LSIS Leadership in Technology (LIT) grant based intervention
March 2013

Provider name & contact details	Canterbury College New Dover Road Canterbury Kent CT1 1AJ
LIT Project title	Integrating Grade book to our PLP
The project	
What problem or issue you were trying to resolve or improve with this project	This project aimed to address the issue that Moodle 2 Grade book was separate to the ePLP. This was a new integration of systems, as many Further Education providers would try to create their own bespoke 'grade book' that run in one of a variety of different systems. Needs addressed: • Feedback from the ePLP focus group and collaborative working with Mid Kent College indicated direction of progression from user level • Student voice surveys indicate need for improved feedback so students know how to improve rather than just knowing they 'must do better'. • OFSTED 2012 report mentioned good organisation of VLE but lack of effective use and the comments from inspectors that the ePLP was a good start but needed further development. •
Why did you go for a technology-based solution	The previous LIT project to build and implement an electronic PLP was to overcome the difficultly of ensuring all parties communicate effectively when delivering a tutorial. Using the electronic based system ensured that all parties were able to access the information system for the electronic tutorial within and outside the organisation. The improvement of integrating Grade book means that all users can now access tutorial and assignment data to track progression and achievement. The technology based improvements were also geared towards adapting the system for the learner, not the learner for the system. Students use technology in their everyday lives to communicate so using it academically simply makes sense.

What did the project cost: LSIS funding + your organisation's contribution	0.2 FTE Web Developer for 3 months (96 hours x £15 per hour) = £1,440 ILT Maturity – Using the VLE and PLP to engage learners - Training at annual staff development conference and travel expenses for Rebecca Barrington from South Devon College on 26th October 2012 = £1,500 Training and Project Development personnel time for 6 months (2 days per month @ £100 per day) = £1,200 Mentor/Critical Friend – Steve Humphries from North Kent College = £1,860 In kind contribution: Video production, blog updates and e-guide production (12 days) = £1,920

Describe what you did and what happened	To ensure the successful completion of the project, a working group was formed to work with a variety of different parties throughout the organisation who have an invested interest in the PLP. Since the start of the last project this group has met at least once a term to discuss the progress of PLP and agree the project objectives. Because the majority of technical and functionality issues were resolved in the last project, this project is fairly straightforward and has gone smoothly. We have used focus groups to test navigation, appeal, features and flexibility of the on going development of our PLP. Actions: • Identify existing code for reuse. • Add gradebook tab to student view. • Add grades column to staff view (student list). We recruited additional web development support to ensure the Gradebook functionality is integrated and operates effectively within the PLP. Gradebook column has been added to the ILP student list page and content was uploaded to the Gradebook tab. Web developers put safeguards in place to ensure no existing data from the PLP was lost and new data is saved as required. Testing of the system has gone well and the feature was made available at the end of January 2013. We had to make adjustments to Grade book as it ordinarily only caters for courses such as A levels with an A, B, C etc. grading. Where vocational courses are usually designed as BTEC or NVQ, we had to adapt the code to suit pass, merit, distinction. E-guide tutorials are being developed by our mentor to guide staff in using the PLP and to use the Gradebook function effectively. This tutorial will been added to the teacher's toolkit page on the VLE and shared with other providers. The money from the ILT grant has been used to identify time with the Web systems Developer so that these small but significant developments could be made with the PLP. The main development has been that the functionality of the PLP and Gradebook will need to be re-addressed as comparisons between two of the main sections that use the PLP and gradebook has fundamentally come down to accessibilty to the technology required while in the classroom. The Engineering department has struggled for years to gain devices and currently struggles with the student participation in the PLP as they have 12 PCs to a class of 26 at any one time. It is mainly a tool for the lecturers and provides a reminder of progress when students are away from the classroom i.e. at home with their own devices. For a section such as Music who have ample access to PCs, laptops and tablets, the gradebook function has been a seamless transition as part of the PLP.

The benefits and impact	
What benefits/ impact has the project had on:::	a. the work/ effectiveness of your organisation Impact statement: If we did not integrate a technological intervention into our PLPs, we would not give students and staff the streamlined access to the data they need to be informed about improving student progress. We have also made a significant effort in any communication/updates with staff to address the issue that the effective use of this technology should not detract from the personal feedback dialogue that students need to improve. A significant impact has been the SMT level review of the ILT strategy and the staffing consequences that are needed to aid the movement from where we are as an organistion to where we want to be. As identified in the lessons learnt, we lost our Elearning coordinator who was an Advanced Practitioner and this has a negative impact on the progress we've been able to make with projects such as this. On a positive, it will change the way the college sets its expcetations of the teaching and learning staff and their use of ILT, specifically the PLP, VLE and gradebook functions.
	b. the cost/ efficiency of activities Longer term an improved system will allow for timely intervention to address student progress. This will enable further cost efficiencies as staff time will not be spent 'chasing' students for work or improving attendance once the damage has been doen or bad habit has set in. There has been a considerable saving in budget allocations under 'stationary and printing'. For example, the Music section (which has pure ePLP usage) were allocated £2784 in academic year 11/12 for printing and stationary but have only spent £1549 in comparison to last year where the full budget allocation was spent. If this is used as an average and replicated across all academic sections, this would save £23,465. This significant amount of surplus will give the college the capital funds needed to update learning technology resources and provide greater access to high quality courses to all learners.
	c. any other aspect of your work

What contribution to the success / smooth running of the project was made by:	LSIS funding a little / some/ a lot / **essential** Your mentor a little / some/ a lot / **essential** LSIS Associate a little / some/ a lot / **essential**
Do you have any comments on the funding, mentor or LSIS Associate.	The funding has been vital in allowing us to increase the capacity of the web development personnel and realising the changes needed as an organisation to progress out ILT strategy.
What lessons did you learn / what tips would you give to other providers	Unfortunately, we lost the named project lead, who was also our E-learning champion, to another College due to promotion. This left the direction of the project somewhat uncoordinated without the expert in place. As Training and Development Officer, I've learnt a lot about the technical aspects of the PLP and making it fit for purpose, as well as the 'human' side as I've dealt with concerns from lecturers about being "faceless". I've also learnt about the day to day challenges facing some sections who have the desire to embed technology but have not got the resources. I would recommend to any other provider that they have an Elearning or ILT coordinator in place to ensure the smooth and successful implementation of system changes. The expertise and problem solving abilty is vital when gaining the confidence of staff.
Telling others	
What have you done to share /disseminate this project with others in the sector	Project code is available on https://github.com/canterburycollege/plp-gradebook We have also continued to work with Mid Kent College on the development of the PLP and North West Kent College with regards to the outcomes of the gradebook addition.
Provide a quote on your experience of the LSIS LIT project.	It will change the way the college sets its expcetations of the teaching and learning staff and their use of ILT, specifically the PLP, VLE and gradebook functions.

Are you happy for us to use this and your contact details for marketing and publications?	Yes
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