Regional Collaboration Fund (RCF) grant based intervention
Impact study template

RCF Project title	Exploring the use of Moodle Gradebook to fit a range of academic qualifications
Name of lead contact	Brian Lambourne
Consortium members	Boston College, Grantham College, New College Stamford, Leicester College
Other contributing organisations (if any)	Mitchellmedia
The project	
What problem or issue you were trying to resolve or improve with this project	Quality Assurance reviews and Ofsted observations identified an inconsistency in tracking and recording of learner progress across a range of qualifications in the lead college (Boston) . Through existing peer group collaboration and early communications, it was found to be a common problem for all of the other colleges working in this project, namely New College Stamford, Grantham and Leicester College. We therefore wished to explore several possible solutions that would improve tracking of learner progress.
What was your solution	The Consortium organised an early 'show and tell' event attended by all the partners which formed a basis for collaborative actions and planning. By looking at existing structures and methods being used within each organisation it was clear that the recording and tracking tools in Moodle (Gradebook) was being adopted in a variety of ways. The focus of the consortium's work was therefore to try to explore the benefits and challenges of different approaches to using Moodle gradebook and so provide guidance for colleagues that would reduce the steep learning curve for teaching staff in configuring the Gradebook.

Describe what you did and what happened	a) The Colleges worked together to provide a consistent and standard method in each College for monitoring and tracking learner progress by sharing expertise in the use of Moodle Gradebook. This has lead to more effective reporting and recording of individual learner performance across a range of academic qualifications being implemented in the consortium. b) The Consortium developed and shared the practice of creating a range of Outcomes and Custom Grades in Moodle Gradebook which matched specific academic qualifications.This work is currently ongoing particularly around the customisation and exporting of pre-embedded Grade configurations for BTEC and A- Level qualifcations. c) The partners shared joint expertise in using video conferencing tools to facilitate the sharing of best practice between the partners via joint training sessions. This work was supported and developed by the external consultant whose input proved to be invaluable. It has left a legacy for sharing of the future developments and best practices in teaching and learning between the partners, and provided a method of supporting sustainability of sharing and pooling expertise.	
The collaboration		
How well did the collaboration work and what were the key factors that led to this	There were strong working relationships and willingness to share ideas and support others. Much of the involvement was pro-active and supported by excellent communication. Factors that led to this were early one to one meetings between the lead College and each partner. This was reinforced by 4 more face to face meetings and training by the external consultant.There was excellent communication and support from the project's external consultant, the LSIS Mentor and the Lead College. The general spirit was emphatically collaborative rather than competitive.	
The benefits and impact of the project		

What benefits/ impact has the project had on:::	a. the work/ effectiveness of the organisations in your consortium Most organisations in the project initially had poor uptake and use of Moodle Gradebook, there is sufficient evidence to suggest that the uptake and use will increase in proportion to the ease of use that can be achieved by pre-configuring and exporting to new or existing Moodle courses. New College Stamford has already seen a significant rise in the use of Gradebook.	
	b. the cost/ efficiency of activities Because the configuration of Moodle Gradebook is a complex and time consuming task and beyond the scope of many teaching staff, the ability to be able to provide teaching staff with a Gradebook "Template" or a similar ready made configuration is potentially a significant time and cost saving practice.	
	c. any other aspect(s) of your work For New College Stamford it has increased the use of Moodle Gradebook and also has given us the opportunity to look into new ways of using the Gradebook to integrate with existing monitoring tools and information systems. As an additional benefit, as we chose to use iPads to support our collaboration The iPad access and training has broadened our knowledge about the use of iPads and how these can be used as a tool to support teaching, learning and assessment. Significant additional and unintended impacts have been the in the use of "Explain Everything" on the ipads as an inexpessive yet powerful tool.	
What contribution to the success / smooth running of the project was made by:	LSIS funding a little / some/ a lot / **essential** LSIS Associate a little / some/ a lot / **essential** Other contributors (please identify) a little / some/ a lot / **essential**	
What did the project cost: LSIS funding + your consortium's contribution	£30,000	

| What lessons did you learn / what tips would you give to other providers | Gradebook configuration is a steep learning curve
It was found that most of the work was being done by a single enthusiastic staff member in each College which is a high level risk in terms of reliance on an individual.
Strategically a less risky solution is to find a method of configuration which can be exported into any Moodle course delivering a specific qualification, or a stable bespoke configuration. Both of these solutions have been developed within the timescale of the project.
Staff development on a large scale in configuring the Gradebook was not a realistic option in terms of either time or level of difficulty.
There is no single solution that fits all organisations
More time consuming than first anticipated – use of Gradebook and also some glitches with the saving of the marked work

To use the Moodle gradebook successfully to track learner progress in a way that benefits learners and the organisation, we suggest.

1 Don't see 'creating Moodle gradebooks' as the responsibility for a single member of staff. If the organisation is to secure the benefit it is best to draw on the expertise of several individuals. Then if one person leaves the benefits are not lost.

2 Collaborate with other organisations so you can swop and develop gradebook templates and so reduce the time you have to invest yourselves. This is especially important as syllabuses change, the gradebook needs to be revisited.

3 Many people using a standard version of the gradebook is preferable to only a very few members of staff using a highly customised solution. The level of investment may be similar, but many more learners benefit.

4 Overall, learners valued being able to track their progress and this helped achieve more timely completions. Moodle gradebooks *can* be an appropriate approach to achieving this. |
| Telling others | |

What have you done to share /disseminate this project with others in the sector	National dissemination at the LSIS Workshop Birmingham. The content and outcomes are available on the LSIS Web site at *http://www.lsis.org.uk/events-download-event-resources/technology-success-2013* See also *http://185.14.187.6* Regionally, an article will be used in The East Midlands Regional Support Centre's e-bulletin. Internal presentations within each organisation to teaching and Learning Forums.
Provide a quote on your experience of the LSIS RCF project.	"Many thanks for the session. I thought it went really well. The 'collaborative' benefits were plain to see. A great team spirit! Well done all! Ian Pritchard LSIS Mentor "I'd echo Ian's comments the collaborative aspects of the project and that team spirit was very evident and the common challenges of getting the most from Moodle Gradebook in each of your colleges and amongst the delegates was also clear." Ron Mitchell (External Consultant for the LSIS Project)
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