

Repackaging ALS for Additional Learner Satisfaction and Advancing Learner Success

Gemma Hughes and Ruth Magnus

Repackaging ALS for Additional Learner Satisfaction and Advancing Learner Success.

Abstract

This paper aims to evaluate and develop learner responsive models for targeted additional learner support, (Foster.2006:17). The central part of this paper focuses on the effects of various delivery models, including 1:1 support, and small group support outside of a taught learning session which have their basis on the theoretical assumptions of social constructivists, Bandura, Pollard and Mezirow, and humanists, Rogers and Maslow. As this paper is played out against a backdrop of funding cuts, massive rates of youth unemployment and bitter attacks by the media on the skills levels and qualifications of learners, it seems more pertinent than ever for FE providers to utilise ALS funding, where possible, to promote learner competence and satisfaction with the support provided. Mindful of this climate, and utilising social learning theory, we believe that ALS delivery should not only meet the current obsession with targets, but also, by incorporating a more individually tailored programme, impact positively upon students' learning experience. This research suggests that using data gathered not only from formal assessment results, value added details and attendance statistics, but from the learner voice itself, these additional models can be evaluated against institutional and national benchmarks, and positive changes proposed. The final section aims to make transferable suggestions to increase the efficacy of responsive targeted support with fiscal and time constraints in mind. This, we proffer, may increase achievement, attendance, retention and, ultimately, employability.

Key Words

Additional Learning Support. Social Constructivist Theory. One to One Support. Humanist Facilitation.

Introduction

In a climate of crippling financial cuts in further education, and an ever expanding skills gap in young people entering a competitive job market, effective learning support to enable individuals to progress and achieve in their chosen course of study and progression route is becoming an increasingly difficult task. Yet, it can be argued, ensuring this fundamental aim of education in breaking down barriers to learning is fulfilled is more important than ever. Headlines regularly report of an unskilled and unemployable 'workforce' of school and college leavers; a recent survey of the Confederation of British Industry highlighted that young people are leaving education without adequate basic skills (Richardson. 2011) and

therefore a key responsibility of further education is to equip learners with appropriate skills and guidance to achieve the ‘currency’ they need to succeed in their chosen path after further education.

Additional learning support clearly has a pivotal role in this process as it should not only endeavour to remove or minimise any disadvantage experienced by individuals with identified needs impacting upon their learning experience, but to equip them with the skills to take control of their own learning,

“The culmination of this learning process is what Bandura (2001) refers to as efficacy, including planning intentional actions, guiding and directing one’s own behaviour toward a goal, and reflecting on one’s own actions to assess their quality, impact, and purpose.’ (Newman. 2011:42).

The college’s additional learning support provision evidently has strengths in the timeliness of support needs being identified and support being put in place. Patently, the support also helps to keep learners on programme and achieve; retention rates in 2010-11 for those receiving ALS are 2% points higher than those not requiring support. This was also confirmed in the college’s most recent Ofsted report which highlighted that “systems to put support in place are effective and the support provided is of a very high standard” (Ofsted. 2010:6). However support is inconsistent and figures vary across the college; for Bede Sixth Form, where the study is based, in the same year retention for those students receiving ALS was 89%, 3% lower than those not receiving support.

Recent changes in Additional Learning Support allocation, and a convergence of funding for 16-19 year olds between school and colleges, has meant a reduction in funding per learner and therefore an increased need to ensure that ALS is correctly allocated and effectively delivered to ensure full impact and learner satisfaction and success. With 24% of the college’s overall student cohort receiving some form of ALS last academic year, the delivery represents a significant aspect of the provision and a clear need from current learners for this type of support. Indeed, the allocation from the YPLA for ALS for this academic year is £2,085,417, providing support for 996 learners. It is also significant to highlight that of the 996 learners receiving ALS, the identified need for 586 of these learners was study skills (Leggett and Hall. 2012). The data indicates that poor study skills, and subsequently a lack of independence and self-reliance in learning, are the biggest barriers to learner success within the college setting.

The learner centred intervention proposed through the research study recognises the role of ALS in promoting an autonomous learner as ‘independence, creativity and self – reliance are

facilitated by self-evaluation', (McGhee. 2011:29), rather than by others. Key improvements for the college, identified in the most recent Self-Assessment Report (Appendix 9) include improvements to success rates, progression rates, further development of personalised learning and improving learner satisfaction and it is proposed that the differentiated approach to ALS delivery through an exploration of various models of support can be utilised to aid in not only addressing these key areas but also wider societal and economic issues.

To promote the most effective outcome for learners and college success measures, the current delivery model for low cost support within taught sessions will be assessed against more personalised small group and 1:1 support to examine the potential of these models in their responsiveness to learner need and impact on learner success. Embracing social learning theory and its potential to engage and develop ability in 'learning to learn' as 'motivation to learn arises, or fails to, in a social context of mutual expectation by teachers and learners.' (Jarvis. 2003:50), the aim of the study is to propose a suitable package of ALS which best meets the needs of the learner and can work effectively under current funding, institutional and wider constraints.

Methodology

A selection of twenty learners was made for this research. These learners all currently receive Targeted Additional Learning Support provision which covers two areas; the first, Skills for Life support, in particular Numeracy and Literacy from Entry Level through to Level Two. These learners all gained a D grade or below for Mathematics and/ or English Language at GCSE level and as such are all referred for Targeted Additional Learning Support. Previous ALS provision within this institution has consisted largely of working with learners within their timetabled sessions. This has the benefit of following the lesson plans of the tasks needed for examination purposes, however, as Michael Oakeshott states, 'Human learning is not acquiring habits or being trained to perform tricks or functions: it is acquiring something that you can use because you understand it.' (Oakeshott. 2001:8) and as such it was decided that in large classes, and surrounded by other learners it was difficult to judge exactly how much knowledge and understanding was being developed by the targeted learners. It was this lack of clarity in the ability of the learners to apply knowledge to other situations which in part determined the need for research into this area. The second area to be investigated is targeted curriculum support which covers organisation skills as well as academic writing, and aims to increase confidence with written work and encourage critical thinking. As Frank Coffield boldly avers, 'too many GCSE students now move onto FE and sixth form colleges

as highly dependent learners, who expect to be spoonfed.’ (Coffield.2010:12), and our research encompasses the option of allowing learners the opportunity to explore their reasoning skills and critical abilities in the safety of small groups or individual 1:1 sessions, encouraging Vygotsky’s ‘Zone of Proximal Development’ (ZPD) which he believes is, ‘able to operate only when the child is interacting with people in his environment and in cooperation with his peers.’ (Pollard. 2008:114).

Cognisant of the findings of Gillborn and Youdell’s study into two London secondary schools, which suggests that support and opportunity neglects, ‘certain pupils while directing additional resources to those deemed most likely to benefit’ (2000:134), the A Level subjects of this study were selected from those who at the beginning of the academic year were deemed not to be achieving their target grade. This varied from D/E targets to those from the High Achiever groups. But as this research concerns itself not only with improving grades, but also with the impact of the differing delivery methods on the learners’ emotional response to ALS, it has been decided to use a triangulated approach as discussed by Denzin (1978:291). The quantitative data, collected from assessments throughout the time frame of the project will be evaluated against information taken from questionnaires and individual interviews with the students to create a more rounded interpretation of results. Although we are mindful that triangulation can only reduce, ‘any possible task- bias,’ (Barron. 2001:81), to increase objectivity of the findings.

As this research concludes prior to the ending of the academic year, data was collected for A Level students from a succession of current working grades and ongoing assessments. This was seen as especially salient due to the fact that only some learners taking part in the research project were studying subjects with January exam modules. Summative assessments for the Skills for Life curriculum are to be considered in the data as these final examinations take place in March 2012.

The delivery models

Looking at the needs of the learners alongside time and financial constraints, it seemed logical to utilise the previous system as a baseline while trialing two other approaches to targeted ALS.

- ALS delivery in scheduled taught curriculum sessions
- ALS delivery in small groups outside of taught sessions

- ALS delivery 1:1

Following the strategic plan for ALS within this institution and inbuilt into National Curriculum and Literacy and Numeracy Strategies is the notion that, ‘If support is appropriate and meaningful, then it is argued, the understanding of children can be extended far beyond that which they could reach alone.’ (Pollard. 2008:179). And specifically, ALS seems to function following the suggestions of Thorp and Gallimore (1988), who propose that, ‘learning can be seen as “assisted performance”’. (Pollard. 2008:179). With this in mind, we looked at how we could use Social Constructivist theory as a basis for one of our new models; small group support.

When developing the small group delivery model it was noted, as Jarvis succinctly posits, that, ‘learning clearly has a social dimension or context. We learn from other people and alongside them, in all our social relationships. [...] Social relations may promote or inhibit effective learning.’ (Jarvis. 2003:42). In effectively creating a situation where a maximum of six students have the space to develop their learning technique outside of a taught session, the learners in the small group support model have a safe environment in which to voice their ideas with the support of the lecturer and their peers. Bandura’s social interaction theory (1963), which suggests that, ‘learning takes place as a result of observation and imitation of other people’s behaviour’ (Newman. 2011:42), also reinforces the need to provide learners with an environment where they can observe others receiving encouragement and guidance where they feel that engaging with the session will be answered with positive acknowledgement. The small group support then allows the opportunity for positive feedback from both the lecturer and peers and is compounded by Mezirow’s thesis that, ‘at the heart of learning, [...], lies the notion of discourse which always appears to depend upon ideal conditions for perfect communication.’ (Jarvis. 2003:41). The small group support sessions allowed the learners the opportunity to voice their opinions in a situation where they were not overshadowed by more vociferous learners and where there was time for a more full discussion of topics rather than fast paced question and answers. Linked to Pollard’s questioning of appropriate learning environments is his theory that,

““deep” and “connected” learning is also linked to learner identity. Does the learner feel comfortable with the new, school knowledge? Can they incorporate it and feel supported by the significant others in their lives [...] or do they experience apathy or even disapproval? (Pollard. 2008:178-9).

Learner identity and self-esteem seems to lead to a more individual approach to learner support and lends itself to the 1:1 model of support delivery trialed for this paper. Inextricably embedded within an individualistic approach to teaching and learning is humanist facilitation. Maslow's assimilation of behaviourism as discussed by Thorndike and Watson with psychoanalytical approaches, and in particular, Carl Rogers' value on 'person-centred therapy' (1951), played a major role in the development of the student-centred learning offered in the 1:1 ALS sessions. The idea of this 1:1 support offer was compounded with theory discussed in Rogers' chapter "The goal: The fully functioning person", from his 1969 text *Freedom to Learn*. Because learners are referred for targeted support for various reasons including but not exhaustive of:

- learner lacks the confidence to undertake independent study and may benefit from individual support/mentorship to help with ongoing coursework and to meet assignment deadlines
- learner lacks study skills and may benefit from support to enable her/him to progress and achieve learning goals
- learner has difficulties in organising her/his thoughts and may benefit from support to produce coherent written and/or spoken work
- learner lacks confidence and may benefit from individual support to prepare for written and oral examinations
- learner is experiencing social difficulties which are affecting college performance and will benefit from individual support/guidance to enhance progress
- learner experiences difficulties in socialising with her/his peers and will benefit from a programme of support/mentorship,

it seemed more pertinent to focus on the emotional aspects and self-esteem of the learner, and in this way, the child will hopefully achieve "self-actualisation" – becoming aware of, and confident in, knowing and learning.' (McGhee. 2001:35). With this approach, learners were given more freedom to decide individually what they required from a particular support session. Although some information had been given from curriculum lecturers regarding specific topics, the learner often seemed to need the opportunity provided in a 1:1 setting to discuss their emotional response to aspects of their learning experience which could then be redirected into discussions of particular topics and follows Newman's supposition that, 'a subjective sense of self sufficiency is achieved gradually as young people face and meet

important challenges of school, work, and family life and build a degree of confidence in their capacity to make good decisions.’ (Newman. 2011:394).

While not in the remit of this paper to determine the perfect learning theory, the three support models tested during this research do have their basis in some of the most discussed, those which have progressively underpinned the work of curriculum associations and teacher-based curriculum innovation in all subjects’ (Pollard. 2008:180), and have enabled the circumstances to find the ideal learning environment for each individual targeted learner.

Findings and Discussion

Overall the participants and staff seemed willing to engage with the study and happily contributed to qualitative reports. The summative collected data of this project seems to suggest that ALS has a positive impact upon learner experience of college. This is implied in the statistics for retention, attendance and achievement and, perhaps more importantly, in the questionnaire results. But, again, we must be mindful that the research sample is very small and that any data analysis and conclusions must be taken as intimations only. The project would need to be carried out with a much wider range of participants and over a longer period of time for any final conclusions to be drawn.

Quantitative Data

- 100% Retention for all twenty named participants
- 100% Achievement for all twenty named participants
- Between 91 and 95% Attendance for all twenty named participants

Qualitative Data

- ‘It gave me the confidence to achieve good grades in essays.’ Learner
- ‘I felt I could ask for help more and receive the help I needed.’ Learner
- ‘Gives individual attention to students who need support and encouragement and more explanation of tasks.’ Deliverer
- ‘Student confidence, attitude and attainment have noticeably improved.’ Lecturer

Retention

Overall, all students who have participated in this project have remained in college. Although there may be many other factors which contribute to this figure and the overall institution

retention rate of 98% remains above the national benchmark. However, it is not only in the statistics that we believe the impact of this research project has some merit, but in the opinions of those receiving the support. As Bandura claims, ‘people’s expectations influence how they behave, and the outcomes of their behaviour change their expectations.’ (Bandura.1977:195). One A Level student was poised to withdraw as they were struggling with their academic studies, but with the offer of a tailored 1:1 support system they have stayed in education, on course, and increased their A Level current working mark by two grades. Indications suggest that by providing this additional learning support the student achieved better results alongside increased confidence, which changed their expectations of further education and their place within it, as the student claims, ‘The help I received made me feel much more confident about staying in college and my grades have really gone up.’ In comparison to the previous year’s data, where only the ‘in class’ model was used, the overall retention percentage for those receiving ALS within this institution was 97%; 1% above national comparison for those receiving ALS, and 1% higher than our overall retention as a sixth form. The introduction of a more learner centred ALS delivery program using the two new models alongside the base has, we have found from our small sample, improved upon this statistic and 12 out of 20 participants believe the offer of an ALS program is more likely to persuade them to stay in education.

Attendance

- 95% 1:1 support
- 93% taught session support
- 91% small group support

These figures are the mean attendance percentages for the targeted participants of the study over their whole program. The overall attendance percentage for this particular site within the institution is 89%, one point below the national ‘outstanding’ grade. Our trialed models, although only evidenced from a modest sample, show up to a 6% increase in attendance statistics, placing these students firmly within the upper quartile.

The learners overall seemed the most positive regarding the effects of ALS on their attendance: 4 agreed strongly that ALS improves attendance, 11 agreed ALS improves attendance. However, 4 remain unsure whether ALS improves attendance, and 1 student disagrees that ALS improves attendance at all.

The deliverers of ALS also seemed to feel that ALS has a positive impact upon attendance with 5 agree ALS improves attendance. Although 3 stated that they were unsure if ALS has a positive impact upon attendance and 1 deliverer disagreed strongly that ALS impacts upon attendance at all.

The surprising result was the view shown by the lecturers of students who receive ALS. The data collected from their questionnaires show a much more negative view where 4 agree ALS improves attendance, 5 remain unsure if ALS improves attendance figures and 1 disagreed strongly that ALS positively impacts upon attendance.

Achievement

- 20/20 learners passed course or are on target to achieve.
- 100% first time pass rate in SfL where the learners were taught out of class
- Value added up to 2 A Level grades
- Distance travelled up to 4 A Level grades

In terms of the A Level achievement of the participants identified for this study, the results indicate a very promising increase, particularly in more subject specific study skills ALS which was delivered using either the 1:1 or small group model. The students ranged in subject from English Literature, to Film Studies, Geography and Physics, and the data poses that ALS had a positive impact upon not only value added statistics but more importantly, the individual distance travelled for each student. The learner participants of the study agree with the positive impact upon their academic achievement, as stated by a learner supported in a small group: ‘it made me confident in the subject and I achieved better results.’ The findings seem to correspond with the literature read prior to this project which discusses the need for social interaction through which, ‘individuals develop an understanding of the social consequences of behaviour, leading to new patterns of behavioural expression and self regulation’, (Newman. 2011:42), the impact of which can be seen in the table below.

Value Added - A Level

Achievement	Number of Learners
= Target Grade	3
+1 Grade	6

+2 Grades	1
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Distance travelled first assessment to summative project assessment - A Level

Achievement	Number of Learners
= Initial Grade	0
+1 Grade	3
+2 Grades	4
+3 Grades	2
+4 Grades	1

Those learners receiving ALS in Skills for Life areas were supported using either the ‘in class’ or small group model. In terms of summative achievement at the end of this project, 100% of targeted students passed their SfL exams. However, to look at the impact of the different models; of those taught in class, 4 out of 6, or 67% passed the exam first time. Of those receiving ALS in small groups outside of the taught curriculum session 100% passed the exam on their first attempt. These findings seem to support Vygotsky’s theory of ZPD as the learners in the small group were encouraged to interact, thus enabling them to extend, ‘the level of potential development as determined through problem solving under adult guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers.’ (Pollard. 2008:113).

The teacher and learner voice

The initial aim of this paper was to investigate which of three delivery models for Additional Learning Support gave the best results in terms of achievement, retention and attendance and also which increased learner experience of Further Education. The statistical data collected throughout the project does seem to answer our initial hypothesis; however, the interviews and questionnaire results have thrown some increasingly interesting opinions into the research pot. The questionnaire, (appendix 8), was distributed among the participating learners of this research project, and also ALS deliverers within the same institution to see if the opinions of the receivers and the deliverers of ALS had a common perception of the experience. To gain further insight it was then agreed that the questionnaire be circulated amongst their curriculum lecturers to gauge a more rounded response to the ALS models utilised. These results seem to show a distinguishable difference between the perceived experience of ALS by learners and deliverers as opposed to the experience described by the lecturers of students receiving the support.

	Agree Strongly	Agree	Unsure	Disagree	Disagree Strongly
3. Additional Learning Support improves attendance?		 	 	 	
4. Additional Learning Support improves retention?	 	 	 		
5. Additional Learning Support improves achievement?	 	 			
6. Additional Learning Support improves learner confidence?	 	 			
7. Additional Learning Support improves general study skills	 	 	 		

<p>Receive ALS</p> <p>Deliver ALS</p> <p>Lecturer of students receiving ALS</p>

In the small group model, ‘learning is situated within communities of practice’ (McGhee, 2011:29), and also, to some extent during the ‘in class’ model. Although due to the pressure to get through a syllabus there are fewer opportunities available for the students to hold discussions during the ‘in class’ support sessions, this seems to be highlighted in the achievement data collected in comparison to the 1:1 and the small group models and is also reflected in the individual questionnaire responses from those who receive ALS. Although all participants responded positively to the question, ‘Additional Learning Support improves learner confidence?’, the learners offered the 1:1 and small group support were more likely to

indicate an 'agree strongly' response than those supported in a full class: ten out of fourteen, with the remaining four stating that they agree with the statement.

The deliverers of ALS seem to concur with the participants of this study and suggest that a matching of their study skills to the individual needs of the learners alongside the flexibility to decide between various support packages does indeed impact positively upon the achievement and experience of the learner as one ALS deliverer states: 'Yes [ALS is beneficial] because I think it improves the focus of the students and enables them to ask questions when they wouldn't have the courage to in front of the rest of the class.' Another deliverer suggests that, 'ALS does help my students when you are supporting in an area your skill set is matched. Working with mainly my own students has also helped identify concerns/ issues quickly.' It appears that ALS, especially in the small group or 1:1 model, not only allows the learners to ask questions when they are unsure, but ultimately allows the deliverer of the support to more appropriately focus on an individual learning plan and build up a more reciprocal working relationship. This also follows the theory of dialogue in education as discussed by Martin Buber;

'when the pupil's confidence has been won, his resistance against being educated gives way to a singular happening: he accepts the educator as a person. He feels he may trust this man, that this man is taking part in his life, accepting him before desiring to influence him. And so he learns to *ask*....' (Hodes.1972: 137).

In contrast, some lecturers of the participants of this study appear to have a more ambivalent attitude to the delivery of ALS when looking at the quantitative section of the questionnaire. This may be explained in the more detailed and personal questions asked to which the general opinion may be summed up in the statements, 'I feel that ALS does support the learner and helps keep learners on task' and, 'Yes, to motivate students and keep them "on track", work with them and help them.' Although these statements agree with the positive nature of ALS there seems to be some ambiguity between the specific objectives of Additional Learning Support and general classroom management. Perhaps time set to discuss the specific requirements of the students with all of their curriculum lecturers, and more explicit details of what ALS can include, may alleviate some concerns or issues.

In summary, the data seems to suggest a significant rise in achievement and retention albeit from a very small research sample, and the maturation of learners and more dedicated learning time may also have been factors in the increased results, but all but one participant stated that ALS specifically in the small group and 1:1 models increased confidence in their own abilities and studies.

Recommendations

Given the limited scope and short time frame taken for this study it seems that our hypothesis of adaptive repackaging of ALS delivery has shown some positive outcomes, however, it has also raised many more questions and ideas to be taken into the next academic year and beyond. These include:

- Summative results
- Progression destinations
- Attitude towards life long learning of those who have received support
- Trial of models in other centres within the institution
- Comparisons of ALS delivery between cohorts in different sized institutions
- How to adapt ALS delivery with impending funding changes

Another main consideration which we plan to take forward from our study is how receivers of ALS are identified. There must be some assurance that ALS is targeted effectively or risk that learners are identified not because of their individual needs but that they become the proverbial cash cow. Currently all students who achieve below a C at GCSE Maths or English are initially identified and over a three week period of observation these are more specifically targeted. However, requests have also been received from lecturers with large groups where individual students are not always considered. With regard to the A Level receivers of ALS, this tends to be allocated after two or three weeks of their course when homework or assignments have shown evidence of required support with general study skills or academic writing. These more targeted and considered identifications seem to be the most productive in terms of achievement, attendance and retention.

This joint practice development or collaborative working could also be extended to cross college ALS meetings, specifically with cross coordinators regarding the delivery models. Another issue that has arisen is that of ALS CPD. For new staff coming into the area there is no specific training available, more guidance from other deliverers as and when support is needed. CPD would also provide a supportive environment to share good practice and develop new skills to extend specialisms. This would also allow a deeper investigation of the whole college needs in terms of additional support and areas for development which could then be disseminated more widely.

Within our institution, the deliverers of ALS are all experienced lecturers with subject specific degrees, post graduate qualifications in teaching, and some higher degrees. Although not always possible, it has been suggested that the deliverers be matched with receivers of ALS who are studying within the same field. This again has a significant impact upon the level of support on offer and a wider application of the models, especially when timetabling and in terms of financial implications due to impending funding changes. However, with improved links with curriculum teams and a focus on more generalised study skills and confidence building, this could widen the utilisation of the three studied ALS delivery models.

Another issue that seems, from this study, to be paramount when coordinating and delivering ALS, is the collaboration between student, deliverer, and subject specific lecturers. An initial meeting could be proposed to discuss areas to develop as this can become a fragmented process. Materials for ALS sessions could also be provided in this initial meeting as currently the ALS deliverers spend some of their desk time or even own time preparing more specific support materials and developing their knowledge of different curriculum areas. Again this may have implications upon timetabling and contracted contact hours, especially if regular follow up meetings are to be arranged. Perhaps ALS could be added to the agenda of curriculum meetings as, it appears from our sample, that dynamic ALS can have a real impact upon improving retention and achievement, usually key issues in these meetings.

This may also alleviate the occasional blurring of lines between a deliverer of additional support and classroom assistants or mentors whose role may be more to deal with behaviour management rather than academic development. This can sometimes cause consternation between the parties involved in Additional Learning Support where expectations of each others role can be misunderstood and in some cases act as a barrier to the support given.

In terms of the balance of the three models used per institution, we are aware that from our small sample group based in a sixth form centre which delivers both A Level and vocational programmes, that our delivery has been evenly distributed between models. The benefit of ALS is that the spread of delivery can be matched to the institution and the needs of individual learners as the funding remains constant for each model as long as the minimum number of contact hours is met and in line with guidance initially from the YPLA and now from the EFA. This funding allocation has, however, been proposed to change for the academic year 2013/14 which may affect the learners supported but not the delivery models proposed and investigated within this study. Each model has its own merits, the 'in class' model allows for discussion and collaborative working following social constructivist

theories and allows for a larger number of students to be supported. The small group and 1:1 models can be developed to suit individuals, from many disciplines and various levels and encourage what Vygotsky termed as ZPD. These also allow for discussion but seem optimal when developing study skills and student confidence. Overall, this small study suggests that a differentiated combination of all three models could be used to maximise impact.

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CONSENT FORM

Repackaging ALS for Additional Learner Satisfaction and Advancing Learner Success.

Name and contact details of researchers:

Ruth Magnus
Bede Centre
Sunderland College
Durham Road
Sunderland
SR3 4AH
5116709
ruth.magnus@citysun.ac.uk

Gemma Hughes
Bede Centre
Sunderland College
Durham Road
Sunderland
SR3 4AH
5116705
gemma.hughes@citysun.ac.uk

Please initial box

1. I confirm that I have read and understand the information sheet for the above study and have had the opportunity to ask questions.
2. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time, without giving reason.
3. I agree to take part in the above study.

Please tick box

4. I agree to the interview / focus group / consultation being audio recorded.
5. I agree to the use of anonymised quotes in publications.
6. I agree that my data gathered in this study may be stored (after it has been anonymised) in a specialist data centre and may be used for future research.

Yes

No

Name of Participant

Date

Signature

Name of Parent

Date

Signature

Information Sheet

Study title: Repackaging ALS for Additional Learner Satisfaction in Advancing Learner Success

You are being invited to take part in a research study. Before you decide whether or not to take part, it is important for you to understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. Please take time to read the following information carefully.

Why you have been invited to participate

You have been invited to take part in this research as you currently receive additional support from one of the researchers. In total there are twenty students being asked to participate.

It is up to you to decide whether or not to take part. If you do decide to take part you will be given this information sheet to keep and be asked to sign a consent form. If you decide to take part you are still free to withdraw at any time and without giving a reason. Your decision to take part in this research will not affect the current level of support you receive or your assessments.

What is the purpose of the study?

With current media discussions and employer surveys suggesting that students leave education with excellent grades on paper but lacking the additional skills for successful entry to employment, this research aims to look at the way additional learner support is delivered to students. By using data collected from assessment results, questionnaires and short interviews we will evaluate the method which is most likely to increase skills, grades and the satisfaction of the student.

This project will run until 25 May 2012 and will follow the same ALS package which you currently receive. Additionally to the support, you will be asked to complete a short questionnaire to answer questions on how successful you feel the support has been to you and may be interviewed by either of the researchers for a more in depth discussion of the support provision. Information will be used from your assessments to date and will be used to chart your progress. There is no cost involved in taking part in the study and all except any additional interviews will be included in your normal support session.

What are the possible benefits of taking part?

It is hoped that by completing this study we will be able to tailor our delivery of additional support for students for the optimal results. This may in turn increase the skills which employers are looking for, and boost grades and achievement results.

Will what I say in this study be kept confidential?

All information that you give throughout this research project will be anonymous. Only your initials will be used in the final written report or you may select to use a different name for the purposes of this study. We confirm that confidentiality, privacy and anonymity will be ensured. All data may be kept in paper or electronic form in a secure location for a period up to ten years after the completion of the project as a possible base for further study.

What should I do if I want to take part?

If you would like to take part in this study please sign, date and return the attached consent form.

What will happen to the results of the research study?

The results of this research will be used in a report which will be published in the LSIS online document, Excellencegateway. They may also be presented at a conference for educational practitioners in London in June 2012 and used for further research into this area.

Appendix 3

Vocational Data

Data Table 1. Learners taught in class

	Initial Diagnostic/Exam Level %	Assessment %	Assessment 2 %	Assessment 3 %	Assessment 4 %	Summative assessment %
CT	E3/ E3	85	96	75	85	90 (Pass)
KR	E3/E3	86	100	98	96	90 (Pass)
AP	E3/L1	35	37	52	69	68 (Pass)
HTT	E3/L1	74	100	50	53	75 (Pass)
AC	E3/L1	75	52	Absent	64	85 (Pass)
RG	E3	47	52	57	62	73 (Pass)

Data table 2. Learners taught in small groups away from the taught session.

	Initial Diagnostic/Exam Level %	Assessment %	Assessment 2 %	Assessment 3 %	Assessment 4 %	Summative assessment %
KE	E3/L1	66	73	75	65	68% (P)
JS	E3/L1	64	70	80	80	81% (P)
HG	E3/L1	64	65	60	83	63% (P)
AB	E3/L1	64	40	58	85	75% (P)

Appendix 4

A Level Data

Data table 3. Learners taught in small groups away from the taught session.

	Target Grade	Assessment	Assessment 2	Assessment 3	Assessment 4
JW	C	D	C	B	C
US	C	E	D	B	B
BT	D	E	D	B	Merit/C
EW	C	E	D	C	Merit/C
CK	D	D	C	C	C/D
LW	D	U	D	D	D

Data table 4. Learners taught 1:1

	Target Grade	Assessment	Assessment 2	Assessment 3	Assessment 4
JA	C	U	E	C/B	B
TL	C	E	B	A	B/C
RB	D	E	D	C	C/D
CU	D	D	B	B	B/C

Appendix 5

ALS questionnaire

1. In which area are you involved in Additional Learning Support?

Receive ALS <input type="checkbox"/>	Deliver ALS <input type="checkbox"/>	Manage ALS <input type="checkbox"/>	Lecturer of students receiving ALS in your class <input type="checkbox"/>	Lecturer of students receiving ALS outside of the class <input type="checkbox"/>
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2. Is your experience of Additional Learning Support

1:1 support <input type="checkbox"/>	Small group support outside of a taught session <input type="checkbox"/>	Support delivered in a taught session <input type="checkbox"/>
---	---	---

	Agree Strongly	Agree	Unsure	Disagree	Disagree Strongly
3. Additional Learning Support improves attendance?					
4. Additional Learning Support improves retention?					
5. Additional Learning Support improves achievement?					
6. Additional Learning Support improves learner confidence?					
7. Additional Learning Support improves general study skills					

8. Do you feel that ALS has been a benefit? Why/ Why not?

9. How do you think the impact of Additional Learning Support could be improved for your area?

Thank you for your time.

Additional Learning Support (ALS) Strategy 2011-12

A Learner Centred Approach

{Institution name omitted} is committed to developing a learning plan for each individual learner that reflects her/his specific needs to ensure that each learner gets the most out of his or her learning programme. The College therefore aims to accurately identify what each individual needs to learn and be aware of any additional learning support (ALS) requirements that he or she may have.

When identifying what learners need to learn we consider:

what they have already learnt and know and understand and can do

the most appropriate learning programme for them to follow

their career aspirations and their relevant abilities, interests and skills

In addition, the initial assessment and observation process for ALS should therefore aim to gather information on basic skills and key skills learning needs, any learning difficulties, qualifications and achievements, aptitude and potential, prior learning and experience, interests, learning style, personal effectiveness and personal circumstances which may affect learning.

Our strategy aims to ensure that:

- learners are fully involved in the initial assessment process
- learners understand the benefits of what they are being asked to do and how the information is used
- recommendations on how learning requirements will be met are agreed
- constructive feedback is given in a positive and encouraging way
- learners' views are collected on the initial assessment process
- initial assessment methods are appropriate
- the purpose of each method is explained to the learner
- assessment methods are monitored regularly to ensure that they are effective and that they do not discriminate against certain groups of learners
- outcomes of initial assessment are recorded on an individual summary record and used when designing the learning plan.

Initial Assessment and Referral for Additional Support - Procedures 2011-12 Academic Year

Referral for ALS for sixth forms and shared centres is as follows:

- Formal Initial Assessment to establish Literacy/Numeracy levels and needs for full-time (16-19) students will utilise Target Skills and/or the Basic and Key Skills Builder (BKSB) assessment tools at the enrolment and/or induction stages. All assessment arrangements should take account of the points outlined in the Initial Assessment strategy above.
- In addition there will be an observation period until Friday 30th Oct 2011 by which time ALS 2 referral forms (1 per individual referred) should be submitted. This will allow time for consultation to confirm referrals for support. **The observation period can be regarded as part of an ALS support programme and should be recorded as such on the ALS3 booklet.**
- Referrals can be made later in the year using the **ALS1** referral form if support needs arise as appropriate.
- The Learning Support Directorate will collect ALS 2 forms following the observation period in conjunction with the nominated ALS Co-ordinator at each centre. [Names omitted].
- The LS Directorate will keep Shared Centres/Sixth Forms informed of those students with previously declared, more specialist ALS needs. (i.e. supported by Disability Advisors/Specialist Tutors/ Mentors)

In order to target support effectively, all centre based staff delivering ALS on full time (16-18) courses should be aware of as much relevant and accurate information as possible relating to those individuals referred for support. This could include:

- Learner entry qualifications
- Initial Assessment outcomes (TargetSkills/BKSB); Diagnostic Assessment outcomes (where appropriate)
- Copy of ALS 2 (ALS Assessment/Observation Form)
- Schemes of work (Main Programme/Literacy/Numeracy Programme)
- Any additional information relating to support needs/disability

Information relating to individual learners from tutorial, curriculum and other support teams will also be of much importance including:

- Performance on main programme
- Performance on Literacy/Numeracy programme
- On-line assessment/test feedback
- Progress Reviews Plans (PRPs)
- Tutor referrals
- "At Risk" information
- Learning Mentor involvement
- Educational Psychology involvement
- Exam Access Arrangements (EAAs)

Staff delivering ALS should also contribute to learner PRPs and ideally attend any relevant assessment/progression boards as well as curriculum team meetings and "parents evenings" where possible.

In addition there is a range of staff development events and information available to all college staff in relation to Learning Difficulty/Disability including:

- Disability Equality Duty (Compulsory for all staff)
- Safeguarding Awareness (Compulsory for all staff)
- Dyslexia Awareness
- Mental Health Awareness
- Assistive Technology Awareness

Disability Advisors/Specialist Tutors at College main centres are: [Names omitted].

ALS EVIDENCE/DOCUMENTATION GUIDELINES

For every learner receiving ALS, detailed evidence of assessment and observation of need is required. Provision of ALS should therefore be preceded by a process of initial assessment and follow up diagnostic analysis of need. In most cases initial assessment will take the form of a formal process (assessment/testing) - followed by a period of documented observation.

Record keeping procedures are as follows:

- As soon as a learner is identified as needing support an **ADDITIONAL LEARNING SUPPORT (ALS) OBSERVATION AND ASSESSMENT SCREENING CHECKLIST 2011-12 (ALS2)** needs to be completed for that individual.

Please note - Initial Assessment outcomes alone will not trigger ALS. Observation and Assessment criteria by use of the above form must therefore be completed by the personal tutor and forwarded to the **ALS Co-ordinator** before any claim for ALS funds are made. **Staff delivering additional support should retain a copy of the individual ALS2 for each learner they are supporting.**

- For each individual learner identified for support an **ADDITIONAL LEARNING SUPPORT STUDENT BOOKLET - ALS3** will need to be kept as evidence of the additional provision. Entries into the booklet (at least weekly) should detail the programme of support provided for that individual linked to initial assessment outcomes (i.e. not a scheme of work). All sections of the booklet need to be completed.
- Any programme of ALS to be delivered needs to be accompanied by **REGISTER EVIDENCE**. If the support is delivered in an existing class session that is double or multiple staffed, the name and status of the ALS person/s should appear in the appropriate space on the register. If the ALS is delivered in a discrete session, a separate register should be kept.

Please note that ALS evidence documents are subject to both periodic internal and external audit and inspection and should be up to date and available at all times for this purpose. Such documentation is also designed to enhance the quality dimension of any ALS provision. At the end of the academic year, or on completion of the student's period of study or ALS programme (whichever comes first), the documentation should be submitted to the ALS (Low Cost) Co-ordinator for 16-18 provision or the notified representative for 19+ provision who will in turn forward it to [Name omitted].

Additional Learning Support (ALS) Observation and Assessment Screening Checklist 2010-11 (16-19 learners)

Name of Learner

Ref no

Date of Birth

Course

Centre/VI Form Bede

Following consideration of GCSE grades, Initial Assessment and follow up Screening Observation does the learner named above require referral for Additional Learning (group) Support?

YES (please delete)

Completed forms should be returned by course or tutor group to nominated

	Please provide further comments/information where appropriate	Please tick
1.	The learner's GCSE (English) grade is below C and initial observation suggests she/he will benefit from support with literacy in identified vocational/academic settings	
2.	The learner's GCSE (Maths) grade is below C and initial observation suggests she/he will benefit from support with numeracy in identified vocational/academic settings	
3.	The learner has difficulty with literacy/numeracy as outlined in Target Skills outcomes and will benefit from support in identified vocational/academic settings	

Associated information following observation which may trigger more specialist support

4.	The learner has a specific learning difficulty which is likely to hinder progress on her/his chosen course of study and will benefit from support to enhance progress	
5.	The learner lacks the confidence to undertake independent study and may benefit from individual support/mentorship to help with ongoing coursework and to meet assignment deadlines	

6.	The learner lacks study skills and may benefit from support to enable her/him to progress and achieve learning goals	
7.	The learner has difficulties in organising her/his thoughts and may benefit from support to produce coherent written and/or spoken work	
8.	The learner lacks confidence and may benefit from individual support to prepare for written and oral examinations	
9.	The learner lacks concentration which affects academic study and may need ongoing individual support to focus on college work and appropriate behaviour	
10.	The learner has general difficulty in engaging with and managing their college programme of study	
11.	The learner is experiencing social difficulties which are affecting college performance and will benefit from individual support/guidance to enhance progress	
12.	The learner has been highlighted by the sixth form during reviews of progress as giving cause for concern regarding general progression and will benefit from a programme of support and guidance	
13.	The learner experiences difficulties in socialising with her/his peers and will benefit from a programme of support/mentorship	
14.	Other - please give details	
15.	Further comments	

Signature (Staff)

Staff Name

Date

Appendix 9

FE CURRICULUM SELF ASSESSMENT REPORT

(Curriculum Area/Department/VI Form/Curriculum Directorate)

YEAR: 2010-2011

Title: Bede Sixth Form & Headways Sixth Form

Location: Bede

Curriculum Areas/Quals/Departments of Delivery:	Grade
IT and Computing	1
Business	1
Social Sciences, English & Creative	2
Health & Childcare	1
Science, Mathematics & Psychology	2
Skills for Life	2
Sport	1
Tutorial	1

Subject Sector Areas: Age Grade

Overall Grade: 1

CTI Grade: 1

KEY STRENGTHS:

- * Significant 3 year improvement trend across the levels and types of qualifications, above all relevant benchmarks.
- * Outstanding success rates, high grades and value added on all vocational courses.
- * High success rates on A2 programmes.
- * Outstanding retention.
- * Range of provision is excellent.
- * Strong learner support impacting on improved outcomes for learners.
- * Teaching & Learning is good with outstanding features.
- * There are very strong partnership links with schools and other stakeholders.
- * Strong Leadership and Management impacting on positive improvement trends.
- * Rigorous quality assurance processes embedded into the sixth form that improves provision.
- * Outstanding viability and significant financial contribution to the College overhead.
- * Improved recruitment has increased enrolments and offers.

KEY AREAS FOR IMPROVEMENT:

- * Improve success rate on AS Mathematics, Biology, Physics & Fine Art.
- * Further improve high grades and value added on AS and A2 programmes.
- * Further improve progression from AS to A2.
- * Further develop personalised learning, including assessment feedback to support and stretch
- * Improve learner satisfaction through the learner voice mechanism

IMPROVEMENTS SINCE LAST SELF-ASSESSMENT:

- * Continuing improvements in success rates above benchmarks.
- * Success rates, high grades and progression rates continue to improve.
- * Improvements in the Teaching and Learning profile.
- * Improvements in curriculum liaison with partner schools resulting in increased applications and offers.
- * Improvements in accommodation, including new Goals facility, more effective use of curriculum zoning & up-dating of heating system.

CAPACITY TO IMPROVE (CTI):

* Grade 1

Capacity to improve is outstanding indicated particularly by the significant upward trend in success rates (including Key Skills) improving by 17% between 2007-08 and 2010-11. There has been a strong 3 year upward trend of improvements in success rates within the Sixth Form, above both sixth form and FE national averages at all levels and types of qualifications. The teaching and learning profile has also improved, with a greater proportion of lessons being observed as good or better. The Sixth Form has a clear focus on identifying current performance at all levels and ensures that procedures are in place to focus on quality improvement. The Sixth Form has identified clear SMART targets for all staff through the Performance Management Review system, with managers monitoring all targets and Quality Improvement Plans throughout the year. A2 success rates have remained at an outstanding 98% achievement and success rate, with AS success rates improving by 4% to 81%. Improvements required in the Science and Math department have been realistically identified and plans put in place to address any issues.

A number of key improvement strategies have been implemented effectively and have resulted in the positive trend of the Bede and Headways Sixth Forms. These have included following the right student, right course philosophy, with core managers being the first point of contact at enrolment, effective monitoring of the demanding and ambitious targets set for both students and staff. This continuous monitoring includes progress review boards, tracking spreadsheets for vocational and A Level courses, regular meetings to discuss then action plan relevant students and the staff PMR system. The increased focus on improving and developing the teaching and learning strategies within the classrooms including assessment for learning and higher order thinking skills have also driven improvements.

Signed (author):

Date

Signed (validated by):

Date

