

Reinvigorating Curriculum Design

Case Study



Project title: Embedding functional skills into work-based learning

A project led by Otley College, shared with other local colleges and providers, to develop an online resource to support the development of functional skills in the workplace.

Worth reading if you are interested in:

- Functional skills
- Online learning resources
- Virtual Learning Environments

Contact information

Main contact: Neil Ridley, Otley College

Participating organisation(s):

Otley College, Lowestoft College, Great Yarmouth College, WS Training, Norfolk Adult Education

What the project set out to do and why

Work-based learners, by their very nature, are employed and based in the workplace. Removal from the workplace causes disruption to both learner and employer and, in some cases, has led to learners leaving their chosen programme of study early. The College set out to develop an online learning resource to achieve a number of aims:

1. Offer learning and support that better meets employer and learner needs by providing more flexible access and a greater range of learning resources that can be tailored to the workplace.
2. Encourage a more productive working relationship between learner, tutor, employer and College.
3. Use technology where appropriate to create cost savings and increased retention for the College.
4. Continue to promote the importance of literacy, numeracy and ICT with learners, employers and across the College.

As described by the Project Manager:

“We will develop a series of learning materials that meet the needs of tomorrow's learning environment and business to achieve the embedded skills of functional learning as identified in the Wolf report.”

What the project has achieved so far

Between the 1st December 2011 and the 31st March 2012, the following outcomes have been achieved:

- A Moodle page structure has been established, creating an online location for the storage of both public and private learning materials and a place for learners and tutors to communicate with a particular focus on functional skills.
- The initial functional English materials have been developed, including the editing of current literacy materials, the creation of new materials and video tutorials. These have been mapped to the functional skills learning outcomes and hosted on the online site. They show staff, and shortly employers, something they can comprehend and contribute to, making the project real rather than merely a discussion of things to come,
- The functional maths and ICT materials have started to be developed, mapped and stored on the online site. As more materials are developed, the inter-relationship between the functional skills becomes clearer, helping to prevent each functional skill being seen in isolation.
- Presentations, meetings and relationships with the Business Training Consultants helped to develop “buy-in” from the College staff who will be instrumental in the success of delivering functional skills teaching and learning in the future. This, in turn, has increased staff confidence that functional skills can successfully be delivered with work-based learners ahead of the mandatory implementation from September 2012.
- Research into learner and employer needs has informed the type of teaching and learning materials being developed. They need to be able to be used online, downloaded, put on a memory stick and run on a local computer or laptop and, wherever possible, also be paper-based. This fulfils the project’s aim to open opportunities to learners and reduce the barriers to accessing support and learning materials.
- Visits to other providers, such as Norfolk Adult Education, has helped the project team identify strengths and areas for improvement in their own approach and has generated interest in sharing resources between regional colleges.
- A hidden section has been created, where tutors are helped to prepare for supporting work-based learners and to develop their own literacy, numeracy and ICT skills. This has provided a non-threatening means for tutors to access continuing professional development (CPD) and, through effective preparation,

helps them maintain the delivery of a professional level of service to the learners.

- Work is underway to identify the relevance of functional skills with the Business Administration vocational area. This has provided an opportunity for vocational tutors to actively contribute and has reinforced the message to learners, employers and staff of the importance and relevance of functional skills in the professional development of vocational skills.

What the project still needs to do

The next planned stages of this project include:

- Continue the work with the College's Business Training Consultants to develop their understanding of functional skills and their relevance to employers who are planning business growth or experiencing decline.
- Testing and trialling with an identified group of learners undertaking initial teacher training, and then with a group of Engineering work-based learners.
- Complete the mapping / cross-reference sheet which links the available learning materials with functional skills standards.
- Begin to market this service to employers.
- Continue the collaboration with other regional colleges and learning providers.

What the project wants to share with other schools, colleges and training providers

The following resource is available at the end of the case study:

- Screen shots of developed Moodle pages (annex 1).

Key learning points

- It's been important to identify the key "change agents" for this project from across the College and to involve them from the start rather than to build the team as the project progressed. This has proved advantageous for getting things done, securing commitment, and has been important for getting the functional skills teaching and learning materials right so that they encourage mastery and transferability across vocational areas and learner settings.
- It's rare for the College to feel ahead of the curve, and this builds confidence in the staff that they will be ready for September 2012 when functional skills replace key skills and adult literacy and numeracy.
- This project brought together different people that do not normally meet or work together; for example, VLE experts, work-based learning staff, skills for life and key

skills experts, practitioners and managers.

- Taking a team approach enabled the project to progress even when a key member of staff was taken ill.
- This project provided a more effective mechanism for staff CPD compared to running “introducing functional skills” sessions as it engaged the staff and provided a non-threatening means for staff to develop their own functional skills.

Annex 1: Screen shots of developed Moodle pages

"I want to get to college 30 minutes earlier (9.00am) at least 80% of the time".



James is a 17 year old college student who travels on a reliable public bus route to college that runs every 10 minutes throughout the day.

Click the options below that are included in the target

Choose at least one answer.

- a. Realistic
- b. Measurable
- c. Achievable
- d. Time-bound
- e. Specific

Submit

Assignment Checklist



Lucy has just started her course and has been given a checklist of all the assignments, which need to be completed by the end of the year. Lucy has decided to do them all by the end of the week. This target has been set by a student on a one year Agricultural course. Lucy has access to all the teaching materials and text books, but she has never studied Agriculture before.

Click the options below that are included in the target

Topic outline

Welcome to the online Tutorial Support Area

Are you prepared for your Tutorial?

Do you know who to go to if you have a problem?

You're in the right place

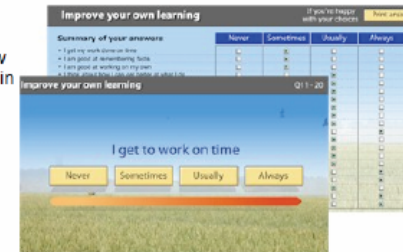
[News forum](#)

[Key College Vocabulary](#)

1 Learner Self Assessment

Assess your study skills as a student
This activity helps you think about your skills and your approach to learning. It should provide a good starting point for a first review session and could usefully be repeated later in the programme.

[Test your study skills](#)



2 Learning styles

We all have different styles of learning and we all know we understand things better if we are taught them in certain ways.
Knowing your style of learning can help you with your studies and help your tutor teach you in the best way to suit you.

Have a quick read of the descriptions below and see which one most sounds like you!

