project requiring new skills that students had to practice themselves in a short space of time, this reflects a positive impact.

At the same time, those students who already consistently met deadlines also did so for this project, again despite the difficulty of the task.

At least 70% of students valued the style of the assessment, in terms of the involvement of people from industry and the real client, feeling that it helped them to achieve work of a quality that was higher than they otherwise would have been able to achieve.

In fact the number was around 80%. Students had given positive feedback throughout the project and the standard of work and effort has been good.

A project such as this, where people from industry are brought in to lead sessions, where some learning takes place away from college in an environment more like the real work place, and where there is a real client willing to meet with students, to discuss requirements and to give feedback on outcomes, is difficult and time consuming to organise, needs resources and funding and needs a bank of people willing to take part. I am very grateful to Ahmed, James and Peter who all contributed their time to help the students to achieve some good results.

There is evidence that students value the input of people from the industry directly relevant to their learning. Having these people available and willing to help allowed students to achieve a good level of work using skills that are not easy to acquire and that their tutors don't necessarily have is valued.

Having tips and inside information about the industry is valued by students. Students often prefer to do practical rather than written tasks, especially those who have achieved less in the academic system. This is often cited as a reason why students applied to come to college in the first place. Finding ways to involve people from industry in the delivery of learning on IT/computing/digital media courses would be a valuable step forward in making the learning more real, more interesting and more motivational for students.   This is then very likely to result in, not only better success rates, but better and more relevant skills being demonstrated by students as they enter the workplace.