

# PROGRESS TO SUCCESS

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Knowledge is power – so the saying goes – and as one of the UK's leading providers of personal training and fitness instructor qualifications, Study Active certainly echo this sentiment, as *Craig Smith* finds out.



**ir Francis Bacon's now famous maxim has in itself a wealth of fulfilment, but**

**combine that with hands-on support for those starting up within the fitness industry and a link-up with REPs, and it really does hit the spot!**

So, what are the secrets to Study Active's success? Well, it's a fusion of blended learning and the maintenance of quality standards, meaning students who enrol on one of their courses are in the best hands.

Managing Director of Study Active, James Luscombe, is a keen advocate of his company's blended learning approach and

“**Our assessment days are as much developmental days as they are exam based.**”

the benefit it has on the fitness professionals of tomorrow: “Blended learning is something that we like to think we do very well...it is blended learning as it should be.”

Not to be confused with online learning, blended learning is “not a case of delivering an online course; it is a case of giving students a menu; options as to different means of media that they can study their learning outcomes and prepare them adequately for a robust assessment”.

“This can be via numerous options. Online learning is included in there, so for a topic like anatomy, online learning could be a very useful tool to use. However, anything which is studied with any online component does need contact and therefore if someone was studying something like anatomy, reading our online resources, they would also have



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built-in contact from a tutor (via a Skype tutorial, telephone call, or face-to-face). There must be ongoing support. We would never expect a learner to be left alone. We do have a dedicated support team open seven days a week who do nothing else other than support students. Even though students may be using some online resources, they are in constant contact with us all the way through their learning journey.”

James continues: “We focus on getting our students in face-to-face for the areas of the course which demand face-to-face interaction, so things like the practical unit (of delivering a personal training

“**As a training provider we need to get out there and interact with the industry.”**

session), a gym induction, learning about training systems, training techniques, or effective teaching/instructing techniques. We believe all need to be done face-to-face.

“Although our students are primed and prepared by online learning, the real value lies in the practical, and with an intense approach in our workshops where we cover a lot. It all gels together at that point.”

Study Active also offers its students individual coaching, if required, as James explains.

“If a student has done a practical workshop and needed to improve or expand on certain areas, we do lots of one-to-one coaching, so it really is a true menu of options whether it is going to be eLearning, a webinar, a practical workshop or a one-to-one practical coaching session.

“As it is all about assessment, the question we ask ourselves is ‘have we prepared our students for the assessment?’” With a guaranteed interview at a Bear Grylls’ BMF Bootcamp or another nationwide gym for every student as part of their learning with Study Active, it is all about collaboration with the sector.

“As a training provider we need to get out there and interact with the industry,” says James.

“A popular CPD product is kettlebell training and we give that to our students as a CPD unit at no extra cost, so we like to think that from linking with the gyms and finding out what they want from their staff when they come in, we can get our graduates ready for work. The fact that we can then refer students forward for an interview with the various gyms we work with, really is the icing on the cake.”

Students’ development is clearly the key factor in the work of Study Active – a desire that is further strengthened with a promotion to its learners to become REPs members.

As James explains: “It is a real value-added item and an opportunity to join REPs at a preferential rate. The industry



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is demanding universal recognition of quality and REPs brings that and students are liking the fact that all their hard work of achieving the qualifications leads to professional recognition with REPs. Also, the benefits that REPs offers are a real value-add for all our graduates, and the various tool kits and incentives are only going to be good for our graduates and their future careers.”



Aligned to Study Active's approach to blended learning is their own constant wish to learn from its students and the continual development within the industry, as they pride themselves on ensuring quality standards are always maintained across the organisation.

But what does this mean?

"Quality standards is all about making sure qualifications are fit for industry and are robust enough to maintain their status as qualifications on the regulated qualifications framework. We work very hard to ensure that what we are offering satisfies the requirement of a regulated qualification and also remains fit for purpose in the industry.

"How we do this is, first of all, by liaising with our awarding organisation (Active IQ) who have been incredibly supportive to us, providing excellent support with their quality assurance team working with us to ensure what we are delivering meets the requirements of the qualification. Our external verifier has been instrumental in our success because he helps us to develop what we are today," James adds.

"Active IQ understands we are very much about a blended approach where there's lots of innovation and different types of learning and different mediums."

Study Active's year to learn evidently runs deep, even after the qualification for the student has ended, with the door opening on the next stage of development.

"All of our staff, as well as being tutors, are also practising exercise professionals. This helps to tell us what the industry is demanding. At the end of the course we give all our students a road map. We have further contact with them advising them what their next steps are. One of them is now to join REPs, but we also look at getting them interviews at different gyms, giving them careers advice, and really getting them on their journey forwards.

"The end of their journey is more than a piece of paper. They have a robust learning experience, have achieved a qualification and have information for their next steps, and that is why we see so many of our students go on to have such successful careers in the fitness industry."



**The real value to blended learning is the actual face-to-face component."**



## Next steps

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