

Skills Fund Case Studies



Skills Fund Enhances Oriental Cuisine Students' Employment Prospects

Students of oriental cuisine are working in a professional restaurant as they train for an NVQ Level 2 qualification in Professional Cooking. Currently 30 students are being supported as a direct result of a successful application to the Skills Fund. In addition, the Skills Fund will enable a further 20 students to undertake the training through to qualification.

Based in Leeds, the Oriental Academy of Cuisine was established in 1995 to address the skills shortage within the industry. It is an innovative training centre to encourage students to start out in the industry or support those needing professional accreditation in order to develop a career.

The Academy's General Manager, Gemma Stubbs said, "We started the Academy with a view to improving standards in this specialist area of cooking, and to give the local community an opportunity to develop these skills in the process. We knew that by providing professional training, a corporate level of professionalism could be achieved for the industry, whilst at the same time helping unemployed people to become professionals in their own right."

The success of this idea was dependent upon attracting people into the profession who would perhaps otherwise struggle to find work because of language barriers or lack of other basic skills, as many prospective candidates are of minority ethnic backgrounds.

Gemma explained, "By attracting people who were unemployed and with potential, the mutual benefits to the industry, local communities and the Academy could be maintained and sustained in the longer-term." 30 students are currently training in Professional Cookery with some who are doing NVQ Level 2 gaining IT skills and taking an ESOL course as a supporting qualification.

The training includes food preparation and food safety, and methods particular to Oriental cooking. Students not only gain knowledge and expertise in professional cooking, but receive language mentoring, learn the tools to write a CV and skills to apply for work. As well as working in a professional kitchen, trainees undertake some of the course via distance learning. Students are not just Leeds-based. The Skills Fund has enabled students from Wakefield, Bradford, Shipley and Huddersfield to undertake their training.

Last academic year, out of twenty-four students who had enrolled, only six could afford to complete the qualification. But now the Skills Fund has enabled the Academy to guarantee the potential for all enrolled students to complete their course with qualified status. And the Academy is delighted with the results.

Gemma said, "Not only are the students qualifying, but the improvement in self-esteem, confidence and raised morale within the students' communities has been a huge additional benefit." The Skills Fund is helping the Academy to support students who may never otherwise have had the opportunity to train, qualify and cook professionally for their living. You can find out more about the work of the Academy by visiting www.academyoforientalcuisine.co.uk.