

Reinvigorating Curriculum Design

Case Study



Project title: Making Level 1 Foundation Learning flexible

This project aimed to improve the approach to personalised curriculum planning for Foundation Learning, providing learners with the opportunity to broaden their occupational interests and to develop both personally and socially.

Worth reading if you are interested in:

- Foundation Learning
- Flexible curriculum planning
- Collaborative delivery
- Tracking learners

Contact information

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What the project set out to do and why

The project aimed to improve the College's offer of a personalised curriculum for Foundation Level learners at Level 1 so that it more effectively met their individual needs.

Previously, learners on a Level 1 course were only able to select one vocational pathway. The College wanted to utilise the opportunities offered by the Foundation Learning curriculum to offer a wider choice of vocational options and a customised Personal and Social Development (PSD) qualification. The PSD qualification would provide learners with the opportunity to develop personally and socially regardless of any reduction in entitlement hours.

What the project has achieved so far

Foundation Learning team meetings, facilitated by the Lead Internal Verifier, were held to enable collaborative planning of the curriculum across sectors and to develop a bank of shared PSD units.

Early staff development sessions were provided for teaching staff, concentrating on assignment writing, assessment and internal verification. For these sessions, the College's Professional Practice team prepared a scheme of work and assignment brief for 2 mandatory units and 4 optional units. This provided the staff with a useful template and resources; these increased their confidence and provided the momentum for development.

The College designed and implemented an online achievement tracker to track course pathways, and an online tracking system for the PSD certificate. Each pathway has its own Google spreadsheet tracker document shared by the course team which lists the vocational unit name, the assessment criteria (numeric) and the learner names. The unit tutor tracks when, and which, assessment criteria have been completed by each learner. The online trackers allow the Lead Internal Verifier to view all learners and unit delivery dates and this supports the standards verification sampling process.

New assessment and verification procedures have been written and staff have received training on them. Standardisation meetings ensure that tutors delivering the same unit across different pathways work to the same evidence requirements. The issues raised, and the recommendations made, when the delivery team met in the first term to standardise the first mandatory unit resulted in actions which benefitted the implementation of later units.

The increased personalisation of the Foundation Learning curriculum has given learners the opportunity to enrol on a generic qualification and to then choose units from different vocational pathways in child-care, health and social care, media or IT.

There has been an increase in cross-phase teaching and in the use of experts across different curriculum areas, ensuring that the curriculum reflects industry practice and takes into account labour-market intelligence.

What the project still needs to do

There remains a need to further improve flexibility within the Foundation Learning timetable to increase the opportunity for personalised delivery and to make the most effective use of tutor expertise and time.

There may be benefits in revisiting the marking of assignments to make the process 'smarter'.

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

The following resources are available in a zipped resource folder accompanying this case study:

- A blank PSD tracker spreadsheet.
- A sample assignment brief.

Key learning points

- Curriculum teams who previously worked in silos are now working more effectively in partnership. This strengthening of collaborative working was facilitated through the laying of good foundations through staff development activities at the outset.
- Introducing all staff to learners during the induction process helps learners settle quickly and ensures continuity.
- Sharing the tracking of learner progress across the whole qualification enhances quality and supports the standards verification process.
- Standardising across vocational units at the earliest opportunity pre-empts the development of any issues that may also affect later units.