

## **FIFE AND TAYSIDE WIDER ACCESS FORUM**

### **Annual report for HBOS Foundation Year 1 - 2007 - 2008**

#### **Introduction and Background**

Fife and Tayside Wider Access Forum is one of four regional forums in Scotland that receives core funding from the Scottish Funding Council. The primary role of the Forums is to contribute to Learning for All (The Scottish Funding Council's Widening Participation Strategy) through the development of partnerships that support a range of activities that raise awareness and promote opportunities to widen participation in learning. LIFT OFF is the Schools' theme of Fife and Tayside Wider Access Forum and works with schools across Fife and Tayside that have low progression rates to further and higher education and have a high proportion of pupils from deprived communities.

Funding from the HBOS Foundation is used to extend and expand the LIFT OFF programme. Specifically the funding is being used to develop the following:

- a range of information about student finance for both pupils and their parents
- enhancement of S4 residential event (LIFT OFF 2 Success) through improved finance session for parents, guardians and carers.
- a conference for S5 pupils that highlights next steps towards further and higher education including more in depth information on student finance and transition
- a residential experience for S6 pupils focusing on budgeting skills and higher education preparation
- Annual capacity building and training sessions for volunteers and teaching staff

#### **SUMMARY OF ACTIVITIES UNDERTAKEN IN 2007 -08**

##### **Financial information resources**

The LIFT OFF Student Finance Comic has been developed as an online resource and was launched in November 2008. It can be found at [www.lift-off.org.uk/finance-comic](http://www.lift-off.org.uk/finance-comic). Posters and post cards have been used to promote the resource to young people and a limited number of USB wrist bands have been distributed. Initial responses have been positive. Since its launch, there have been 311 visits recorded to the comic on the website. This will continue to be monitored to assess its impact.

A booklet for parents has been researched and developed in draft form. It was presented to parents at LIFT OFF 2 Success in August 2008 as part of the consultation on its contents and some changes will be made as a result of this feedback. It was extremely well received and the following comment from one parent highlights the need for this kind of material and information - *Thank you for your time and effort, much appreciated- parents need help too!*

## **S5 Conference –GBLOC (Great Big LIFT OFF Conference)**

The first GBLOC was held in Dundee on two days in November 2007. Despite the short preparation time 170 pupils from across Fife and Tayside attended. In addition to compulsory finance sessions, Forum partners (colleges and universities in Fife and Tayside) provided sessions covering a range of issues that young people face in the transition from school to college or university.

## **S6 Residential**

The first residential experience for S6 pupils had been planned to take place in October 2008. However due to different holidays across the region in October, this proved too difficult to organise and it has been postponed until Easter 2009.

## **Capacity building sessions for volunteers and teaching staff in schools**

A training and feedback session for student volunteers was held in Dundee in May 2008. A session for school guidance staff is planned for GBLOC 2008.

## **Progress against milestones**

A Project Officer was appointed to support the LIFT OFF team. LIFT OFF has a management group that advises and supports its work and this group in conjunction with the Executive Group of the Forum has acted as the project Steering Group. Both these groups are involved in monitoring of progress. The first Great Big LIFT OFF Conference was delivered in November 2008 and the evaluation report (Appendix 1) summarises the feedback and lessons learned from this first event. The Project Officer with responsibility for development of the Finance Comic carried out extensive consultations to establish what was needed and how best this could be presented. This included consulting with pupils, parents, current students, teachers, and a range of people giving financial advice to young people and students. The comic was completed and launched in November 2008.

## **Analysis and reflection on progress to date**

An important element of the LIFT OFF programme is the Pupil Forum, an elected group of pupils who have participated in LIFT OFF core activities and represent the views of their fellow pupils from target schools. The Pupil Forum meets twice yearly to provide feedback on existing activity and to advise on new developments. The Pupil Forum has been actively involved in all the above developments. An example of advice from the Pupil Forum is the introduction of a 'Plan B' session at GBLOC in 2008. This session will provide information on where to get help if young people do not get required grades for, or accepted onto, the course of their choice.

The GBLOC 2007 evaluation includes a lessons learned section and as a result a number of changes/additions have been made to the 2008 conference. These include the introduction of a training session for guidance staff, more information on finance for students intending to go to college and as detailed above the introduction of a Plan B session.

The priorities for 2008/09 are as follows:

- To monitor the use and effectiveness of the Finance Comic

- To introduce more financial awareness sessions in school workshops
- To use school workshops as a vehicle to promote the Finance Comic
- To introduce and ensure effective distribution of the parents' guide to finance
- To review GBLOC in light of two years' experience
- To develop a resource pack building on GBLOC sessions that will be distributed to all schools in the region.
- To extend the student volunteering programme to include volunteers from business, particularly the banking sector

### Sustainability of activity

Support from the HBOS Foundation has increased the numbers of young people participating in LIFT OFF activities, However, more significantly the funding has allowed the development of a range of resources and materials that can be embedded within the LIFT OFF programme and made available to young people beyond the initial target groups. Through capacity building and training programmes, awareness and understanding of issues facing young people from deprived communities in the transition from school to further and higher education will be raised.

**Table 1 – Progress towards targets**

<b>3 year target</b>	<b>Progress towards targets – Year 1</b>
A financial advice programme designed to fit into the existing project	Finance comic completed and launched on LIFT OFF website 6 November 2008. Student finance session developed and introduced in GBLOC (Great Big LIFT OFF conference) Information for parents researched and drafted.
390 pupils provided with individual guidance on financial issues relating to moving into post school opportunities.	Target not applicable in Year 1
4,500 pupils attending group workshops	170 pupils attended GBLOC conference – November 2007. 1000 pupils attended general workshops in schools from August 2007 – July 2008. 65 pupils attended LIFT OFF 2 Success (LO2S) in August 2008.
27,000 pupils with access to information and resources developed.	Finance comic available on LIFT OFF website - 311 hits on comic at 20 November 2008
Delivery of annual training and capacity building events for teachers and volunteers	Volunteer feedback and training day held in May 2008. Capacity building event for teachers planned for November 2008 (during GBLOC)

## Outputs

1. **Overall** - More young people leaving school and entering further and higher education, better prepared

Numbers progressing to further and higher education are monitored by the Forum. In 2006 Fife and Tayside as a whole was broadly in line with Scottish averages in terms of the numbers of school leavers progressing to higher education. However, the target schools with which the Forum engages fell significantly below this.

The first cohort of LIFT OFF pupils will leave school in June 2009 and these young people will be tracked to establish their destinations and also assess how prepared they felt in making the transition.

2. Increase in numbers of young people participating in the expanded programme with raised awareness and understanding of:

Choices and potential impact on later life of those choices	95% of participants mostly agreed or strongly agreed that the GBLOC helped them plan what to do next
Opportunities in post school learning and what is required to participate in these opportunities	96% of participants mostly agreed or strongly agreed that GBLOC was helpful for S5 pupils thinking of going to college or university
Issues surrounding transition into post school learning, in particular development of financial literacy skills.	94% of participants at GBLOC mostly agreed or strongly agreed that they were better informed about issues surrounding student finance

The detailed evaluation of GBLOC is contained in Appendix 1

3. Increased capacity within schools to support young people better for transition to post school learning

The development of finance materials that can be used within schools and the information and resources available at GBLOC all contribute to this output. The final evaluation will assess how effectively these resources are being used and the extent to which they have built capacity within staff in schools

## Financial report

### Fife and Tayside Wider Access Forum - HBOS Foundation

#### Financial Statement at 30 September 2008

<b>Income</b>						
	£					
HBOS Foundation	<b>49,975.00</b>					
<b>Expenditure</b>	<b>Annual budget</b>	<b>Expenditure Q1 - Dec 07</b>	<b>Expenditure Q2 - Mar 08</b>	<b>Expenditure Q3 - June 08</b>	<b>Expenditure Q4 – Sep 08</b>	
	£	£	£	£	£	
balance carried forward			<b>35,996.60</b>	<b>28,484.28</b>	<b>19650.11</b>	
Staff and volunteer costs	24,675.00	2,721.40	4,378.57	6,004.20	11917.00	
Conferences and Information	16,500.00	9,067.00	1,571.37	-		
Interactive resources	8,000.00	2,190.00	1,562.38	2,829.97	7695.50	
Pupil Forum support	800.00	-	-	-		
Total	49,975.00	13,978.40	7,512.32	8,834.17	19612.50	
<b>Balance</b>		<b>35,996.60</b>	<b>28,484.28</b>	<b>19,650.11</b>	<b>37.61</b>	

#### Notes on finance:

In compiling the budget, the cost of producing the comic was significantly underestimated; however, this was balanced by an overestimate of the cost of conferences and associated information.

### Great Big LIFT OFF Conference (GBLOC)

20 & 21 November 2007

Dundee College

Evaluation Report



The Great Big LIFT OFF Conference was designed to offer practical support and advice for S5 school pupils from LIFT OFF target schools, who are considering progressing to college or university after school. GBLOC ran for the first time on the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> November 2007 at Dundee College. The five Fife target schools and Blairgowrie High School attended on the 20<sup>th</sup>, others on the 21<sup>st</sup><sup>1</sup>. There was space for 200 pupils to attend (100 per day). A total of 170 pupils attended the first GBLOC over two days. GBLOC was developed with financial support from the HBOS Foundation.

#### Groundwork

The LIFT OFF Pupil Forum was presented with the idea for GBLOC and voted unanimously in favour of the event. Those Forum members who were in S5 stated that they would be very keen to attend, and believed their peers would be also. LIFT OFF staff also contacted link teachers in the target schools to see whether this was something they believed would be useful, and again support was very strong.

#### Building the programme

GBLOC was intended to be as inclusive as possible, so it was vital that the programme include something for everyone. Partners were asked to provide sessions on the following:

UCAS and the personal statement  
College and University – are they for me?  
To college and beyond – progression from HN  
Interview tips for college and university

Delegates chose two out of these four. There were three additional sessions that everyone took part in:

Student Finance  
Student Life  
Visiting partner stands

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<sup>1</sup> Please visit the LIFT OFF website ([www.lift-off.org.uk](http://www.lift-off.org.uk)) for a full list of LIFT OFF target schools.

## Promotion

GBLOC was open to all S5 pupils, so presentations were made by LIFT OFF staff in target schools to either whole year groups, or large groups recommended by the link teacher. Pupils who were interested were given a postcard with log-in information for the online registration.

## Registration

Pupils were responsible for registering themselves as delegates for the conference and for choosing which sessions they wanted to attend. Information was collated by LIFT OFF for each of the schools, and the link teachers were then provided with a list of pupils from their school who had registered.

## Transport

Pupils were collected at their school gates on the morning of the conference and were dropped back there at the end of the day.

## School Participation

School	No. of pupils
Arbroath Academy	5
Auchmuty High School <sup>2</sup>	21
Beath High School	3
Blairgowrie High School	15
Braeview Academy	30
Brechin High School	6
Harris Academy <sup>2</sup>	5
Kirkland High School	13
Lochgelly High School	19
Menzieshill High School	17
St Saviours RC High School	3
Viewforth High School	12
Woodmill High School	21

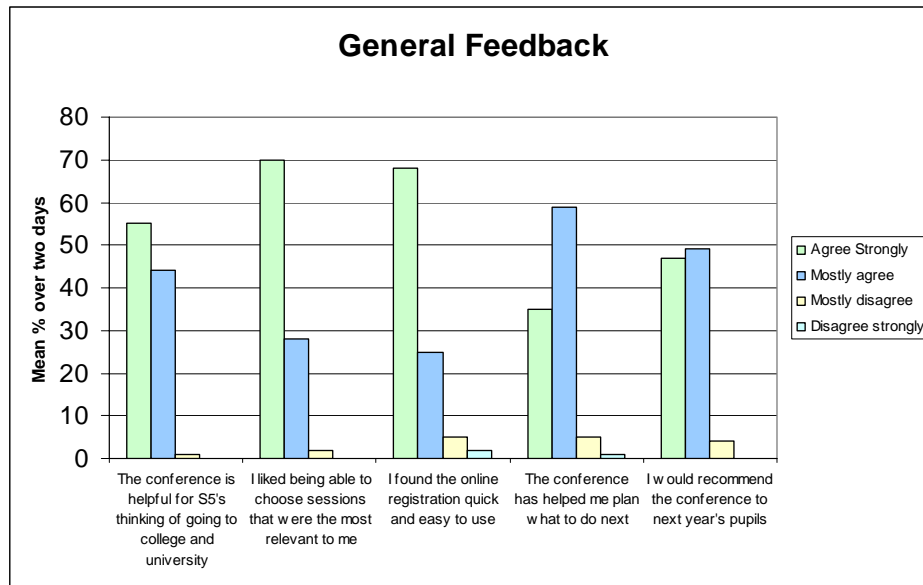
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<sup>2</sup> Not a LIFT OFF target school

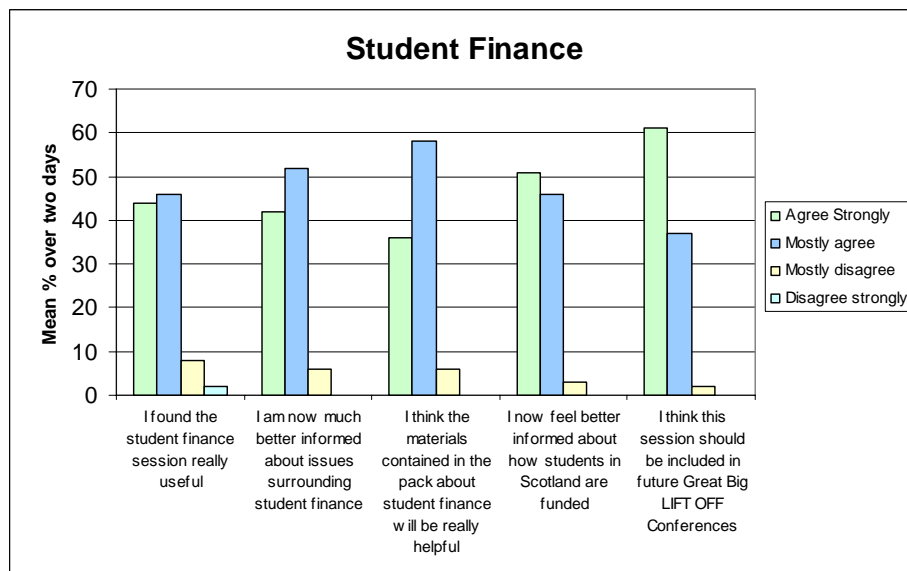
## Evaluation results

The following graphs show the mean evaluation results from the participants over both days. Please contact LIFT OFF if you would like results from a specific session.

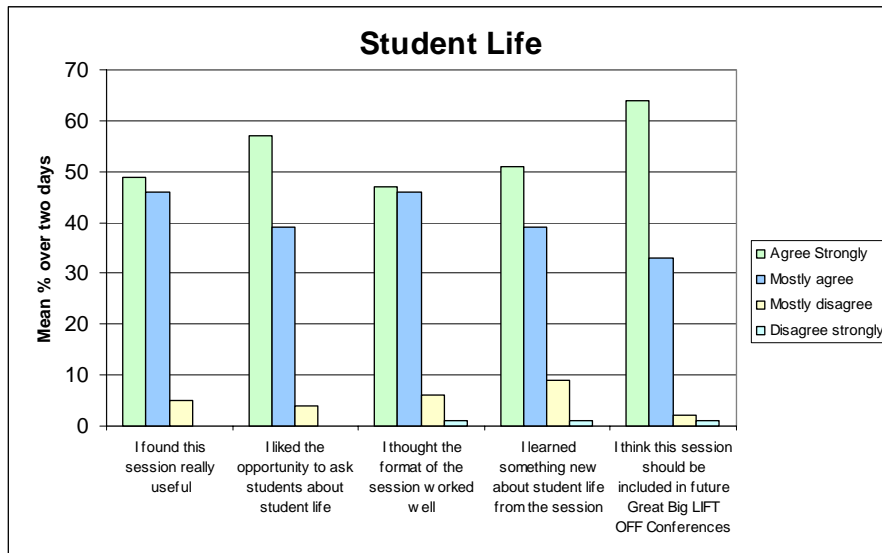
### Generic sessions and general feedback



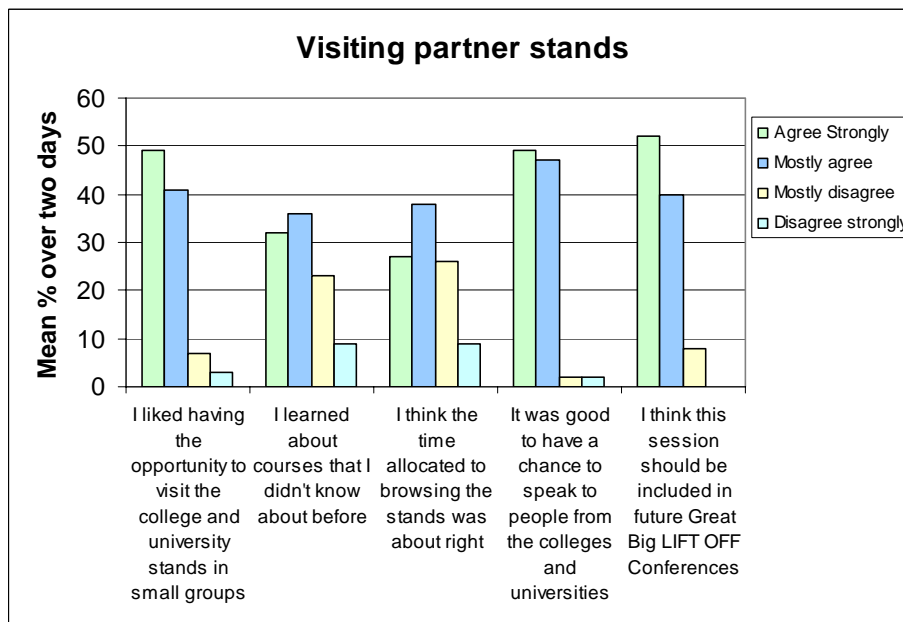
Overall, GBLOC was very well received by pupils, with nearly 100% of participants answering either “agree” or “strongly agree” with the statements that the event was useful and that they would recommend attending to next year’s S5s.



The Student Finance sessions were delivered by members of staff from SAAS. Although SAAS deals specifically with finance for Higher Education, reference was made to FE funding in the presentations.

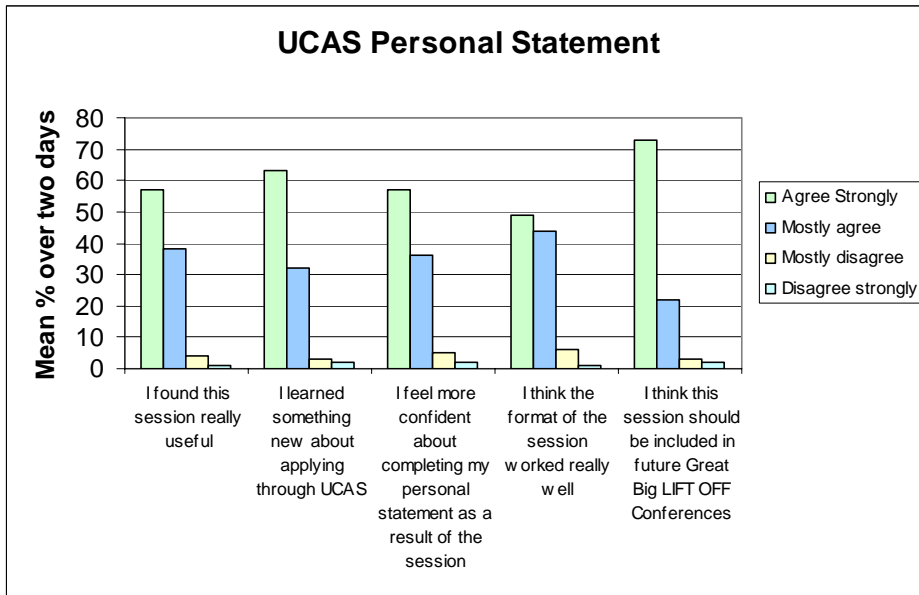


LIFT OFF Student Volunteers were an integral part of the Student Life sessions. These sessions were delivered by a member of the LIFT OFF team, and gave pupils an opportunity to chat to students and ask questions.

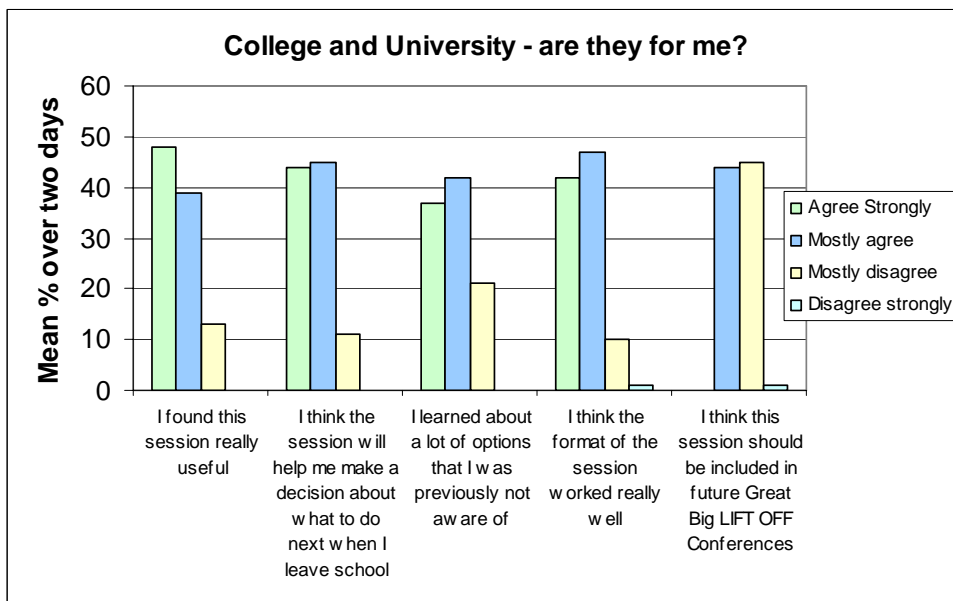


Although the feedback was generally very positive for these sessions, there was some feeling that there was too much time scheduled for this. Amendments will be made for future sessions.

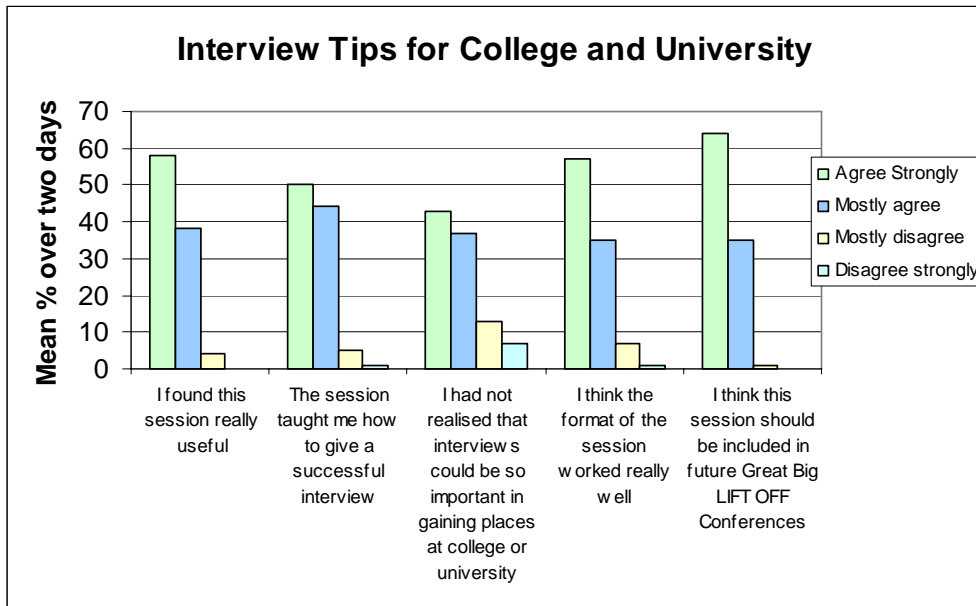
## Chosen sessions



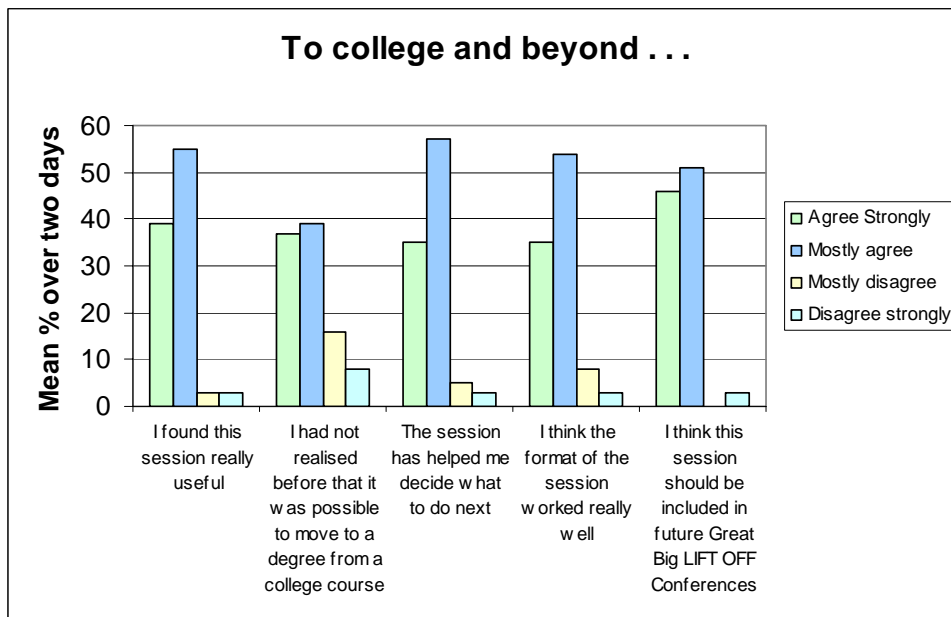
This was the most popular session on offer, with 124 out of 170 pupils choosing it.



Initially, feedback from this session appears to be slightly less positive overall to that of other sessions. However, a timetabling error on the part of LIFT OFF meant that there were major disruptions to these sessions, particularly on the second day when more people had chosen it. 62 pupils chose this session.



103 pupils chose this session.



38 pupils chose this workshop.

## **Lessons learned**

- There was relatively little time to promote the event, and not all the target schools were able to fully participate. This meant there were lower numbers than hoped for, particularly on the second day. Liaison with some non-target schools boosted the numbers (thanks to Harris Academy and Auchmuty High School). It is anticipated that having a much greater lead-in time in the future will prevent this from being an issue, and should also result in more uptake from the less well-represented schools.
- The online registration made administration of the event straightforward, and will be used again. However, there was scope for pupils to enter false information when submitting the form. In reality, this only happened on one occasion, and was quickly identified and dealt with. It may, however, be necessary to manipulate the form for future events in order to prevent this happening again.
- The LIFT OFF website was blocked in some schools, making it difficult for pupils to register unless they did so at home. This problem has been resolved, and we will ask schools to make PCs available to pupils shortly after the initial presentation about GBLOC so they can register from school.
- Visiting partner stands was scheduled in as a session for pupils to visit in small groups. This was too long, and particularly on the second day student recruitment staff were left for long periods with no-one visiting them. For future sessions, it is suggested that the lunch hour be staggered, so half the group (approximately 50 pupils) can visit the stands at a time, which will deliver a more meaningful and time-efficient experience for student recruitment staff.
- Guidance staff who came to the event with pupils gave very positive feedback on how some of the sessions had been good for their own CPD. It is suggested that sessions specifically for school guidance teachers be built into future programmes.
- SAAS staff made reference in their session to differences in funding between further and higher education, which was extremely helpful. In the future, these sessions could perhaps be delivered in collaboration (e.g. between SAAS and a member of college staff).
- An error of timetabling meant that there was disruption to the “College and University . . .” sessions. Feedback from these sessions should be viewed within this context.

## ***Acknowledgments***

LIFT OFF would like to thank the HBOS Foundation for their generous support. We are grateful to Dundee College for hosting the event and to all partners for their support and participation. Particular thanks to Karen Thirkle (Elmwood College) Anne Hamilton and Mike Bartle (Dundee College) Jean Gow (Perth College) Mike Johnson (University of St Andrews) Louise Irving (University of Abertay, Dundee) and Olive Sneddon (Careers Scotland) for delivering the workshop sessions. Thanks also to Julia Reid and James Mair from SAAS for delivering the Student Finance sessions.