

From Wales to Spain: Further Education students travel to Barcelona



Written by:

*Sophie Williams,
A level Lecturer,
Coleg Sir Gar*

The beginning of July saw A level students from Coleg Sir Gar, South Wales departing for five days to Barcelona to work with leading company NexGen. All students who attended the trip are currently studying the Advanced Skills Baccalaureate Wales alongside their respective A level subjects. The trip gave students the opportunity to hone their skills and evaluate their own career pathways, interests and values through a series of workshops. Learners also worked collaboratively to complete a set brief for companies from across the globe. NexGen's experience of working with numerous further education colleges across Wales proved highly beneficial in helping to build confidence amongst learners and develop the skills needed to be successful in the ever-changing world of work. As well as this, learners experienced the cultural vibrancy of Barcelona, with a visit to co working space Betahaus to learn about how even the location and spaces in which we work are ever evolving.

Developing skills; creating lifelong learners

NexGen's ethos and over-arching goal to 'create the next generation workforce' was a fundamental motif that underpinned the five days. With the world of work continually developing, learners were encouraged to appreciate the world in which they currently live, their role within

this and how the landscape will look in the future. At the core of the workshops was the focus on how students perceive themselves, their values and where they would like to contribute to making a difference in the future. Incorporating NexGen's EX3 framework of Examine, Explore and Experience, learners were able to identify what is most important to them as individuals, explore pathways that relate specifically to their values and gain invaluable experience working with companies to meet a desired outcome.

Not only this, the NexGen framework and ethos is designed to encourage young people to recognise their role in their wider communities and society on a local, national and global level. This holistic approach to looking at the world of work integrates skills and values that are pivotal in shaping lifelong learners, much like the aim of the new Advanced Skills Baccalaureate Wales.

Spain, Wales and the Advanced Skills Baccalaureate

In Wales, the majority of further education students undertake the Advanced Skills Baccalaureate Wales (AdvSBW) as part of their programme of study. With its reform in September 2023 came a fresh approach to thinking about how educational institutions develop vital skills and attributes amongst their learners. The structure of the AdvSBW has proven essential in developing learners' skills that will be crucial as they embark on further study or the world of work.

Whilst in Barcelona, learners were continuously provided with opportunities to develop their skills set that tackled the four integral skills of the AdvSBW. These included critical thinking and problem solving, creativity and innovation, planning and organisation, and personal effectiveness; elements that align directly with the qualification. Over the course of the week, it was pleasing to watch learners' confidence grow as they began to appreciate how these integral skills

feature in all aspects of their studies, future plans and on a wider global scale. The learning context of the AdvSBW (the integration of the UN sustainable goals, and Wales' Wellbeing Goals) also featured heavily across the learners' time in Barcelona - not only in the workshops but also considering the cultural significance of these ideas. When learners were completing their projects for their company, the UN Goals were an essential aspect that they had to consider, much like they do in the Global Community Project. Of course, NexGen's career design framework also complements the Future Destinations Project and it was pleasing to see learners consider different pathways and gain an appreciation of how diverse their world of work could look.

The development of skills and level of consideration of these required throughout the week cannot be underestimated. Learners were not only told to consider their wider skill set and how this relates to their future careers but actively encouraged to do so as part of NexGen's approach to learning, which is an instrumental factor that added to the enjoyment and success of the visit.

When asked to reflect on her time in Barcelona, learner Madeleine Moore commented "the whole experience has improved my ability to work with others, develop my communication skills and generally grow my confidence. We had to come up with an initiative for a company considering all these elements and making sure we able to meet the brief of the company".

Madeleine was also asked about how the experience has helped shape her work for her AdvSBW projects and she remarked that "NexGen and the workshops had similar characteristics and aspects of the Future Destinations Project so that was extremely useful and relevant. It was an invaluable experience and it has really helped me to appreciate how the AdvSBW provides us with the opportunity to develop those essential skills that

employers are looking for, whilst also understanding our place as global citizens".



Learners (from left to right) Ffion Jones, Jemimah Norton and Madeleine Moore presenting their final pitch for their company Rally to the panel

So, whether our young people are participating in projects for global companies whilst working from Barcelona, or if they're in Wales working towards achieving their AdvSBW qualification, the focus remains the same: provide them with the skills, attributes and values needed to succeed in what is a challenging, yet exciting future.

