

OUTSTANDING TEACHING, LEARNING AND ASSESSMENT

**FINAL REPORT ON THE OTLA PHASE 6 (ENGLISH) PROJECT -
LEVEL UP**

South Devon College

South Devon College (2020) *Final Report on
the OTLA Phase 6 (English) Project - Level Up.*
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The programme was delivered by -



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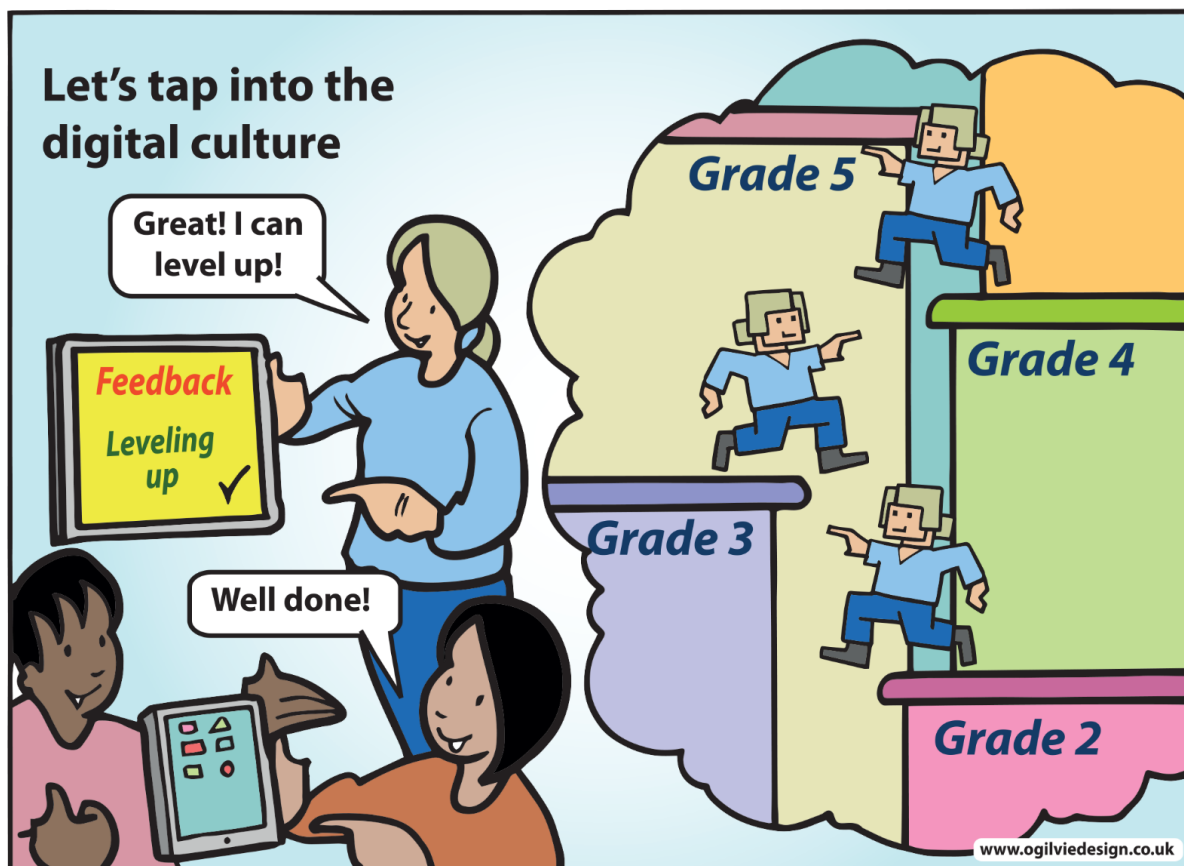


Contents

Final report - Level Up.....	2
Case Study 1.....	14
Case Study 2.....	18

Final report - Level Up

South Devon College



The aim of this project was to raise learner achievement and aspiration by developing a new progressive marking strategy across the English department and by implementing a marking cycle across the English department delivering Functional Skills, GCSE and A Level English.

Summary

South Devon College is a General Further Education college, based in Paignton, with 'out centres' throughout South Devon.

The aim was to make marking more meaningful for teachers and provide learners with the opportunity to upgrade.

The stages of the cycle were as follows:

1. Learner completes their summative assessment work
2. Teacher marks and grades learner work
3. Suggestions for improvement are provided by the teacher
4. The redraft and upgrade work is completed by the learner
5. Upgraded work is marked and marks are added to 'LEVEL UP' the learner grade

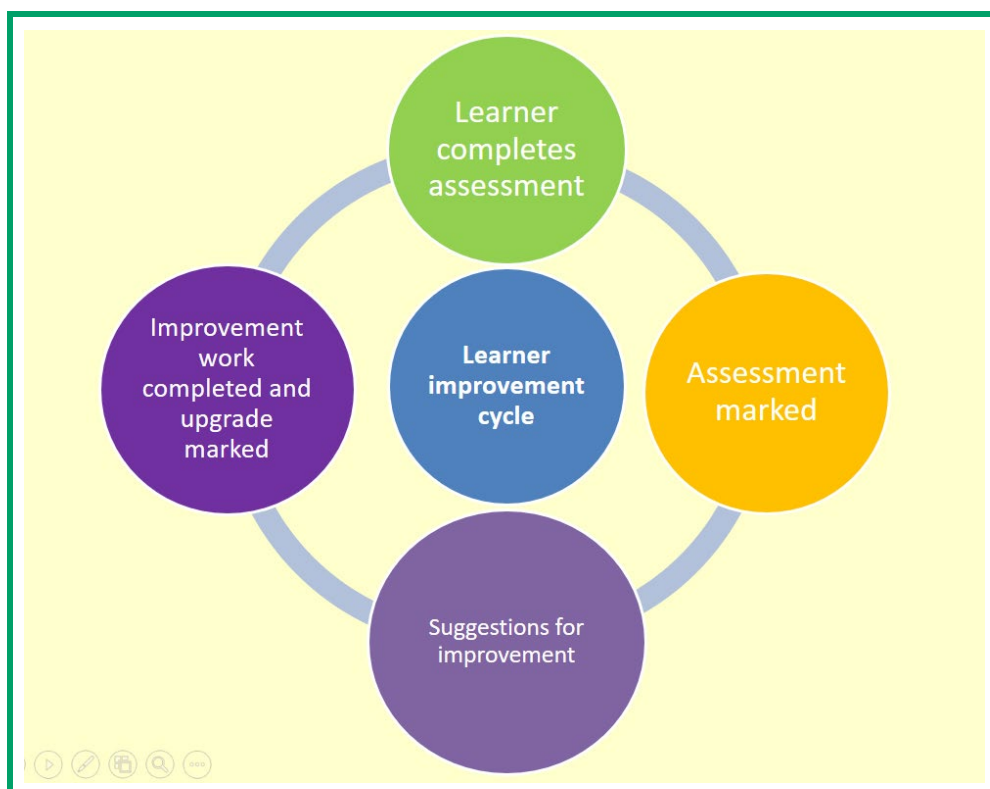


Figure 1a-1: Learner Improvement Cycle

This cycle would also support the development of learners' lifelong metacognitive skills, transferable to vocational courses and industry.

Rationale

Although summative assessment work was marked by teachers in the English department, further moderation and work scrutiny identified inconsistencies in terms of –

- The focus of marking activities
- The impact of marking on learner progress
- Time taken to mark work after completion
- Methods used to provide feedback
- The language used to communicate the feedback
- Time allocated for learners to respond to feedback
- Teachers' response to improved learner work

Learners' attainment in English was identified in our last Ofsted inspection as an area for development: "Learners do not improve their English and mathematical skills in all curriculum areas and at all levels well enough."

We also found that there was a disproportionate balance between the time teachers spent marking and the time spent by students responding to their feedback.

Figure 1a-2 shows the average amount of hours spent on marking an assessment by the teacher (1 hour per student) compared with the time students spent responding to their feedback (average 15 minutes).

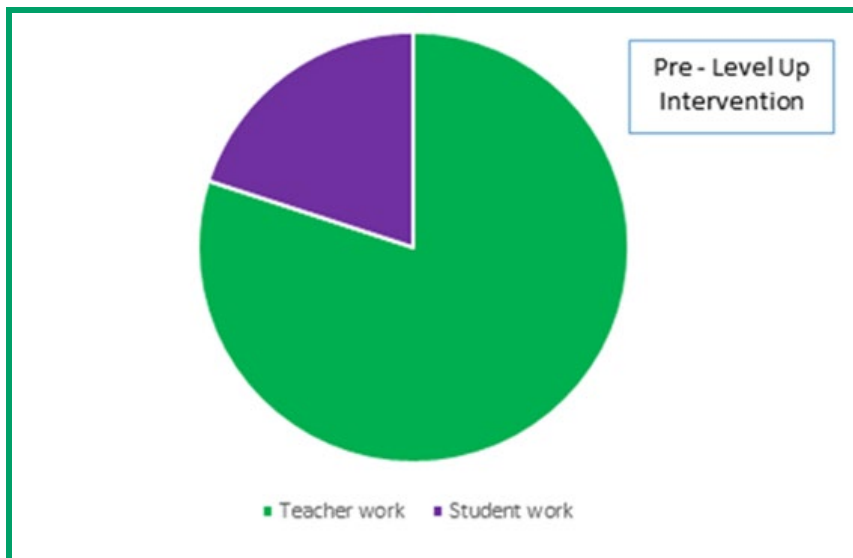


Figure 1a-2: Marking time compared with student upgrade time pre-project

There were also missed opportunities for teachers to use the marking of summative assessment to identify students who would benefit from an exam access arrangement referral, for example: extra time, use of a laptop, reader or prompt.

We were unable to track any measurable impact that teacher marking, feedback and upgrade may have had on student progress.

The value of re-drafting or improving work was under-rated. Opportunities were missed to develop student resilience, motivation and aspiration to produce work to the best of their ability and achieve a higher grade.

Following an initial CPD session, teachers commented:

“They were committed to marking books, and spent excessive time completing marking, but would welcome the opportunity to be supported to make their marking more efficient and to have a greater impact on their students.”

Approach

A ‘continuous learner assessment cycle’ was created to show each stage of the process clearly and was used as a tool for staff members in the initial CPD launch in July 2019. The cycle was a model built on the principles of the existing ‘DIRT’ model widely used in the schools sector (see <https://ukedchat.com/2019/04/29/dirt/>) which inspired the additional stage of the re-marking of the upgraded work and provide recognition for the progress made.

At the initial CPD session the cycle was modelled using an example of a learner journey and the positive impact on learner progress. It was important for us to raise awareness of the risks, should any of the stages not be completed, such as work not marked, feedback not actioned, feedback actioned but not marked and upgraded, and how the learner impact would be compromised if all stages of the cycle were not completed by the teacher or the learner.

We also placed a strong emphasis on how the cycle helps the development of employability skills and metacognitive skills. For example, following teacher feedback, students need to reflect and take an active part in their improvement by planning, monitoring, and evaluating their upgraded responses.



Figure 1a-3: Stamps

To support teachers, we purchased 25 sets of stamps which they are able to use to indicate that feedback has been actioned.

Other methods included typed feedback slips which could then be copied directly onto the electronic learner record system.

Name		LEVEL UP	
English Language Exam		Your Personalised Feedback	
Reading	23/40	Improve your grade by:	
Letter	10/12	Content	7/8 VSSPS 17/20 +2
Guide	9/12	Content	7/8 VSSPS 16/20 +2
Total	56/80	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Amending both your letter and guide based on my feedback notes • Ensuring you add I think/I feel to your question 4 reading response • Re-attempting question 6 and reading the question very carefully 	
Grade 6		New total after upgrade <u>60</u> / 80	
Grade boundaries			
40 – Grade 4	58 – Grade 7		
44 – Grade 5	64 – Grade 8		
52 – Grade 6	70 – Grade 9	New grade <u>7</u>	

Figure 1a-4: Feedback slip

There is now a proportionate balance between time marking and learners acting on feedback (Figure 1a-5).

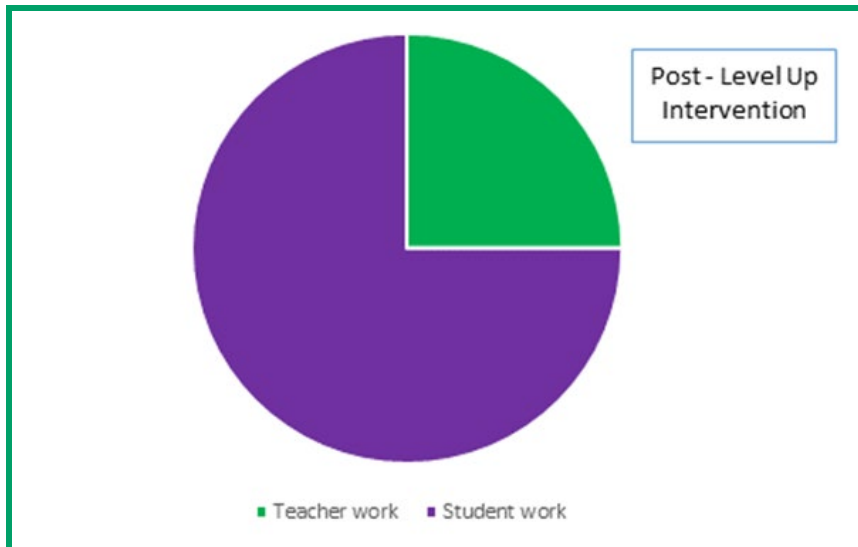


Figure 1a-5: Marking time compared to student upgrade time post-project intervention

A learner focus group was formed which served to highlight the similarities between the upgrade cycle and other quick feedback processes that underpin digital platforms such as video games, Instagram and Facebook. This idea was developed by our Learning Technology Team who designed the branding for the LEVEL UP promotional poster, complemented by branded purple LEVEL UP pens for learner use.

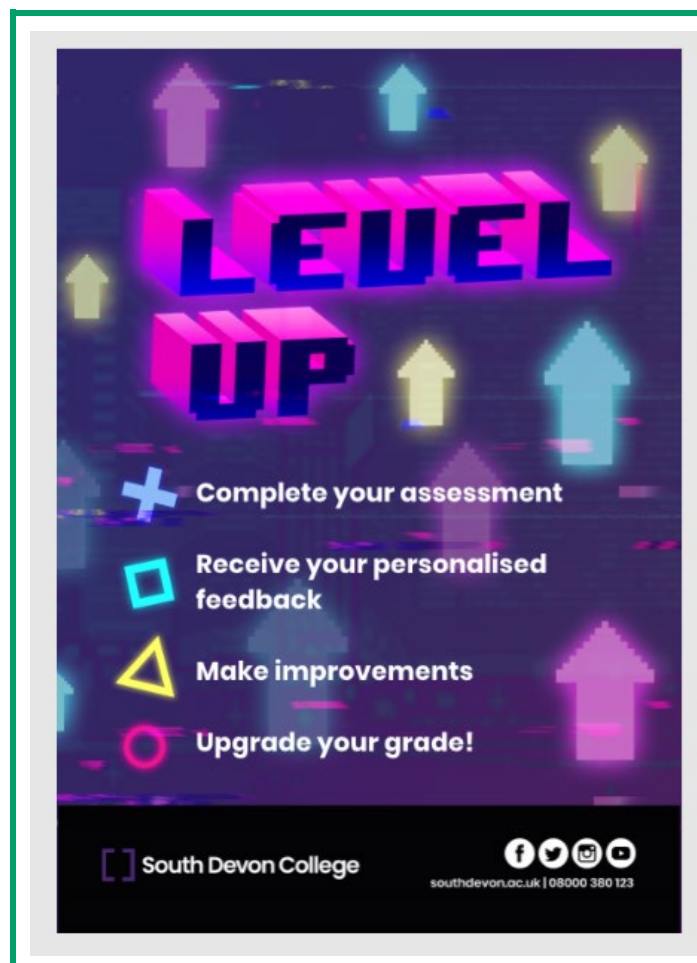


Figure 1a-6: LEVEL UP promotional poster



Figure 1a-7: LEVEL UP branded pens

Professional learning: Evidence of changes in teaching, learning and assessment practices

The use of the Level Up model is now consistent across Functional Skills, GCSE and A Level English courses and features on the scheme of learning and assessment following summative assessment points. There is an active action learning set of 14 teachers, based across college areas, who use the Level Up process. This includes teachers from maths, science, history, catering and geography.

Vocational staff members have been instrumental in adapting the feedback stage of the LEVEL UP model for their vocational subject. However, rather than written feedback, feedback is recorded by audio or video.

The Level Up process used by the teacher in Case Study 1 will form part of her QTLS professional development plan.

The LEVEL UP model has helped to build positive and collaborative relationships between learning support assistants in the classroom who support learners completing their upgrade work. The project has been fully supported by the senior leadership team and features as part of the South Devon College teaching and learning framework, contributing to the development of the organisation.

As part of the learner improvement process, exam access requirements have been identified and the improvement work has been used as evidence to provide referrals for use of laptops in class and in summative assessment. There was also a focus on learners who had Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCP), identified to have Special Educational Needs (SEN) or pupil premium students to use the upgrading of work as a motivational tool and raise aspiration.

As an English team we have had regular meetings to moderate marking and linked this specifically to the examining board criteria. The use of marked examples from the examining board has enabled us to maintain and update our awareness of the exam criteria.

The project has encouraged staff members to evaluate and adapt their practice to use other evidence-based approaches, which can be seen in the learning walk record:

Learning Walk Record 2019/20

Date of Walk	11/10/2019
Tutor Name	Bruna Harrison
Section	AL16 - A Level Academy and GCSE
Provision Type	Young People
Observer Name	Nicky Hawkins
Type of Learning Walk	General
Focus of Learning Walk	Initial assessment - feedback - upgrading of work
Location	3.068
Course	AS English Language
Level	Level 3
Theme	Feedback and upgrading of work following first assessed piece of work

Overall comments

Learners arrive promptly. Folders and purple pens are on tables to indicate the seating plan.

Learners arrive and start reading through their feedback. You introduce the observer and reassure learners about the camera, register taken. You ask learners to put their phones away and you ask for their attention.

Recap quiz - individual Ls are nominated to answer and you summarise each answer. Ls appear used to this format and answer confidently. You thank each learner after they answer.

You introduce the lesson objectives, elaborating on each point, starting to outline the upgrade process. You introduce the learner improvement cycle, emphasising the importance of having model answers to refer to. "I'm really pleased with how you've done..." Encouraging Ls with a D or E to aim for a C.

You display the question on the screen, then introduce the mark scheme. Ls nominated to answer. A can't answer, so you throw it over to K. You include your own interpretation of A01 encouraging learners to make links to their targets. You prompt Z to answer about A02, "I'll give you a clue..." You hand out the band descriptors for learners to measure themselves against.

You give a rough indicator of how the marks translate into percentages/grades. L: "By the skin of my teeth..." You encourage her to aim for a firmer B. L: "Are we rewriting the whole thing?... I really hope not" You reassure her that she won't. You give examples of learners' targets. Image of your feedback displayed on the board.

L has his hand up and asks what the assessment is out of. You tell him. Reiterating the importance of creating a model answer, e.g. Ls typing up essays for homework.

Whole group feedback: Common targets and a reminder about what a model intro looks like.

You share a model answer and read aloud. A couple of Ls take a photo of the model intro. You highlight the strengths, e.g. 4 sentences long. You reassure Ls that the slides are on a handout. You nominate a L to summarise the Howard Giles study. Her neighbour chips in, you ask Ls what "matched guise" means. Question bounced around. "What was the result of the experiment?" L answers confidently and adds more detail. You are careful to nominate a L who hasn't answered yet.

Ls start to work on their upgrades. You move around and support. Ls are all clear exactly what they have to do and most are able to work independently. They look back at their notes and previous Ppt slides using mobile devices. Ls also use phones to check spelling.

Strengths

Evidence informed approaches are prominent in this lesson - recap quiz encourages retrieval practice, slides are uncluttered with accessible text in line with principles of dual coding, providing learner-generated model answers.

This lesson was structured extremely clearly to introduce learners to the importance and process of upgrading their work. The devil is often in the detail, e.g. Ls write a title Upgrade in Ls' books.

Built in stretch/developing independence, e.g. Ls typing up essays.

Seating plan - ensures learners are attentive and not distracted. Tables in islands allows for collaboration.

Questioning -nominating individuals to answer and bouncing questions around if they can't answer.

Developing independence - Ls are able to look back at notes and use phones productively.

Inclusion - international Ls are supported with e.g. spelling.

Points to consider

Possibly bounce questions around a little more with the recap quiz, i.e. getting answers from 2 (or more if time allows!) learners.

Follow up actions/support

The video will be a fantastic resource to support your peers Bruna. Thank you so much.

Best Practice identified

Evidence-informed approaches. You are a real ambassador for the key principles of a wide-range of key elements, e.g. dual coding, modelling, retrieval practice, responding to feedback, using whole group feedback.



Figure 1a-8: Learning walk record

Evidence of improved collaboration and changes in organisational practices

Following the CPD sessions held in June 2019 and January 2020 a number of staff members across the college community expressed an interest in incorporating the LEVEL UP model within their own practice. Members from the Teaching and Learning Coach team actively supported these practitioners with marking learner work, creating achievable targets and facilitating learner upgrade sessions, thereby strengthening the collaboration within sections throughout the college.

The personalised feedback has enabled all learners, including those with SEN, EHCPs and exam access arrangements, equal opportunities to upgrade their work.

The LEVEL UP project team were invited to present at the Senior Leadership meeting. The success of this presentation raised awareness amongst Curriculum Managers who fully decided to include the upgrading process as a key feature on schemes of learning and assessment across college.

Because of the success of the upgrade project, it has now been implemented in the South Devon High School which is a 14-16 provision and although situated on the college campus, is recognised as a separate external establishment. Further CPD sessions were provided and 1-1 coaching to help them adopt this new progressive approach to marking.

Evidence of improvement in learners' achievements, retention and progression

All A Level learners made progress in their marks which was reflected in many cases in the grade boundaries.



Figure 1a-9: A Level Improvements

Pre-upgrade the highest achievement was a B grade but post upgrade 3 B grades had been achieved as well as an A grade. Following the introduction of the upgrade process, the learners who remained at a D grade did achieve higher marks and were motivated to attend supported one-to-one study to gain additional marks to move them into a C grade.

All GCSE learners made progress which can be illustrated on the bar charts at Figures 1a-10 and 1a-11.

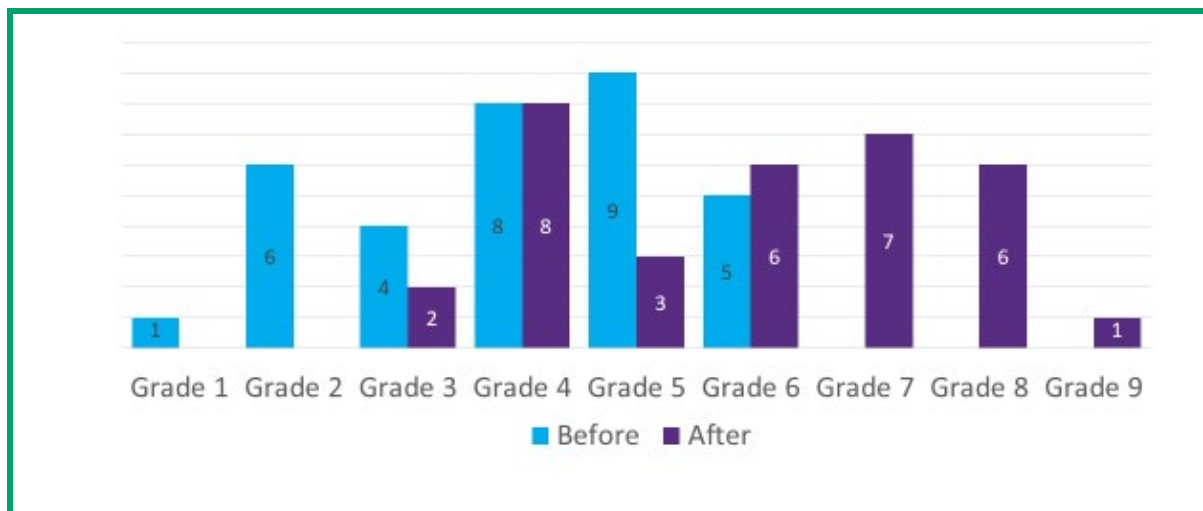


Figure 1a-10: Group A – GCSE Grade Improvements

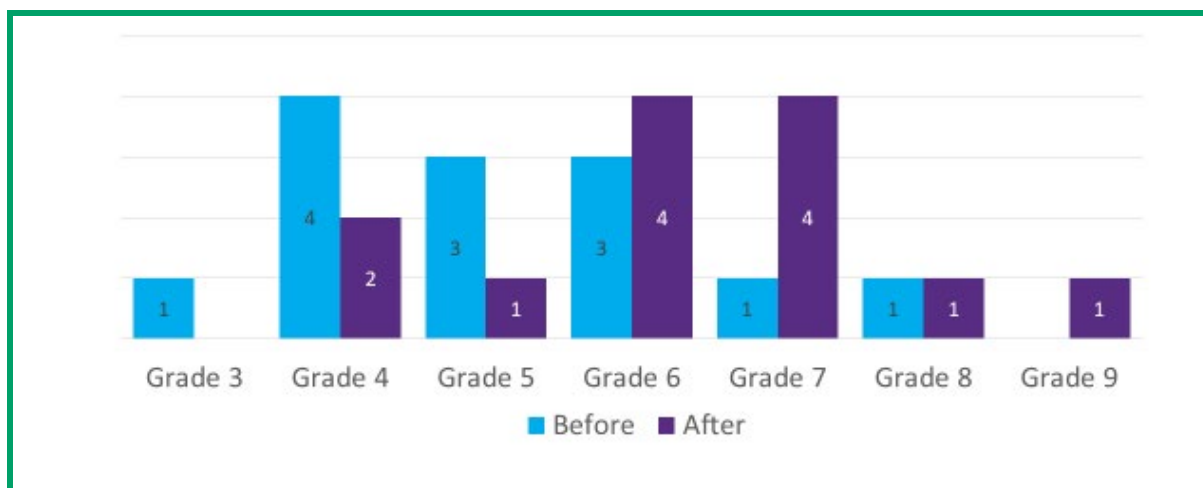


Figure 1a-11: Group B – GCSE Grade Improvements

Learner comments included:

“It teaches you how to improve. I think that’s very important as we all want to get the best grades we can...The feedback...helps us get a better grade... The process makes it all seem achievable.”

“It gave me confidence for other exams throughout the whole school, so I know I can actually do this and improve on everything I do.”



Figure 1a-12: Celebration awards

Learning from this project

One of the biggest challenges faced was the new November retake, introduced across college. Teachers delivered an intense GCSE English scheme of learning and assessment from September to November. Because of time restriction, this scheme did not provide regular opportunities for learners to upgrade their marked work and gain recognition.

Within the initial CPD sessions staff confidentially expressed their concerns about how they felt their time spent marking was not always able to demonstrate measurable learner progress. As a result, coaching was offered for staff members to bring learner work up to standard and receive support with the process to ensure it had impact and could be completed more efficiently.

The LEVEL UP upgrading process was most successful when used consistently and as part of a scheme of learning. Learner feedback showed that they felt that completing an assessment was now the first part of the future opportunity to improve and gain a higher grade. The process removed the fear of 'making mistakes' from previous summative assessment where their grade would be final.

The teachers' capacity to meet all learners' needs has been greatly enhanced by the LEVEL UP project, by providing constructive, actionable and personalised feedback, modelling high grade examples and empowering the learners to learn more effectively.

The process has developed a new aspirational culture for all learners to access and strive to produce the best work possible, rather than settling for mediocrity which they had perhaps done previously. Students were engaged in the process and were keen to share their upgrade success with other teachers and managers in celebration events.

The postcards home to share success with parents and carers were extremely motivational and received excellent feedback.

Where can I find more information?

You can see our project video on YouTube

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=u5TfgDEctsQ&feature=youtu.be>

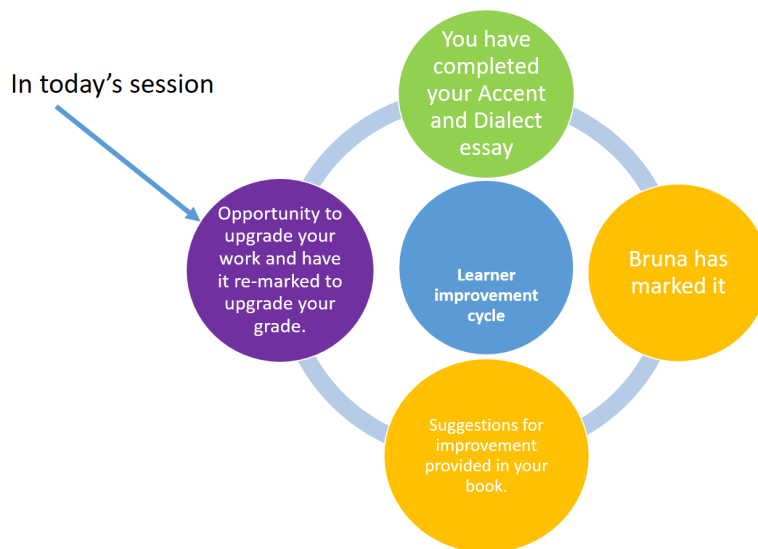


Case Study 1

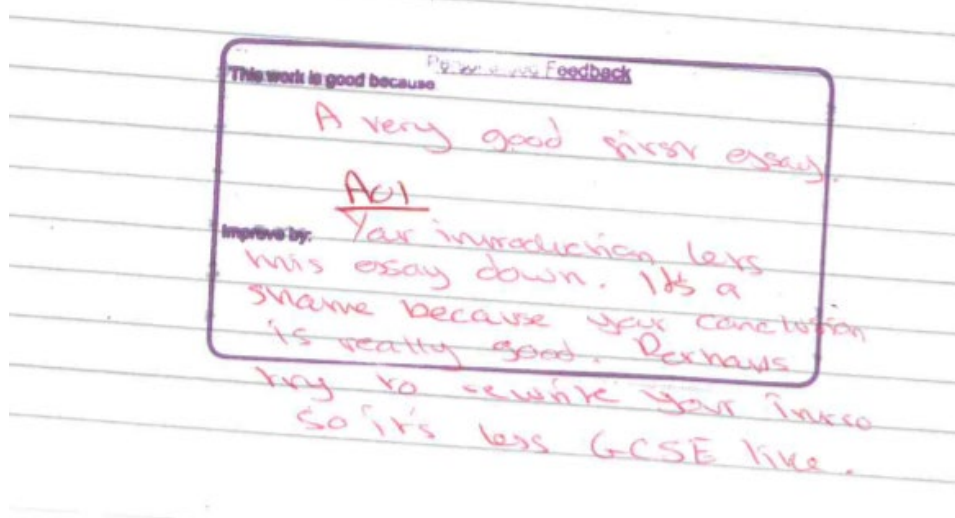
AS Level English Language teacher

I decided to do an upgrade lesson after my AS English Language class completed their first assignment: an essay on the topic of Accents and Dialects. I had previously, with all my classes, found the target setting aspect of the marking system quite unsatisfactory in terms of results. The targets were rarely referenced in the learners' next assignment and often no clear improvement was made.

I started the lesson by introducing the Learner Improvement Cycle.



This was followed by a brief reminder of Assessment Objectives 1 and 2 which were used to mark their essays. Their individual feedback, therefore, either featured an AO1 or an AO2 target (or in some cases both). The Learning Improvement Cycle stamp was used in their individual feedback. The learner's feedback was as follows:



A01: 6

- A well written essay. Well done.
- Your introduction lets the essay down a bit.

A02: 14

- Good use of research to back up your points. Well done.

20/30 66%

Grade: B-

Well done!

Common targets for the class included: rewriting of the introduction (A01) and adding a paragraph with a theory or example to illustrate a point they have made in the body of their essay (A02). These common targets formed the main focus of the lesson.

The class used the purple pens provided to upgrade their work by working on their individual target(s). The learner's purple upgrade completed during the class involved her rewriting her introduction:

Upgrade

The notion that some accents are more attractive than others has long been debated. There are many reasons why certain accents may be perceived as more attractive which is why ~~is~~ this question is the subject of multiple studies and surveys, like ^{what smart is} figure 1. ~~These studies~~ These studies aim to shed some light on the debate.

Upgrade

A01: 8

22/30 73%

Grade: B+

FEEDBACK ACTIONED

The class were given the opportunity to redo their essays for homework with their corrections incorporated. Most of the learners, including this particularly learner, chose to do this. The table below shows the learners in the class and how their marks for the AOs improved as a result of the upgrading lesson.

Name	A01 (10 marks): Before upgrade	A02 (20 marks): Before upgrade	Total (30 marks): Before upgrade	A01 (10 marks): After upgrade	A02 (20 Marks): After upgrade	Total (30 marks): After upgrade
	7	13	20 Grade: B	7	14	21 Grade: B
	5	12	17 Grade: C	6	14	20 Grade: B
	4	8	12 Grade: E	5	9	14 Grade: D
	5	10	15 Grade: D	6	10	16 Grade: D
	7	11	18 Grade: C	7	13	20 Grade: B
	5	12	17 Grade: C	7	12	19 Grade: C
	5	9	14 Grade: D	6	9	15 Grade: D
	5	10	15 Grade: D	5	12	17 Grade: C
	6	14	20 Grade: B	8	15	23 Grade: A

The lesson was observed by the Programme Co-ordinator for Quality, Teaching, Learning and Assessment, who commented in her feedback *"This lesson was structured extremely clearly to introduce learners to the importance and process of upgrading their work."*

I found the whole process valuable and worthwhile as learners were able to upgrade their work immediately by working on their individual SMART target(s) set for them to improve their mark for A01 or A02 or both. This not only enhanced their understanding of the AOs, but also increased their motivation and confidence as they were able to see how easy it is to upgrade, also how incremental changes to a piece of work is reflected in their marks. An upgrade lesson now routinely follows every completed essay.

The feedback from the class has been invariably positive. They all saw the value in upgrading their essays. One learner commented when interviewed about the process:

"It teaches you how to improve. I think that's very important as we all want to get the best grades we can...The feedback...helps us get a better grade... The process makes it all seem achievable."

Case Study 2

GCSE English Lecturer


Following an initial Level Up CPD launch session, one of the GCSE English teachers decided to apply the progressive marking process to her practice.

She decided to focus on one of her GCSE groups of 18 learners that were of mixed ability with target grades varying from grade 4 to grade 7. She felt the time she spent marking learner work (30 minutes per learner) was disproportionate to the time learners spent responding to her written feedback. The learners would spend approximately 15 minutes using a purple pen to act on feedback and this upgrade work was not remarked.

The learners all completed a summative assessment and the teacher marked the work, but this time with a focus on a specific area for development: the content, which reduced her marking time (15 minutes per student) and allowed to provide learners with 3 key targets to improve to avoid cognitive overload when receiving feedback.

The feedback was typed onto a Level Up feedback slip which could then be copied directly into the electronic learner record on the college recording system LEAP, saving more time.

Name	
English Language Exam	
Reading	23/40
Letter 10/12	Content 7/8 VSSPS 17/20
Guide 9/12	Content 7/8 VSSPS 16/20
Total	56/80
Grade 6	
Grade boundaries	
40 – Grade 4	58 – Grade 7
44 – Grade 5	64 – Grade 8
52 – Grade 6	70 – Grade 9



Your Personalised Feedback

Improve your grade by:

- Amending both your letter and guide based on my feedback notes
- Ensuring you add I think/I feel to your question 4 reading response
- Re-attempting question 6 and reading the question very carefully

New total after upgrade _____ /80

New grade _____

The teacher was supported by the project lead to create resources, to facilitate her upgrade lesson, to include: exemplar responses, guidance sheets on how to approach the language questions. The project lead also attended her class to offer support to both her and her students actively responding to their feedback. A 1 hour 15 minute session was planned to first explicitly present the progressive learner improvement cycle and respond to any learner questions. The teacher was establishing a new active approach to responding to feedback and it was of benefit to the learners to fully understand the purpose of the work they were

expected to complete. The learners then spent the session independently upgrading their work.

Following the task one of the learners commented, “We were given our tasks and a feedback sheet to help us along with way...the sheet would provide tips for improvement...the teacher came along and gave us a new grade to show our improvement.”



The feedback slip featured the grade boundaries and as learners completed their improvement work in class the teacher and the project lead provided recognition for the improved work.

Name

English Language Exam

Reading 23/40

Letter 10/12 Content 7/8 VSSPS 17/20 +2

Guide 9/12 Content 7/8 VSSPS 16/20 +2

Total 56/80

Grade 6

Grade boundaries	
40 – Grade 4	58 – Grade 7
44 – Grade 5	64 – Grade 8
52 – Grade 6	70 – Grade 9



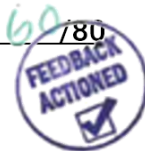
Your Personalised Feedback

Improve your grade by:

- Amending both your letter and guide based on my feedback notes
- Ensuring you add I think/I feel to your question 4 reading response
- Re-attempting question 6 and reading the question very carefully

New total after upgrade 60/80

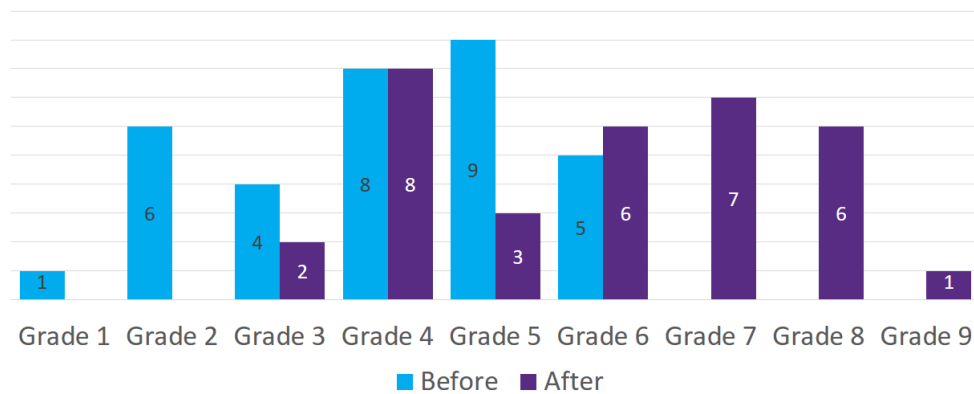
New grade 7



A senior manager was asked to attend the class at the end of the session to talk to students and share their individual success with the learners.

The chart below demonstrates the improved grades achieved in the teacher's group.

Group A – GCSE Grade Improvements



The teacher then completed the Level Up success postcards and posted home for learners to share the positive progress made.



A learner commented:

"It gave me confidence for other exams throughout the whole school, so I know I can actually do this and improve on everything I do."