

OUTSTANDING TEACHING, LEARNING AND ASSESSMENT TECHNICAL SKILLS NATIONAL PROGRAMME

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Managed by



In partnership with

emfec

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BLENDING SOLUTIONS FOR EMPLOYER - BASED LEARNING



Project description

This project originates from City College Plymouths innovative blended delivery of L4 HNC General Engineering at IMERYs Ltd in Cornwall. City College Plymouth was approached by IMERYs in late 2016 to deliver a bespoke training solution for a group of middle management/senior engineers who cannot attend a day release programme. In response, City College developed a blended package of learning which includes self-guided distance learning based on the Google platform bespoke to the requirements of this HNC, Skype and email support for both group and one-to-one tutorials and periodic face to face tutorials and workshops. By developing a transferable model, based on not only the experiences of the pilot group at IMERYs but also of other key employers that each College supports, the aim is to extend the impact and benefit to other sectors, deliverers and employers – initially focusing on engineering and digital industries with other sectors incorporated as their needs are identified.

This project enabled representatives from the partners and employers to collaboratively develop a model that will support employer-based solutions for higher level technical learning. This model will enable teaching staff and managers to respond flexibly and creatively to employer's requests for this type of work based training.

Through a series of structured discussions, CPD workshops, information gathering and evaluative feedback, the project aimed to generate findings and outcomes from a range of providers and employers that will test the model and provide a viable approach, to take forward a transferable Blended Delivery model. It is hoped the model will form the basis for curriculum delivery for the new Technical Level qualifications and the new Apprenticeship Standards in terms of flexibility, innovation and providing a wider offer to employers.



As an environmental instrument, Google would be a perfect learning platform to promote the performance of our learners.

AMY WARD
TECHNOLOGY USED WITHIN
FORMAL EDUCATION (2017)

Project aims

- To encourage greater familiarity and adoption of blended learning and web-based technologies to improve teaching, learning and assessment of technical training.
- Create project partnerships to share strategies, challenges and opportunities to establish cross-sector transferability of this blended learning solution, extending to other sectors to include Digital Industries, Engineering, Health and Science.
- Create a best practice process for building higher level technical blended solutions to meet employer training needs on-site, based on this project's experience.
- Deliver CPD within partnerships to share best practices and embed a sustainable approach to future roll-out of this delivery solution, for example, workshops, online resources.
- To develop a Blended Learning delivery model to support small to medium employers in rural areas, enabling employees to gain higher level technical qualifications in the workplace.
- To share responsibility and participation in curriculum delivery and design.
- Support employers to grow internally with existing staff, with reduced management overhead and Business gaps during the working day.
- Extending Blended solutions to other sectors to include Digital Industries, Engineering, Health and Science.

“

“Although there are training providers local to us who deliver the HNC in General Engineering, it was difficult to find a provider who could a) run the course for us on our own premises, saving the need for our students to travel which in turn costs Imerys money in loss of production time and travel costs

b) prepared to run the course for us with a small number of employees.”

*Tracy Gay
Learning &
Development Co-
Ordinator / HR Advisor
IMERYS*

Imerys group initial launch meeting



Seated from IMERYS (L to R) – Shaun Bartlett, Adam Dyer, Matt Netherton, David Magor, Chris Truscott

Standing from City College Plymouth - Martin Smith, Bob Hunter, Iain Le Couteur Bisson

Project impacts

- Use of the blended learning approach has enabled the pilot group of learners to make good progress on their HNC course and successfully achieve the expected two modules. (This same group of learners has previously failed to achieve this qualification when delivered through a distance learning approach)
- Use of blended learning within City College Plymouth and partner organisations has increased significantly, with one partner organisation completely changing their long course provision to a blended learning approach, with high levels of learner satisfaction.
- All partner organisations have benefited significantly from collaborative workshops and discussions on blended learning. Discussions and outcomes from this collaborative work has increased knowledge and understanding of blended learning, and improved Teaching, Learning and Assessment across partner organisations
- The relationship with the employer involved in the pilot delivery phase of the project has been enhanced throughout the project. Excellent and detailed feedback has been received from this employer who has requested further training for another group of employees. City College Plymouth has also been approached by other employers who have heard about this successful delivery method, requesting similar training for their employee.
- The successful collaborative practice training and development days which were held as part of the project and which involved all partners, supported participants to improve their overall teaching practice and in turn the quality of learner experience.
- Tutors working with the pilot group have improved their teaching practice and this has made a positive and measurable difference to the culture and quality of technical knowledge, teaching and learning and learner experience.
- Problem based learning has created a clear company focus and has had unexpected consequences in terms of Business improvements to the employer.
- Google Classroom and OneFile have proved to be supportive platforms for the delivery and management of Blended Learning solutions.
- Employer and training provider relationships have been strengthened through the onsite Blended delivery model.
- There is recognition that new innovative Blended models of delivery moving away from traditional curriculum styles has clear benefits for the learners, employers and training providers.



'When we initially started conversations regarding delivery of the HNC on our own premises, I found City College Plymouth open to the suggestion and very willing to work with us to achieve a 'win win' situation, even if this meant significant additional workload for them.'

*Tracy Gay
Learning & Development
Co-Ordinator / HR
Advisor
IMERYS*

Key learning points

1. Partnerships

In the early stages of the project difficulties with the original partners were quickly identified mainly due to staff availability, delay in communication back to lead partner to confirm commitment of staff to support delivery at the employer premises and staff not being released to attend planning and review meetings. There needs to be early guarantees for commitment to partnerships.

2. Project Management

Project management has been challenging in terms of the time required to ensure all key performance indicators (KPIs) are being monitored, appropriate data is being collected, staff attendance from all partners at project meetings is promoted, Project Lead attendance AoC meetings and the project is promoted through employer forums and meetings. The Project Lead maintained consistency throughout although needs to be supported fully by management.

3. Employer based issues

Don't assume that employers will have the same level of IT. Employers use specific IT platforms for business that may not be compatible with some college or provider systems. Business intranets may not be accessible and may not be as good as most colleges. This was overcome through the use of a DONGLE allowing onsite connection to GOOGLE Classroom where lessons and resources were accessed.

Employers expectations for onsite Blended Delivery is sometimes not realistic and needs to be managed. The employer was familiar with college delivery and expected a like for like delivery model. The Blended model devised included self-guided learning, tutorial workshops, onsite delivery and use of a VLE. This needed to be explained to the employer to manage fully their expectation and the colleges expected commitment to providing a Blended model of delivery and not a traditional model offsite.

4. Staffing

Staffing any offsite programme requires detailed consideration to the tutors traveling to and from employer premises. This needs to be considered early at the curriculum planning and timetabling stage.

Recommendations for developing employer learning partnerships

- Don't assume traditional planning and delivery will be able to be implemented on employer premises.
- Establish early contact with the employer to discuss and agree the delivery model and the expectations from them. Manage their expectations.
- Be prepared to be flexible with the Scheme of Learning to take into consideration the company and employees changing circumstances.
- Plan CPD for staff and learners to ensure they are fully prepared to use the learning technologies.
- Employer engagement training needs to be provided for those staff who would not traditionally have direct contact with the employer, particularly those delivering on the employer site.

Moving towards Outstanding Teaching, Learning and Assessment.

The project has been organic in terms of the benefits gained by the employer, providers, learners and partners. It started as a pilot but is now starting to develop into a more sustainable model, with an additional cohort of learners, all engineers within the company, starting in April 2018.

The idea of 'Blended Models' of delivery as an offer to employers seems to be attractive for developing 'Higher Level Technical Skills'. The key factor identified for the success of this 'Blended Model' has been the addition of the face to face support sessions on company premises. Some traditional distance learning models do include online tutorials or summer school type face to face, however the injection of regular three weekly face to face contact sessions with the tutor has ensured any difficulties experienced by the learners has been quickly addressed. This has ensured that any gaps in understanding and learning have been quickly addressed allowing higher-level skills to develop.

This type of model could also support other areas of the skills plan for example:

- **New Apprenticeship Standards**
Blended approaches will support the 20% off job training.
- **New Technical (T) Level qualifications.**
Blended models can support Work experience mentoring, delivery of some modules.

- **Support Regional and National Skills Gaps**
Increase in qualified, skilled middle managers, senior technicians, engineers – meeting skills gaps.

Key message

'Blended Models' of delivery have the potential to provide an offer to employers that can develop Higher Level Technical Skills within the company without affecting front line production.

Above all, as a provider BE FLEXIBLE and ADAPT'.

