

# Supporting excellence in initial teacher education in further education and skills



## Case study for projects

To be submitted to LSIS by 5.00 pm on 31st October 2012 to [deborah.moss@lsis.org.uk](mailto:deborah.moss@lsis.org.uk). Please refer to the questions in each section to help you prepare the content.

### ABOUT YOUR PROJECT

#### 1. Project title

BlendEd: enhancing initial teacher education through flexible eLearning

#### 2. Project summary (max 50 words)

This may be the same as in the original submission, but please amend in light of changes you may have made during the duration of the project.

This project has made use of interactive eLearning technologies to create a new and sustainable model of ITE to achieve excellence in teaching and learning, increased flexibility in and efficiency of delivery and a more attractive *modus operandi* for both in-service and pre-service trainees. The project also developed new HEI-FE partnerships.

#### 3. Your ITE provision (approx 200-300 words)

Describe the ITE provision you are offering from September 2012, including as a result of the project: number of students (predicted or estimated if not confirmed), accreditation, delivery methods and target audience

##### **Bradford College**

Full-time pre-service PGCE: 16

Part-time pre-service PGCE Y1: 13, Y2: 13

Part-time in-service PGCE Y1: 11, Y2: 11

Part-time in-service Certificate in education: Y1: 20, Y2: 20

Trainees involved in project: 60 (all year 2 trainees and the full-time group)

All courses are currently validated by Leeds Met University.

Trainees normally attend one afternoon and evening per week for 4 hours (3 – 7.30).

##### **Askham Bryan College**

PGCE/Cert Ed . 14 students in year 2 and 8 in year 1 accredited by Huddersfield University.

The majority of trainees are college staff.

Year 2 students studying on a blended learning route as a result of this LSIS project funding.

Year 1 students studying on traditional route but will progress to study on the blended learning modules.

Trainees involved in project: 14

#### **4. Resources used**

Outline the resources used to run this provision (outlined in 3 above) including: teaching time, resources used, tutoring/mentoring etc.

Where possible please provide a cost for these resources.

##### **Bradford College**

The module has been supported previously by a well-populated Moodle site that was mainly used as a place to store teaching resources and academic reading. This project transformed this site significantly. Teaching traditionally took place one evening (3 hours) per week for 7 weeks. This was replaced by one face to face session (3 hours) plus time each week responding to blogs and the forum and an offer of small group or individual support in week 5 of the module.

Hours: the funding was used to support staff time to develop the resource.

Development time: 420 hours (80 hours for 5 members of staff; 4 module leaders and 1 technical and design support plus 20 hours for colleague to trial site) Total: £21000 (funded by the project)

Tutor time on the course: 36 hours per cohort (standard amount of time) Total: 144

Evaluation time: 1 day approx. for admin support in collating results and email dissemination of surveys : £300 (funded by the project)

Attendance at meetings: 5 days (including travel), 4 members of staff at 2 and 3 at the final day: £3300. Plus travel, accommodation and hospitality costs. (funded by the project)

##### **Technical and physical resources (existing):**

- Virtual Learning Environment (Moodle)
- Adobe Illustrator for the graphics
- Estream Video server to host the guest lecture
- YouTube video hosting (shorter and 3<sup>rd</sup> party videos)
- Audio recording equipment for podcasts
- Library

##### **Askham Bryan College**

Historically the provision has been supported by limited online resources. Lecture notes have been available via the College's Moodle site and course documentation has been accessed via the partner universities Blackboard site. This project has created a comprehensive online learning environment through which learners have taken part in activities, blogs and read a range of associated literature. Tutoring and mentoring have remained face to face but future developments in this area would be desirable.

Traditional delivery involves a 3 hour evening session once a week for 30 weeks. Blended learning route involves 50% in taught sessions and 50% independent study. Internal VLE Moodle used to deliver blended learning units. Development of on-line resources included cost of an ILT specialist to create a variety of online resources and tasks. Tutors have written theoretical components which has involved roughly

The primary cost of developing these resources has been in the time input from both academic and ILT staff. The online content has been arranged in 'learning units' and each learning unit required total time input in the region of five days giving an estimated cost of £7875. In addition to this the College had to invest in terms of research and investigation of ILT tools and methods which is estimated to have cost an additional £3150 (10 days).

3 project meetings: 6 days (2 members of staff attended) Total cost: £2000.

Managing virtual learning – 3 hours a week for the Lecturer plus 1 hour a week of ILT administration/support time.

### **University of Dundee**

**Access and Development:** The University of Dundee's (UoD) VLE for the Teaching Qualification (Further Education) was used in the case study as a model of online learning. Partners were registered on the VLE and given free access to explore the structure and e-pedagogy.

**Evaluation Tool:** UoD created a Bristol Online Survey tool to evaluate the experiences of the students studying on the blended learning modules.

**Staff time:** UoD had two staff working on the project and their hours were costed at 300 hours for the roles of: 1) Consultant, mentor and principle investigator; and 2) Learning Technologist.

**Expenses:** The remaining budget was spent on travel and expenses – to Bradford and York – and hospitality in Dundee.

## 5. Achievement against aims and objectives of project, and lessons learnt (approx 400 words)

The main purpose of these projects was to set up new sustainable models of delivery of ITE (DTLLS and equivalents) which will:

- support providers to develop new and sustainable models of delivery to the highest quality standards;
- create efficient models of delivery, while maintaining fitness for purpose, with a focus on creating excellence in teaching and learning;
- develop ITE provision which is attractive, and affordable, to new trainees and employers and stimulate new partnerships and increased co-operation between subject associations, employers and providers.

Please comment on how well you believe your project has addressed these overall aims and objectives by answering the questions below. Any supporting evidence will be welcome here.

- What lessons have I learnt in terms of efficiency, quality improvement, costing and affordability?
- How can I implement the outcomes from this project in other similar provision?
- In what ways has technology been used to support the delivery? What advice would you give in terms of where it should be used and in what ways? (Answer only if applicable.)
- What should be avoided? What doesn't work?

Both Colleges set out to create a high quality blended learning module that would model best practice in terms of use of learning technology and enable trainees and teaching staff to learn at their own pace in a setting that suits them. This was a new approach for teams in both Colleges and the University of Dundee enabled us to look at an example of a system that worked, explore how to design both the content and delivery method and acted as a critical friend for our new systems. This was a new partnership for all three institutions which created an interesting HE/FE, England/Scotland and urban/rural mix (Askham Bryan is an agricultural college).

Both colleges learnt that the hours devoted to developing the courses were needed. In FE Colleges, where teaching hours per year are greater normally than in HE environments, recognised development time is crucial if a high quality product is to be created.

The usual teaching time per module needs to be allocated as giving feedback on formative assessment is time-consuming.

Time spent in devising an attractive presentation and consistent house style is very important. Initial feedback from trainees after the first session was good.

Development is best done in a team in order to share the workload and resources. Allocating a critical friend is also important as that person can trial the resource and enables the team to sort out problems before it is rolled out to students.

A technical support person is an absolute necessity and preferably one with sufficient academic background and/or knowledge of ITT courses.

### Bradford College:

There is now a model that we feel confident works as the blogs are creating course work that fulfils the learning outcomes of the module. It does appear therefore to be acceptable in terms of creating the same quality of outcome as our traditional approach to teaching. The approach is **fair** in that it does not appear to advantage or disadvantage one group of trainees over another (see survey results) We have ensured that we are responsive to any technical problems and the initial face to face session was focussed on ensuring that all trainees used the system. Moodle does not require a particularly high specification of computer or internet access although testing may have to take place in rural areas with limited broadband if, for example, video footage was going to be used.

Despite the initial development time the blended approach does save on the use of a physical resource (classroom) and enables the ITE team to have a better work/life balance as they have less evening teaching. This is also true for trainees. It also creates a resource that can be shared within

and between departments and mitigates some of the problems associated with staff illness (cover is not such a problem) and enables new academic staff to be well supported.

We do not wish to use distance learning for the whole course primarily because we feel that it is important to model face to face teaching practice. However, having tried this approach it will be difficult to return to our previous practice of using Moodle as a structured storage facility. We have also realised that creating an on-line community is challenging and that face-to-face contact is a method that enables group cohesion to be created, perhaps more easily.

There are a number of considerations that we had to bear in mind regarding effective engagement:

- How well did the group function already (a confident 2<sup>nd</sup> year group that worked well together really embraced the formative blogs)
- How well does the group know the tutor? If the tutor is new to the group then there is time needed to create confidence and comfort of communication.
- The post-graduate learners were already confident autonomous learners.
- Anecdotally it seems as though those with literacy backgrounds are most comfortable with the medium of blogging.

We will continue to develop a blended approach so that trainees do not have to attend every week and it enables us to model a different form of teaching practice.

The other major advantage in terms of **practicality** is that this approach can be adopted to provide cost effective and resource **efficient** CPD. Tutors and trainers in the sector frequently have a lot of contact time and teach until 9pm. Therefore learning that can take place at times and places that suit them enables them to participate and this may encourage more to take up structured CPD.

We will develop elements of modules to be taught on-line.

We will disseminate to the primary and secondary teams for use on PGCE primary and secondary courses and Masters in Education.

### **Askham Bryan College**

Quality improvement is a key feature as trainee have reported high levels of satisfaction in being able to learn more independently. The blogs would suggest that their engagement with the literature has been more effective than when using the traditional face to face delivery. This will be re-visited when the first full assignment comes in in December.

Supporting learners on this programme is equally time consuming but learners who are situated geographically distant from the college have been able to benefit from time saved in travelling and the fatigue of long days has been eased.

As a second phase of this project we are going to adapt the materials from our partner's in this bid to suit our institutional context as we would like to develop a similar route for our first year student but would need help with the development costs.

The College's VLE, Moodle, has been used extensively and provides remote access. Podcasts, blogs and videos have been embedded where possible to create additional learning experiences and address learning styles. Sourcing material for this purpose has been difficult and if more time and money were available creation of new resources would be ideal. Forcing the learners to engage with ILT as learners should force them to develop their ILT skills.

Some learners have benefited from peer support from face to face sessions the plan of delivery has been adapted to allow a good deal of face to face contact. External access to the VLE has been

problematic for some learners. These issues were referred to our I.T department who state the difficulties lie with the learners own home P.C's and was outside of their remit. This does require further investigation as any project along these lines requires guaranteed access by all to the VLE from outside of the campus. As an interim measure the I.T department are putting together a help sheet which may help to pinpoint issues for the learners experiencing difficulties.

### **University of Dundee**

From the UoD's perspective, the aims and objectives of the project were fully met. Using the Dundee model, both colleges were able to create an interactive VLE for delivery of the modules to their trainees. Developing online learning environments and materials is a highly skilled and labour intensive activity. Dundee's VLE was first developed in 2006 and is further developed each session as new technology/functioning becomes available. A driving principle of Dundee's VLE is the aesthetic. The focus is on the visual, as the primary medium, curriculum design as a way of ensuring learning, outcomes and assessment are aligned and interactivity as the means of fostering the learners' engagement. The two colleges were able to learn from our successes and avoid the pitfalls – this is surely one of the great outcomes of the project, being high quality, efficient and sustainable.

Part of the project aims was to up-skill the teacher education trainees in ILT and this was done; however, the project also up-skilled the ILT for the programme teams as they grappled with podcasts, blogs, interactive multi-media and a new way of conceptualising learning and teaching.

The evaluation of the learners' experiences of studying the blended modules showed overwhelming support for this mode of delivery; it thus demonstrates that the key stakeholders (the trainees) found the experience to be **acceptable**. Of the 74 students, 33 responded via the BOS tool. Of the respondents, 64% were female, ages ranged from 18 – 55, over 80% have been teaching in FE for less than 5years and 82% declared themselves to be 'confident in the use of ICT'. The project team believed that Induction would be important prior to commencement to the modules and this was borne out by the responses – 91% said that the 'induction was important for an understanding of the module'.

In using the VLE, 73% found the 'structure to be clear' and 82% found the 'VLE accessible', with the 'learning to be at an appropriate level' (79%) and the 'learning materials made good use of examples and illustrations' (70%). When asked about their preference for blended or online learning the responses were slightly less favourable with, 41% saying that they 'preferred learning in the online environment', 34% saying that 'blended learning is better than face-to-face and 70% saying that 'blended learning is solitary'. In the survey the efficacy of the blog as an effective communication tool was viewed at 50% whereas 82% considered emailing the tutor as effective. These findings are ones that the project team have discussed in relation enhancing communication tools and perhaps utilising more social media (e.g. Facebook and Twitter) and hand-held mobile devices.

In relation to studying and study (transferable) skills 67% agreed that they 'needed to be better organised for blended learning and the project team feel that this is of value as we were trying to foster learner self-efficacy. There was also strong support for blended learning enabling them 'to study at any time' (84%) thus having greater flexibility and the usefulness of having access to the support materials (73%).

Finally, in relation to Assessment, there was strong support with 69% agreeing that 'completing the activities and assessment have been a valuable learning experience' (12% said NA as they had not

completed them yet) and 87% said that 'the assessment requirements have been closely linked to the topics covered'.

The project team has worked extremely hard to create vibrant, interactive VLEs and the trainees' evaluations strongly support their achievements. There is, inevitably, more work to be done within the partner institutions and in terms of sharing insights and developments with the wider sector. We hope that LSIS will support our work to realise this aim.

## 6. Advice to others

This case study will be made available to other providers via the Excellence Gateway. Please outline any advice you would wish to give to others who may be inspired to develop a similar model by answering the questions below. Where possible please highlight any resources (publicly available) that may be of use to others.

- What difference has this project made to our knowledge of running affordable and excellent ITE programmes as an organisation?
- What, if any, further developments are you considering as an organisation following on from this project?
- Will this project result in sustainable improvement? If so, how?
- How can the lessons learnt in this project be applied to other provision?
- What lessons are there about the strategic use of technology for ITE?

Have a clear vision of how blended you wish the provision to be. Later elements of the course may be more appropriate to teach at a distance once group cohesion and some modelling of practice has been achieved. However, with commitment a distance learning approach may be the one that you need to adopt from the start due to perhaps the geographical spread of trainees. It can and does work as long as you follow the principles of best practice for distance learning and work in partnership with employing organisations so as to observe the teaching of far-flung trainees.

Focus the development process on curriculum development and not technology. Technology solutions will be found for whatever method of delivery and assessment the curriculum designers suggest is the most effective way for the learners to achieve the outcomes.

A common language is needed for the team to use throughout the development process (e.g. for this project we used the language of Initial Teacher Education to discuss different aspects of the course design and not specific e-learning terms).

Have a technical support member of the team who also understands the pedagogical issues who can coach the team and set up the initial structure. For those interested in using image maps in their VLE for navigation (as we have with the circles) need to be aware that Moodle 2.3 does not allow direct programming of image maps through HTML. The links do not appear. It is necessary to create the image map in a third-party application (e.g. <http://www.image-maps.com>) and then copy the code into Moodle.

Remember the unique aspect of the educational institution and attempt to retain this in any development to avoid becoming just another 'online provider'.

Create a structure and presentation style for the site as a team using visual methods to think your way through the content e.g. mindmaps

Be clear that this approach requires teaching time. Blogs are the equivalent of talking in class and the tutor response is vital.

Do brief students on the potential challenges if this is the first time they have experienced such a this way of learning. For our groups the major one has been to develop the self-discipline to get online and do the work.

Further developments include working with key members of the primary, secondary and masters teams to coach them in how to create and deliver learning in this way. Certain module or units if learning will be created on-line in this way. One example is the research methods module for the



Masters course. This can then be used by multiple groups and so will be a cost effective investment. The primary PGCE team is concerned about lack of face to face contact time. Next year key elements will be identified to be delivered in this way, for example, the teaching of phonics.

### **7. Contact information**

Please provide contact information of the author of this case study and state whether you are willing to answer queries from others.

Kirstin sawyer

[k.sawyer@bradfordcollege.ac.uk](mailto:k.sawyer@bradfordcollege.ac.uk)

I am willing to answer queries

### **8. Resources available for others**

Please provide details of the resources that can be made available to other providers as a result of this project. Examples may include teaching and learning resources, handbooks, spreadsheets to calculate costs, flyers and recruitment materials, procedure documents etc. These should be referenced in this report and submitted at the same time.

The Moodle sites created are both 'closed' systems and therefore only open to students and staff enrolled on the course. We have used a blog to record progress and to explain the structure of what we created. The link is below. Participants just need to register and then can have access to this easily. Any content is likely to change according to the new qualification framework but the structure is working well for participants and is easily transferable to other modules and subjects/topics.

<http://lsisblended.wordpress.com/>