



**National Academy for Gifted & Talented Youth
(NAGTY)**

Goal Short Residential Courses.

Goal, Aston University Course 'Money and Management'.

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1. Executive Summary

- In 2006 the National Academy for Gifted and Talented Youth (NAGTY) initiated a four year pilot project – Goal - aimed at NAGTY student members deemed to be from groups at risk of under-achievement. The first cohort of Goal students (2006), consists of 200 selected NAGTY members from seven LAs (Coventry, Birmingham, Cumbria, Peterborough, Sheffield, Leicester, and Islington). The second cohort (2007) is currently being recruited, and will consist of approximately 250 NAGTY students from fourteen different LAs. The pilot will continue until 2009, with an additional two cohorts being recruited.
- The Centre for Educational Development, Appraisal and Research (CEDAR), the University of Warwick, was contracted to undertake the evaluation of the Goal programme in its early stages. This report addresses the residential course held at Aston University.
- Students attending the NAGTY Goal Aston University residential course all held high expectations of the course. They expected to enjoy a high quality business and social experience.
- The students rated the business aspects of the course very highly.
- The students were very satisfied with the final day trip to HM Treasury and 11 Downing Street, which they appreciated as a informative, exciting, and high value experience.
- The students rated the social experience of the course very highly, with only one student indicating a negative response to questions on the social experience.
- Prior to attending the residential course, the students, as a group, already had clear ideas about university, and, to a lesser extent, careers, but attendance at the residential course had some impact on a majority of students about their futures.
- The NAGTY Goal Aston University residential course was successful.

2. Introduction.

2.1 The Goal Programme.

In 2006 the National Academy for Gifted and Talented Youth (NAGTY) initiated a four year pilot project – Goal - aimed at NAGTY student members deemed to be in groups at risk of under-achievement. NAGTY's mission statement for the Goal programme stated:

NAGTY is committed to helping young people from under-represented groups to see that higher education is attainable. Goal is a scholarship programme from NAGTY, designed to support gifted and talented students from socially disadvantaged or ethnic minority backgrounds who are currently under-represented in higher education¹

The first cohort of Goal students (2006), consisted of 200 selected NAGTY members from seven LAs (Coventry, Birmingham, Cumbria, Peterborough, Sheffield, Leicester, and Islington). The second cohort (2007) will consist of approximately 250 NAGTY students from fourteen different LAs. The pilot will continue until 2009, with an additional two cohorts being recruited.

NAGTY's stated aims for the Goal programme are to improve outcomes for the target group in a number of ways:

- by improving the effectiveness of NAGTY's intervention strategies aimed at the students
- by enhancing the personal educational experiences of individual students
- by increasing participation rates in NAGTY activities by the students
- by monitoring the valued added by the Goal programme over the period of students' involvement in Goal

In terms of outcomes for individual students, the key objectives of Goal are to increase student:

- confidence
- motivation
- self-esteem

¹ http://www.nagty.ac.uk/student_academy/goal/index.aspx accessed, 31/05/07.

- attainment
- awareness of, and attitudes to Higher Education

To fulfil these objectives, and improve outcomes for the target group, the Goal programme offers each student:

- access to day and residential courses
- access to a distance learning course
- access to a careers and leadership programme
- personal support and mentoring

All these opportunities are offered to Goal students free of charge, and combine access to existing NAGTY programmes, such as the residential summer schools, with new provision linked to Goal, for example, the mentoring scheme. NAGTY is working in partnership with The Brightside Trust to deliver the distance learning course, 'The Big Deal'². NAGTY financial partners for the Goal programme are The Goldman Sachs Foundation, the Allan and Nesta Ferguson Charitable Settlement, and the Caterpillar Foundation.

2.2 The evaluation programme.

NAGTY commissioned the Centre for Educational Development Appraisal and Research (CEDAR), the University of Warwick, to undertake an independent evaluation of the Goal programme. The evaluation covered the three elements of the Goal programme, as extant in the Spring of 2007. The evaluation produced the following outputs:

- A report on the NAGTY Goal University of Lancaster residential school, 26-28 March, 2007³.
- A report on 'The Big Deal', 1 May – 14 July, 2007⁴.

² Cullen, S. & Lindsay, G. (2007). *Evaluation of the Big Deal National Enterprise Competition.*, Coventry: CEDAR, University of Warwick.

³ Cullen, S. & Lindsay, G. (2007). *National Academy for Gifted & Talented Youth; Goal Short Residential Courses. Goal, University of Lancaster Course, 26-28 March, 2007.* Coventry: CEDAR, University of Warwick.

⁴ Cullen, S. & Lindsay, G. (2007). *Evaluation of the Big Deal National Enterprise Competition, 2007.* Coventry: CEDAR, University of Warwick.

- The present report on the NAGTY Goal Aston University residential school, 5-7 June, 2007.

2.3. The structure of the Goal Aston University, 'Money and Management' course.

The Goal Aston University course was run over three days. The first two days of the course were spent on site at Aston University, while the third day consisted of a visit to HM Treasury and 11 Downing Street in London. The focus of the three days was on business, finance, and entrepreneurial education. Staff from Aston University ran sessions on, for example, business marketing, business finance, and public policy in relation to government spending decisions. In addition, the students were prepared for their visit to the Treasury, and a team from Deloitte ran a session on risk and the business environment.

2.4 Methodology.

The evaluation of the NAGTY Goal Aston University residential school consisted of a number of components:

- A CEDAR fieldworker (Dr Stephen Cullen) attended the second full day (of three) of the residential event.
- A pre-course questionnaire was administered to all students in attendance at the beginning of the residential course.
- A post-course questionnaire was administered to all students in attendance at the end of the residential course.

The pre-course questionnaire was administered to all 24 students in attendance at the start of the residential course – a 100% response rate. Similarly, all 24 students completed the post-course questionnaire, providing another 100% response rate. The pre-course questionnaire comprised nine parts, consisting of 34 questions, in both closed and open format. The purpose of the questionnaire was to establish basic information about the students (for example, age, ethnic background, gender, prior involvement with NAGTY), to create a picture of the students' expectations of the course (for example, expectations concerning new skills acquisition, new academic knowledge, and business skills), and to develop a picture of the students' expectations of their futures in terms of higher education and possible careers.

The post-course questionnaire comprised eight parts, consisting of 32 questions, in both closed and open format. The intention was to ask a series of questions that would enable the students' expectations of the residential course to be related to their experiences of the course. The questionnaires are included in Appendix 1 and 2 respectively. The evaluation also included interviews of a random selection of five students about their experience of the residential course. Unfortunately, no room was made available for the interviews, which had to be conducted in a stair well. As a result, the quality of the recordings was too poor to enable the interviews to be of more than limited use in writing the evaluation report.

2.5 The student group.

Of the 24 students, 15 indicated that they were male, and nine that they were female. Five students indicated that they were 12 years old, five that they were 13 years old, nine that they were 14, and five that they were 15 years old. Ethnicity was based on self description, with 19 students indicating that they were 'White British', four that they were 'British', and one 'Mixed White/Asian'.

Of the 24 students, one joined NAGTY in 2003, three in 2004, seven had been members since 2005, two since 2006, and three joined in 2007, while four failed to give a date for initial membership. Only one of the 24 students had attended a NAGTY residential university summer school, although 10 of the students had attended one or more NAGTY day courses, while six had been involved with one or more NAGTY online programmes. .Of the 24 students, 22 had been told about the Goal Aston University residential course by a teacher at school, one heard about it via NAGTY itself, and one from a friend.

3. Students' expectations.

3.1 Choosing to attend the course.

All 24 respondents to the pre-course questionnaire answered the open question, 'Please outline why you decided that you wanted to attend the residential school'. There was a fairly narrow range of explanations given by the students, which focused on only five distinct reasons (Table 3.1).

Table 3.1. Reasons for wanting to attend the course:

Reason given by respondents for wanting to attend	Number of times mentioned
The course sounded 'good' or 'fun'.	11
An interest in business	9
Attendance might help with the Big Deal competition	4
The visit to HM Treasury	3
To experience university	2

N.B. The 24 respondents made multiple responses to the open question.

While the most frequent explanation was the somewhat vague response that 'it sounded good', or 'I felt it would be good fun', it is interesting that 15 of the explanations involved a reference to the specific nature of the course. For the majority of the students, the fact that the course was focused on business, entrepreneurial studies, and issues related to government finance, was an attraction. Typical comments included, 'I wanted to attend because I wanted to help myself become better at business', 'I have an interest in business and wanted to visit the Treasury'. Of note, too, was the connection, in the minds of three of the students between their involvement in the Goal Big Deal Competition, and the residential course. Here students made comments like, 'I thought it would be helpful with the Big Deal project'. 'to learn business ideas, and to help with the Big Deal challenge'.

3.2 Expectations of the course.

Student expectations of the course were high, with 23 of the 24 students responding positively to the nine questions relating to expectations. Students believed that attending the course would benefit them in a range of education, business and life skills (Table 3.2).

Table 3.2. Student expectations of the course.

Expectation that course will help with:	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
Thinking & learning skills	6	17	1	0
Leadership & management skills	9	14	1	0
Financial skills	10	13	1	0
Marketing skills	6	17	1	0
Planning skills	14	9	1	0
Life skills	9	14	1	0

N = 24

In social terms, too, the students had high expectations of the course, with none of the students having a negative expectations. The most notable positive response was with regard to the expectation: 'meet interesting people' (Table 3.3).

Table 3.3. Student expectations of the social element of the course.

Social expectations of the course.	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
Meet interesting people.	12	12	0	0
Make new friends.	9	15	0	0
Take part in fun social activities.	8	16	0	0

N = 24

The very positive questionnaire responses were reflected in the interviews with five of the student group. Two of the five students interviewed had previously attended the Goal University of Lancaster short residential course (26-28 March, 2007), and said that they had a clear idea of what the Goal-Aston University course would entail. They had both enjoyed the earlier course, and felt that it 'was a good experience'. The other students were had vaguer ideas about the exact nature of the course, but, nonetheless, had positive expectations of it.

3.3 Expectations of the residential course – summary.

With one exception, all of the respondents to the pre-course questionnaire indicated that they had positive expectations of the educational, business and life skills benefits of the course. Only one student gave a negative response to each question. For the other 23, the majority of the students 'agreed', rather than 'strongly agreed' that the course would enhance, for example, their teaching and learning skills, their leadership and management skills, or their marketing skills. In the case of their expectations of the course with respect to the acquisition of planning skills, the majority, 14 of 24 respondents indicated that they 'strongly agreed' that the course would enhance this skill, with nine 'agreeing' and one 'disagreeing'. Students had similarly high expectations of the social side of the course, with all respondents giving positive responses to questions regarding meeting interesting people, making new friends, and enjoying social activities.

4. Business education on the course.

The Goal Aston University residential course was entitled, 'Money and Management', and all the elements of the course focused on aspects of business and financial management. The students took part in a range of activities linked to these themes. On day one, for example, the students were introduced to the work of HM Treasury, as an introduction to work they were to undertake on public policy, and to the Day 3 visit to the Treasury. In addition, they had a session on business marketing, the first of three sessions on business. On day two, the students worked on the nature of risk with respect to business, examined business finance, and continued their work on finance and public policy. All the sessions on day two were observed by the CEDAR fieldworker, and these observations form the basis of section 4 of this report. In the post-course questionnaire, all the students positively rated the overall business experience provided by the course (Table 4.1).

Table 4.1. Students' view of the overall business experience.

'The Aston Goal course was a good business experience'	
Strongly agree	9
Agree	15
Disagree	0
Strongly disagree	0

N = 24

The differing aspects of that overall business experience are dealt with by session below.

4.1. Risk and business.

The first business session was facilitated by two employees of Deloitte, and focused on risk assessment in the business world, and Deloitte's risk management services. The Deloitte package was usually delivered to final year university undergraduates interested in a career with the company. A presentation on 'Risky Business' was followed by about 25 minutes of questions and answers, with the Deloitte staff fielding questions from the students on risk in the hotel business – the theme of the session. From the CEDAR observer's view, the students were rather quiet, and the atmosphere was quite subdued, although the students did warm up towards the end

of the period, and asked about half a dozen questions. It might have been a more effective process if the students had been given a short period of time to develop questions among themselves, before being invited to ask questions.

The students, organised in five groups of five, each with a Goal 'Ambassador' (undergraduates from Aston University) then worked on the problem of risks faced by a hotel chain. A plenary session followed, in which the groups raised the risks they had identified, which were presented on a power point screen. As the points were raised, one of the Deloitte employees discussed and explained the point and its implications. It was necessary for the Deloitte worker to provide a good deal of background information, for example, on the regulation of the US markets. Nonetheless, there was scope to involve all the students in further discussion of each point as it was presented, rather than a heavy reliance on exposition by the facilitator. The students then voted on each risk in order to arrive at a ranking of risks faced in the hotel business. Again, it was felt by the CEDAR fieldworker, that this part of the proceedings was, perhaps, too focused on the explanations of the facilitator, and not enough on explorations by the students.

The students were then given the task of working in their groups to buy risk controls for the risks that had been identified. They were given a notional budget of two million euros, with €300,000 to spend on risk controls. The Deloitte facilitators circulated between the groups to help the students with the task. The task, however, did not fit the time available, and the students, having completed the task, were soon chatting among themselves, texting, playing, eating biscuits and drinking juice, while the Deloitte team took the groups' completed risk control sheet in and typed them up for the power point projection.

The final plenary session brought the students' risk control work together, and the Deloitte team linked the students' decisions on risk control to the likelihood of the risk occurring. A winning team emerged.

4.1.1 Risk and business –summary.

The Deloitte 'Risky Business' session provided the students with an interesting introduction to risk and risk management in business. Although the package was designed for delivery with university undergraduates, there was no sense that the material was in any way beyond the capability of the Goal students. For example the students quickly accomplished the group task related to the purchase of risk controls.

In a number of areas, the session might have been developed to more effectively enhance the Goal students' participation and learning. It might have been useful for the session to have been re-structured to allow for the fact that the participants were not undergraduates with an interest in a career with Deloitte, but Goal students. The issue here did not relate to the intellectual capacity of the Goal students, but to motivations. The Goal students would have benefited from a greater focus on learning and participation. It might, for example, have been useful to have given the students five minutes to discuss, in their groups, questions and issues that arose following the opening presentation, rather than expecting students, as individuals, to generate questions immediately following the presentation. Similarly, the final group task was insufficient for the time allowed, while the discussion of the group-generated risk ranking was too focused on the facilitator's analysis, when more could have been undertaken by the groups themselves. The 'Risky Business' session demonstrated some strengths and weaknesses in this type of provision for Goal students:

- The session content matched the stage of development of the Goal students. There was no indication that the material was, in any way, beyond the intellectual grasp of the student group.
- Although it is necessary to convey essential information about a topic that will be new to most students, it is important to keep facilitator exposition to a minimum.
- It is useful to enable students to discuss matters among themselves, in small groups, before an open question and answer session.
- Plenary sessions are best used as an opportunity for widening discussion among all the students, rather than as merely a summary of points generated, and a basis for further facilitator exposition.

4.2 Business finance.

The 'Risky Business' session was followed by a session in an IT suite, where the students worked on their projects (part of the public policy sessions, which involved the preparation of a presentation at the Treasury). This was followed by lunch, and then a 90 minute session on business finance, under the sub-heading, 'A business exists to make money', taught by a member of Aston University.

After a very brief personal introduction, the teacher gave the students a quick, pairs-based task – to define what they thought was meant by 'finance' and 'accounting'.

The students were quickly engaged by this opening task, and generated a good deal of feedback and answers for the informal plenary. The teacher used this feedback to explain essential finance terms, such as profits, loss, and balance sheets. A good deal of these definitions were generated by questioning the students themselves. The students, in small groups, were then given strips of paper with details of major companies' balance sheets. Their task was re-assemble those dissected balance sheets to illustrate the idea of $\text{assets} = \text{liabilities} + \text{capital}$. The groups were all actively engaged in this task, and the teacher moved among them, checking that their understanding. Following a brief plenary, the students divided into pairs and worked on another balance sheet task.

Following a short break, the students were then introduced to another group-based exercise – 'The Apprentice Exercise'. This was based on the idea of a business selling ipods, and focused on concepts of profit and loss. The students worked well on their tasks, being engaged and active, while the teacher circulated among the groups, checking understanding, advising and encouraging the students. The plenary session was used by the teacher to expand upon the basic accounting concepts that had formed the core of the entire session. The teacher concluded with a short statement which he used to defend the idea that 'making money is good', and that businesses were, as a result of market forces, compelled to be good institutions to work for, and buy from. This conclusion carried no element of critique of these propositions, but merely stated them as established and accepted fact.

4.2.1 Business finance – summary.

The business finance session provided a good example of an engaging learning experience for the Goal students. The Aston University teacher facilitated a lively, task-based introduction to some basic concepts related to business finance. The students appeared engaged and interested throughout the session, which exhibited a number of important features for successful teaching of Goal students:

- The students were very quickly engaged in a pairs-based task that enabled them to effectively contribute to the session at the outset.
- The teacher made extensive use of questioning to draw students out, and enable them to construct the basic definitions of the concepts that were the focus of the session.

- Pairs-based, and group-based learning was successful, and enabled all the students to participate.
- A variety of tasks, with suitable props (such as the fragmented balance sheets) maintained the pace of the session.

One issue arose in terms of the content of the session, and that was the failure to problematise the concluding remarks. The teacher's closing remarks gave the impression that there were no issues that needed to be addressed in terms of the efficiency or the ethics of the market. Even within market theory, there is recognition of market failure, yet this was not raised. For this group of students, in particular, one might question the failure to mention a critique of the market.

4.3 Public Policy.

The final taught session of the day was led by another member of Aston University's staff, who continued work on public policy that had been started on day one. The students had been preparing a presentation to be made at the Treasury, with the aim of stating a case for increased departmental expenditure for example, from the Home Office, or the Department of Trade and Industry, to senior civil servants and ministers at the Treasury. They had been introduced to this task on day one, and were given a number of opportunities to research and prepare their presentations. In the session observed by the CEDAR fieldworker, the students were given a briefing on presentation skills, time in the IT suite to further develop their presentations, and then gave draft presentations to three adults, who acted as a Treasury committee.

The public policy teacher interacted well with the students, and developed a friendly, relaxed atmosphere for them to work in. The session began with each group of students providing an account of what they had been working on, and how far they had got. The teacher gave support and encouragement, and gave, in passing, tips on how to present to a group. The students then moved to the IT suite to continue their work on their departmental presentations. They spent 45 minutes on this task, which they undertook with varying degrees of diligence. They then returned to the seminar room, and each group gave their draft presentation to the 'Treasury panel'. Each group gave a short PowerPoint presentation, then answered questions from the panel. The teams were reasonably well prepared, and, generally, had good responses ready to the panel's questions. They all expected to be able to add to their presentations in some free time that remained to them on that day.

4.3 1 Public Policy - summary.

The public policy project ran over the three days of the course, and provided a useful focus, culminating in the students' presentations at the Treasury on day three. The CEDAR fieldworker was only able to observe one session, of five, on public policy. The session was the final one, but it appeared that the students had developed interesting cases for departmental spending in the short time that had been available to them.

5. Students' views on their experiences of the course.

5.1 Introduction.

All 24 students completed a post-course questionnaire at the end of the final day of the course. The post-course questionnaire contained 19 closed questions, in five sections, concerned with the business and social experience of the course, and the impact of the course on education and career intentions. In addition, there were two open questions, one about the visit to the Treasury and another about Goal and the Goal Aston University residential course. The closed questions aimed to match those in the pre-course questionnaire, in order that expectations and experiences could be compared.

5.2 Business expectations fulfilled?

One section of the post-course questionnaire, comprising questions 2a - 2f, generated comparisons with the questions in the pre-course questionnaire, questions 4a – 4f, that examined the students' business teaching and learning expectations of the course. The responses to the pre- and post-course questionnaires, comparing students' expectations against experiences, are given in Table 5.1.

Table 5.1. A comparison of business teaching, learning expectations, and experiences:

Pre-course responses in black; N=24	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
<i>Post-course responses in red; N=24</i>				
a) New thinking and learning skills	6	17	1	0
	<i>2</i>	<i>21</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>0</i>
b) leadership and management skills	9	14	1	0
	<i>6</i>	<i>18</i>	<i>0</i>	<i>0</i>
c) financial skills	10	13	1	0
	<i>11</i>	<i>13</i>	<i>0</i>	<i>0</i>
d) marketing skills	6	17	1	0
	<i>10</i>	<i>14</i>	<i>0</i>	<i>0</i>
e) planning skills ^a	14	9	1	0
	<i>7</i>	<i>15</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>0</i>
f) skills for other areas of life	9	14	1	0
	<i>5</i>	<i>18</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>0</i>

^apost-course, N = 23

Overall, the match between expectations and experiences was positive, with almost all, 68 out of 72, of the post-course questionnaire responses being positive, as with 68 of 72 pre-course responses. However, there was a decline in the number of 'strongly agree' responses in four of the six categories – the acquisition of new thinking and learning skills, leadership and management skills, planning skills, and skills for other areas of life. In all these categories, the respondents 'agreed' that they had acquired new skills, but the responses showed a mismatch between the more optimistic pre-course responses. However, in the area of financial skills acquisition 11 of the respondents 'strongly agreed' that they had acquired new skills, compared with 10 respondents who had strongly expected to acquire those skills. More notable were the responses to the acquisition of marketing skills - six pre-course respondents 'strongly agreed' that they expected to acquire these new skills, but 10 post-course respondents 'strongly agreed' that they had, the difference being found in the 'agreed' category, with 17 pre-course respondents who 'agreed' that they expected to acquire these skills, and 14 who 'agreed' that they had.

Overall the responses to the six business and learning categories of the pre and post course questionnaire perhaps indicate a slight mismatch between very high expectations of the course, and the actual experience of it. Nevertheless, the picture was overwhelmingly positive, with only three (of 72) post-course, experiences, responses being negative.

5.3 Social expectations fulfilled?

Both the pre and post course questionnaires contained questions regarding social expectations and experiences of students on the course, focused on meeting interesting people, making new friends, and taking part in fun social activities.

Previous NAGTY and NAGTY Goal residential schools have shown that these aspects of such courses are an important, and highly valued part of the residential school experience⁵.

⁵ For details about the importance of social experiences for NAGTY students on residential courses see: Cullen, M.A., Cullen, S. & Lindsay, G. (2005). *The National Academy for Gifted and Talented Youth: Evaluation of the Summer Schools, 2004*. Coventry: CEDAR, University of Warwick (pp. 75-90); Cullen, S. & Lindsay, G. (2006). *The National Academy for Gifted and Talented Youth, Summer Schools 2005, follow up report; the impact of the summer schools*. Coventry: CEDAR,

In their responses to the post-course questionnaire, the students indicated that they all rated the social experience positively (Table 5.2).

Table 5.2. Students' view of the overall social experience.

'The Aston Goal course was a good social experience'	
Strongly agreed	11
Agreed	13
Disagreed	0
Strongly disagreed	0

N = 24

The breakdown of that overall assessment into the differing aspects of the social experience is presented in Table 5.3.

University of Warwick (pp. 10-41); and Cullen, S., Hartas, D., Cullen, M.A., & Lindsay, G. (2005). *The National Academy for Gifted and Talented Youth, Evaluation of the Summer Schools 2005*. Coventry: CEDAR, University of Warwick (pp. 52-4).

Table 5.3. A comparison of different social expectations and experiences of the residential course.

Pre-course questionnaire in black (N=24)	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
<i>Post-course questionnaire in red (N=24)</i>				
a) interesting people	12	12	0	0
	<i>11</i>	<i>13</i>	<i>0</i>	<i>0</i>
b) new friends	9	15	0	0
	<i>11</i>	<i>13</i>	<i>0</i>	<i>0</i>
c) fun social activities	8	16	0	0
	<i>16</i>	<i>8</i>	<i>0</i>	<i>0</i>

The social experiences of the students were, overall, positive, and, in all three categories, exceeded their expectations. Most notably, the students appeared to have enjoyed more ‘fun social activities’ than they had expected to, with 16 of the post-course respondents ‘strongly agreeing’ that they had enjoyed fun social activities, compared with eight who had expected to enjoy these when surveyed prior to the start of the course. The organised social activities consisted of orienteering in a park on the first evening, and a cinema trip on the second evening. In the interviews with five students, undertaken on day two of the course, all the students said that they had enjoyed the orienteering, and three of the five students said that they were looking forward to the cinema trip. It should not be supposed that experiences that may be assumed to be common are, in fact, so for all these students. For some of the students, a cinema trip to a multiplex cinema in a large city was an exciting and unusual experience.

5.4. Visit to HM Treasury and 11 Downing Street.

The final day of the course was taken up by a visit to HM Treasury and 11 Downing Street. This enabled the students to give their departmental presentations, and to see something of the workings of the Treasury at first hand. It was intended to be a high value experience, and the post-course questionnaire contained an open question that asked students: ‘What did you think about the trip to HM Treasury? Please outline your thoughts about the visit in the space below’. All 24 students responded to the question, usually providing multiple explanations to support their view of the final day experience. In all, the 24 respondents provided 42 points about the day. With only two exceptions, the comments were all positive, and even the two, minor, negative

comments were made in conjunction with positive points: 'I liked seeing where the money came from but it was a little boring', and 'Sometimes it was boring and sometimes it was fun'. The comments fell, broadly, into a limited range of categories, which are presented in Table 5.4.

Table 5.4. Comments on the HM Treasury and 11 Downing Street visit.

Comment	Numbers of times made
Interesting, informative or enlightening	13
The work of a government department	7
Fun	6
Visit to 11 Downing Street	5
Good experience	4
Enjoyed it	2
Exciting	2
Well planned	2
Making the presentation	1

N.B.: 24 Respondents made a total of 42 comments in response to the open question.

The most frequent response, that the visit was 'interesting' or 'informative', was typically a general assessment of the entire day. However, the respondents usually went on to identify a particular aspect of the day that appealed to them. For example, seven of the respondents indicate that they particularly enjoyed the visit to the Treasury because it gave them an insight into the workings of a government department. Comments included:

'It was interesting to learn about all the different sections [of the Treasury], and a rare chance that not a lot of people get.'

'It was very exciting and a great insight into the jobs we had been practising.'

'It was great to see what they have to do [in the Treasury].'

'It was interesting to see lots of people working [in the Treasury], and to meet and talk to them.'

One student made a wider connection between the experience and the work that the students had done in the previous two days:

'It was interesting and helped me understand more what the course had been about.'

Another respondent made an interesting comment about the way in which the Treasury visit had changed their perception of news reporting in the media:

'It was very interesting to get a behind the scenes view of how government money is spent, because what we read in the papers may not be true.'

The 11 Downing Street visit was also highly regarded, with five respondents noting this aspect of the day in their comments. There was an appreciation that the visit was an unusual experience, and, as such, was valued:

'It was really fun and interesting. I also thought the people that helped organise it were very good and the trip/tour of number 11 Downing Street was unique.'

'I think it was very interesting and that the tour of number 11 Downing Street was very good, I think it was well planned and enjoyed it very much.'

Overall, the final day's events were enjoyed by the students, who felt that they had an interesting and valuable experience, that gave them insights into the running of a government department, which they appreciated. As one student noted:

'I thought the trip was very interesting and enlightening. I found the tour [of the Treasury] useful as well. It was also an interesting cultural experience.'

6. The impact of the course.

6.1. Introduction.

Two key aims of the NAGTY Goal programme were to target young people from groups at-risk of underachievement, and to address under-representation among minority ethnic and socially disadvantaged gifted students. Part of the task was deemed to involve the enhancement of the aspirations of such students in respect of higher education and career choices. CEDAR's evaluation of the Aston University residential course attempted to capture some information with regard to the possible impact on the students of attendance at a residential gifted and talented course at a university well regarded for its business school. The pre- and post-course questionnaires asked questions about students' intentions with regard to university choices, degree courses, and career choices. The aim was to generate evidence about the students' pre-existing intentions, and the possible impact of attending the Goal Aston University course on those intentions.

6.2 Students' intentions with regard to university and career choices.

Student responses to three questions in the pre-course questionnaire concerning their intentions with regard to future attendance at university, along with university and course choices, indicated that 22 out of 24 students did intend to go to university, 15 had a clear idea which universities they intended to apply to, and 18 had a clear idea what subject they would like to study. There was some difference, however, between those students who 'strongly agreed' that they had a clear idea in relation to these questions, and those who 'agreed' (Table 6.1).

Table 6.1. Student intentions with regard to university choices - pre-course.

'Thinking about your future, do you feel that you:'	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
have a clear idea that you would like to attend university.	13	9	1	1
have a clear idea to which universities you would like to apply.	3	12	7	2
have a clear idea what subject/s you would like to study at university.	3	15	5	1

N = 24

In terms of aspirations, it was the case that the large majority of the students (nine out of ten) did know that they wanted to attend university prior to attending the course. However, the students appeared to be less clear what they would like to study, and, even less so, which universities they would like to attend.

One of the intended benefits of residential courses at universities, involving university teaching staff, and giving Goal students some experience of university life, is to provide students with a clearer idea of what university attendance entails. This is especially important for students who do not benefit from a family background that includes university experience. In terms of the Goal students at the Aston University course, it appeared that for the majority of the students the residential course did affect their ideas about university (Table 6.2).

Table 6.2. The impact of course attendance on students' views of university.

	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
Do you think that your ideas about university have changed because of being on this course. <i>N</i> = 24	1	17	4	2
Do you think that your ideas about what subject/s you would like to study at university have changed because of being on this course <i>N</i> = 23	1	7	14	1

The experience of the Goal Aston residential course appeared to have had an impact on the majority (18 of 24) of students in terms of their views of university. However, the impact was less when it came to the students' ideas about their possible choices of subjects, with 15 of 23 respondents indicating that they 'disagreed' or, in one case, 'strongly disagreed' that the course had affected their intended subject choices. This reflected the fact that 18 students had previously, in the pre-course questionnaire, indicated that they had clear ideas about subject choices.

The unifying theme of the course was 'money and management', and nine of the 24 students indicated in the pre-course questionnaire responses that they had been attracted to the course by that theme. In addition, some students made the point that they were attracted to a career in business (see p.9 above). Indeed, a large majority (seven out of 10) students indicated in the pre-course questionnaire that they both had a good idea about the future career they wanted to pursue, and that they felt that they knew how to go about following that career (Table 6.3).

Table 6.3. Students' views on possible career choices - pre-course.

Thinking about your future, do you feel that:	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
you know what career you would like to follow in the future.	5	12	5	2
you have a clear idea what to do in order to follow a career you are interested in.	5	13	5	1

N = 24

The impact of attendance at the Goal Aston residential course on students' thoughts about future careers appeared to be limited, with only one student 'strongly agreeing', and six 'agreeing' that it had changed their ideas about future careers. By contrast, three students 'strongly disagreed', and 13 'disagreed' that the course had changed their ideas about future careers.

6.3 Course impact - conclusions.

The data generated by the pre and post course questionnaires enable some basic conclusions to be drawn about the impact on the students of attendance at the Goal Aston University residential course. However, the inability of the fieldworker to carry out effective interviews limited those conclusions. Almost all (22 of 24) of the students indicated in the pre-course questionnaire that they intended to go to university, 15 had a clear idea which universities they intended to apply to, and 18 had a clear idea what subject they would like to study. As such, this group of Goal students had aspirations for university education prior to attending the course. The post-course questionnaire attempted to generate information about the impact of the course on the students' intentions in relation to university and careers. The post-course questionnaire responses indicated that the majority (18 of 24) students

'agreed' (17) or 'strongly agreed' (1) that the course experience had changed their ideas about university. However, because of the interview constraints it was unclear in what way the students' ideas had been changed. In addition, the post-course questionnaire responses indicated that only a minority (8 of 24) students 'agreed' (7), or 'strongly agreed' (1) that their ideas concerning the subject/s they would like to study at university had been changed by being on the course. This response seemed to reflect the fact that most (18 of 24) students came to the course with a clear idea about university course choices. A similar picture emerged in relation to possible future careers, with only one student 'strongly agreeing' and six 'agreeing' that attendance at the course had changed their ideas about future careers.

7. Students' overall assessments.

The post-course questionnaire asked students whether they thought the Goal Aston University course was a worthwhile experience, and whether it was an experience they would like to have again. The responses were overwhelmingly positive, with only one negative response (Table 7.1).

Table 7.1. The overall experience of the Goal Aston University residential course

The Aston Goal residential school was:	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
a worthwhile experience	13	11	0	0
an experience that I would like to have again	14	9	1	0

N = 24

These responses represent very high levels of satisfaction, and underline the generality of positive responses that characterised the students' views on all aspects of the course.

8. Conclusions and Recommendations.

8.1 Overall conclusions.

The short residential NAGTY Goal course at Aston University, 'Money and Management', 5-7 June, 2007, was successful. Observations made by the CEDAR fieldworker, informal conversations with participating staff and students, the student interviews, and the data generated by the pre and post-course questionnaires, indicated that in all respects the students found the course interesting, beneficial, and enjoyable. Constructing the course around a single, broad theme with the final day's visit to HM Treasury and 11 Downing Street acting as a widely appreciated 'finale' appeared to be particularly successful, and provides another model for this type of short course, in addition to the equally successful, but multi-disciplinary model, of the Goal University of Lancaster short residential course⁶

8.2 Recommendations.

The Goal Aston University short residential course was, overall, a clear success. Only three points need, perhaps, to be addressed in respect to this course.

Given the particular focus of the Goal scholarship programme, that is 'a scholarship programme [...] designed to support gifted and talented students from socially disadvantaged or ethnic minority backgrounds who are currently under-represented in higher education'⁷, some note should be taken of the fact that, in response to the pre-course questionnaire, only one of the 24 students indicated that they were 'mixed white/Asian'. Four of the students indicated that they were 'British', while 19 respondents indicated that they were 'white British'. The relevant question in the pre-course questionnaire asked respondents to describe their ethnicity – 'How do you describe your ethnicity?' – which enabled students to define themselves, but made it difficult to generate an accurate picture of the ethnic composition of the group. It was, however, noted by the CEDAR fieldworker that there did not appear to be any student of Afro-Caribbean background among the students.

⁶ See the CEDAR evaluation of this course: Cullen, S, & Lindsay, G. (2007). *National Academy for Gifted & Talented Youth; Goal Short Residential Courses. Goal, University of Lancaster Course, 26-28 March, 2007*. Coventry: CEDAR, University of Warwick, May, 2007.

⁷ http://www.nagty.ac.uk/student_academy/goal/index.aspx accessed, 31/05/07.

The Deloitte 'Risky Business' session was an interesting, and relevant element in the course. However, there were some issues relating to the teaching aspects of the presentation. The facilitators did not appear to have a particular expertise in teaching, and this may well have reduced the effectiveness of that session.

The central theme of the course was 'money and management', which included questions of non-market, state provision, in addition to market and business. However, it was noted that in two of the sessions observed by the CEDAR fieldworker on day two of the course (the Deloitte 'Risky Business' session, and the 'Business Finance' session) that no critique was offered by the facilitators of markets and market solutions. Indeed, the 'Business Finance' sessions contained no acknowledgement of the existence of the possibility of market failure, rather, the opposite was assumed. This could be seen as an issue that might need to be addressed.

Appendix – instruments.