



QCF Readiness Provider Support Programme

Case study

Leicester College Redesigning the curriculum offer for Fashion and Footwear using the QCF

Introduction

Leicester College is one of the largest and most successful colleges in the UK, with more than 26,000 learners studying a wide range of courses. The College has three campuses in the heart of Leicester and works closely with local and national companies to provide tailored training packages.

In preparing to implement the QCF, the College seconded a full-time QCF Champion who attended the LSIS three-day QCF champions' training programme and used the ideas and resources provided to lead a whole-organisation approach.

Aims

The over-arching priorities for the College were forecasting the funding, managing the impact of transfer to the QCF, and identifying and minimising risks. They also wanted to use the new flexibilities to address some emerging issues in the Art and Design curriculum offer at Level 3 for Fashion and Footwear.

Analysis of performance data showed that retention and success rates needed to improve; there was poor attendance and behaviour in some parts of the programme; the courses were not a perfect fit for the learner ambitions; and timetables did not always meet learner needs. Also, if learners left before the end of the two-year programme they did not necessarily receive any accreditation for their achievements.

Approaches

The QCF Champion established a QCF steering group and set up a roundtable, pulling together internal stakeholders and establishing a whole-organisation approach. She kept the governors and Senior Leadership Team involved through a regular slot to review progress at the meetings of the Curriculum Leaders Group and the College Leadership Team. She also set up working parties to address particular issues and kept the staff up to date with information and continuing professional development activities.

A number of initiatives were combined to provide the redesigned curriculum model:

- the planned 'nesting' of qualifications;
- 'One Big Day' - an approach to embedding functional skills and other units identified as key to success;
- taster sessions to help learners make an informed choice.

The original delivery model involved delivery of 18 units over two years, with nine units each year. The pilot delivery model embraced the potential of the QCF to nest the acquisition of larger qualifications, providing planned progression and accreditation opportunities over three semesters.

Size of qualification	Units	Planned progression timeline
Award	6 units	by week 32 of year 1
Certificate	6 units	by week 18 of year 2
Diploma	6 units	to complete the course
	18 units	

Learners have greater flexibility over their progression routes and are able to select units appropriate to their needs and aspirations - as in the two-year programme outlined below.

Pilot year 1 programme (Level 2 and Level 3 learners)

Semester 1 Weeks 8–18	Semester 2 Weeks 19–32	Semester 3 Weeks 33–46
'One Big Day'	Functional Skills – IT	
	Functional Skills – Communication	
	Unit 5 – Contextual Influences in Art and Design	
	Unit 12 – Computers in Art and Design	
Unit 1 – Visual Recording in Art and Design		Unit 7 – Design Methods
Unit 2 – Materials, Techniques and Processes in Art and Design		Choice unit 1
Unit 3 – Ideas and Concepts in Art and Design		Choice unit 2
Unit 4 – Visual Communication in Art and Design		Choice unit 3
Unit 82 – Production Techniques for Fashion and Clothing		
Unit 79 – Pattern Construction for Fashion and Clothing		

Pilot year 2 programme

Semester 1 Weeks 8–18	Semester 2 Weeks 19–32	Semester 3 Weeks 33–46
Digit Wednesday – Numeracy Functional Skills		
Unit 7 – Design Methods		Choice unit 4
Choice unit continued		Choice unit 5
Choice unit continued		Unit 89 – Fashion Promotion
Choice unit continued		Unit 85 – Fashion Visualisation
Unit 82 continued		Unit 6 – Application, Exploration and Realisation in Art and Design (120 guided learning hours)
Unit 79 continued		

The College also created 'One Big Day' when learners are taught at discrete levels according to skills levels identified during their initial assessment, providing individualised packages of support in an easy-to-manage organisational framework. To overcome any hierarchical associations, the groups were named after famous designers. In this way, 'spiky profiles' were easily accommodated and it was possible for a learner to belong to, for example, e.g. Versace for communications, Gabbana for IT and Dolce for Critical and Contextual Studies. Open access sessions in specialist subjects further enhanced the offer, giving learners a wider range of study options.

	09.00–10.00	10.00–11.00	11.00–12.00	Break	12.30–13.30	13.30–14.30	14.30–15.30
Critical and Contextual Studies	Gucci Level 2 Skilled	Versace Level 2	Chanel Level 3 English C		Armani Level 1 Developing	Dolce Level 1	Gabana Level 3 English C IT C
Communication	Gabana Working with Others English C IT C	Gucci Comms Level 2 Skilled	Versace Comms Level 2		Chanel Working with Others Level 3 English C	Armani Comms Level 1 Developing	Dolce Comms Level 1
IT	Dolce Level 1	Gabana Level 3 English C IT C	Gucci Level 2 Skilled		Versace Level 2	Chanel Level 3 English C	Armani Level 1 Developing
Computers in Art and Design	Armani Level 1	Dolce Level 1	Gabana Level 3 English C IT C		Gucci Level 2 Skilled	Versace Level 2	Chanel Level 3 English C
Open Access	Textiles				Garments		
Open Access						Textiles	
Open Access		Footwear					Footwear

Impact

Staging the delivery over three semesters has provided a more even distribution of assessment and opportunities for credit accumulation. The nesting approach ensures that early leavers receive credit for their achievements.

Learners are empowered to take responsibility for their learning programme and can select units appropriate to their intended destination/progression route.

The 'One Big Day' approach has been recognised as good practice by Ofsted and is now being applied to other areas including Visual Arts and Media. The model is flexible and cost effective. Peer support has improved and naming the groups has provided a natural focus for contextualisation. Staff also find it more inspiring.

Overall, the changes to the delivery model have led to:

- improved attendance;
- improved retention rates;
- increased success rates.

Lessons learned

- Implementing the QCF needs a whole-organisation approach.
- Identifying stakeholders is key to enabling swift dissemination of information and will help to ensure that the QCF implementation is not tackled in isolation.
- Building collaborative relationships using mechanisms such as the 'roundtable' enables you to play to the strengths of others.

There have been some logistical challenges:

- calculating course hours is not easy;
- the management information systems, examinations and administration processes are more complex as each unit needs a separate course code;
- the deployment of rooms and staff is more challenging;
- learner tracking for individual units is more complicated.

However, these problems will be overcome as processes are modified and new systems developed.

Next steps

The 'One Big Day' approach is being explored for two other curriculum areas and there is rising confidence in the potential of new delivery models.

The College has set up a dedicated area on the virtual learning environment to support staff and will hold a QCF Networking Party for local providers to share effective practice.

Strategies, systems and processes to minimise the impact of the changes are being developed and quality assurance and quality control systems are being adapted.

Leicester College has used the QCF as a lens to review existing practice against employer expectations and learner needs, with some very positive results.

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