

Stefanie McCluskey

BTEC Level 3 in Sport

Current Position: Training to become a teacher and Personal Trainer Business Owner



Stefanie McCluskey, winner of the 2020 BTEC Sports Learner of the Year award, is a great example of the power of lifelong learning, and the opportunity that BTEC offers to help people of all ages to enhance their careers. After running a successful Personal Training business for many years, Stefanie is looking to move into a career in teaching – and embarked on a BTEC National in Sport and Exercise Science as a first step in this journey. Returning to study as a mature student, Stefanie brings with her a wealth of work experience, and a high level of drive, ambition, and commitment to achieving her goal of becoming a teacher. “She has grasped every opportunity with both hands – including Camp America, coaching paid work, and teaching work experience,” says Linsey Sloan, lecturer at Belfast Metropolitan College. “Not only that, but she has recently gained her own radio show at a local station. She balances all this whilst maintaining excellent standards in her work, achieving straight Distinctions so far. As a mature student she has confidently returned to education with great focus and ambition.”

Linsey Sloan describes Stefanie as “innovative in her approach to both business and study, and always looking for opportunities to develop. Her recent appointment to radio demonstrates her proactive approach as she uses this opportunity to promote fitness and well-being, which she is passionate about.” Listing some of Stefanie’s other outstanding achievements and qualities she says: “She uses social media to her advantage, where she is an influencer and independently carries out marketing contracts. She is very creative in her coaching and instructing style, running a wide range of events including coaching C25K, and applying

this to her study. During Camp America she was appointed team leader and ended up running the section single-handedly.”

Stefanie’s passion and drive are an inspiration to all around her, from her peers, to her teachers, her work experience employers and even her assessor. In the words of one of her classmates: “Being in class with Stefanie makes me want to do better.” Linsey says: “Stefanie is currently in Year 2 and the Year 1s greatly look to her as a role model. As her teacher am also inspired by her also. Students like Stefanie fuel my love for teaching. She absorbs everything, both knowledge and opportunities. Someday I would be honoured to teach alongside her.”

Stefanie has the knowledge, expertise and confidence that comes with having worked in the sports industry for some time already and she has been able to bring all of that to her work experience posts. As one employer says: “She will make a fantastic teacher. She was engaging, enthusiastic, well organised and motivating. Her experiences add to what she can offer in the classroom. She uses a range of platforms to increase her outreach and it’s very impressive for us as colleagues as well as the students.”

Described as pro-active and organised, Stefanie is a model student, submitting assignments ahead of the deadline and pushing herself to learn as much as she can. Her assessor says of her: “Stefanie is a self-starter, highly motivated and active in her pursuit of independent learning. I would arrive in class and Stefanie would already be reading ahead of the topic and be ready to ask questions and debate topics.”

For Stefanie, fitness and wellness are not just a topic to study, but her life work: "I have a passion for health and fitness and my life work reflects this. I coach community running in Belfast, I run my own fitness company, I coach in the local schools, I run my own health and wellness events around Belfast in some of the most iconic buildings and I have written health and wellness articles for local newspapers and magazines," she says. "I take great joy in helping people become better versions of themselves."

On her decision to study a BTEC in Sports and Exercise Science, she says: "I am passionate about sport and exercise science as it can not only bring physical health benefits but also improve mental well-being. I wanted to learn even more about a range of topics that were not covered in my Personal Training Diploma and push myself further in this area. I would like to progress from sports coach to sports educator; I have a passion to teach and would like to pass that passion onto the next generation of fitness professionals. I was given the opportunity to do my work placement at Belfast Metropolitan College in 2019, where I was able to work alongside the sports lecturers and take my own class. This reinforced my passion to teach and lecture in the College.

"I have also developed new knowledge and skills around fitness testing, biomechanics and nutrition which I can take into industry and apply. For me, this is the great thing about BTECs – they are industry relevant but still open academic doors, for which I am grateful."

This interview took place in June 2020.

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