

Sussex Downs College

i-project

Inspiring achievement through project focused learning



Case Study

This case study is one of a series that provides examples of emerging practice as colleges begin to exploit the flexibilities of the QCF to develop, within current funding constraints, a curriculum more responsive to the needs of learners, employers and the local community.

The colleges featured in the case studies were selected through the LSIS QCF Support as QCF lead providers; all are committed to driving the effective implementation of QCF in their local area. It is important to note that the sector is still in the early stages of QCF implementation; some of the models are still at the planning stage, ready for implementation in 2011/12. The case studies aim to spark ideas and prompt debate; all include contact details so that, if a particular example interests you, you can get in touch with the provider to find out how the model is working out in practice.

Sussex Downs College has used the flexibility of the QCF to create the i-project – an innovative programme to engage 16-18 year olds. The programme enables young people to learn and work towards qualifications at their own pace; offers ‘chunks’ of learning that provide variety, choice and clear progression routes; has flexible start and end dates and fluid movement between courses.

Sussex Downs College’s i-project motivates young people aged 16-18 to continue their learning by getting involved in a range of exciting projects on and off the college site.

Close local partnerships support recruitment and delivery. The i-project team works with agencies such as the Youth Offending and Substance Misuse Teams, Jobcentre Plus and CRI Connexions to promote the i-project offer. Partnerships with local organisations and businesses such as Newhaven Fort, the WRVS, South Downs Rangers, East Sussex Archaeology and Museums Partnership (ESAMP) enable the college to offer exciting projects in the community.

The team’s holistic approach ensures learners are well supported throughout and beyond their involvement in the

programmes; for example, i-project runs a mini bus shuttle service which transports the most vulnerable people to, from and between college campuses as well as to off-site community engagement work.



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The learning that takes place within the context of a particular project focuses on personal and social development, vocational learning and functional skills. Learners attend for 12 hours per week for up to 14 weeks in small groups of about 10 with support staff in every group. The i-project enables learners to work at their own pace and achieve qualifications at an appropriate level, offering unit accreditation leading to an Award or a Certificate where possible. Vocational elements are accredited using NOCN Step-Up¹; the Award is achieved on completion of 2 or 3 units or 6- 9 credits. Learners' achievement is tracked at both unit and qualification level. Learners can take functional skills qualifications if they are ready; alternatively they will continue to work towards a qualification as they progress.

The core project team teaches the functional skills and personal and social development elements of the programme. Functional skills are both embedded into project activity to support the application of skills in real life situations and taught in discrete sessions to ensure a solid knowledge base. Additional Learning Support funding provides specialised classroom learning assistants. Variable hours specialists teach the vocational elements in each project.

Project themes are selected to support progression, for example, linking to vocational areas within the college. 'Team' projects, run in partnership with the Prince's Trust, have a more general focus, aiming to develop young people's readiness to move on to college or employment. Teams of up to fifteen 16-25 year olds take part in a challenging programme, a major part of which involves teamwork in the community and a 5 day residential.

¹ www.nocn.org.uk/qualifications/step-up



i-project Lewes

Horticulture and Healthy Living
grow, market and sell organic vegetables

- gain knowledge about how healthy food is grown
- create the creation of a cookbook with growing hints and healthy recipes
- work with the catering team to sell the produce

Catering Enterprise
create and run a business selling sandwiches, cup cakes and soup

- make the products to sell to local customers
- work together to take and deliver orders on time
- get involved in developing a business

Projects have a strong focus on community involvement, active citizenship and enterprise. Learners shape the theme and outcomes of the project. Learners on the Hair Project, for example, decided that the project outcome would be to organise a fundraiser for local charities. The learners offered their hair and beauty services to members of the



i-project

Coming Soon!
Construction in the Community painting and decorating in the local community working with Newhaven Fort – starting in November

Art and Marketing
-design, produce and sell garden containers, create visuals for a horticulture cookbook and market enterprise business

-Creating a mural with Eastbourne Borough Council - TBA

Re-cycle with the Youth Development Service - TBA

Hair and Beauty fashion show in Hailsham – starting in January

Any ideas welcome!



PAINT JOB: Students at Sussex Downs College at Newhaven Fort

Students give fort a facelift

A HISTORIC landmark is getting a facelift with help from students at Sussex Downs College.

The painting and decorating I-Project team, from the college's Newhaven campus, have been given the mission to paint everything that does not move at Newhaven Fort.

I-Project is a range of programmes to engage with those who are not in education, employment or training (NEET) to help them improve their skills, find work and guide them on the next steps towards college courses, training or employment.

It covers a range of topics, including catering, healthy living and horticulture, art and creativity, young parents, construction in the community, ecology and conservation and beauty and fashion projects.

Simon Cochran, Newhaven Fort manager, said: "This is a win-win situation. Not only is the fort looking great but we, along with Sussex Downs College, are helping to shape these young people's futures through projects that ultimately benefit the community.

"They can be very proud of what they have achieved here."

The Argus, June 2011

i-project Newhaven

Young Parent's Journal
create a journal of experiences from pregnancy to early years

- act as peer mentors and a support group for young parents
- gain vital parenting skills
- help other young parents and make a difference

Conservation in the Community
Working with the South Downs Joint Committee

- work on community projects at Stanmer Park and Houndean Farm
- design and make items using construction skills
- explore environmental issues
- improve the local community



public who made voluntary donations. i-project has fostered positive links between the college and the local community; local TV, radio and print media have shown real interest in the projects' outcomes such as the hair and beauty charity day, horticulture sale, art show in the local gallery, conservation projects in the community and the enterprise cake selling business.

Transition co-ordinators provide workshops and intensive one-to-one support for all learners, exploring progression opportunities from the outset so that learners can be appropriately supported as they move onto, through and from the project. They continue to support learners' progression for up to 6 weeks after they have left the programme. Detailed data is kept on all learners including barriers to engagement and progression routes.

If you wish to develop your provision in similar ways, you might find it useful to look at the Teaching and Learning section in the QCF action planner:

<http://www.excellencegateway.org.uk/page.aspx?o=328227>

Paige, aged 17, is a young parent with a 2 year old child. She had completed a Childcare Level 1 Course at a local training provider before starting an ICT programme. Paige didn't like it so she left in December and did not do anything for the next few months. 'I was a bum ... I hated it!'

Her family outreach worker advised her to go to Connexions who told her about the i-project. Paige joined the Hair i-project

'It's (i-project) not everyday ... you've still got your freedom ... you get something out of it ... it's not like a normal college course, it's fun!'

Paige is now progressing into a Level 1 Hair and Beauty course at the college.

This focus on progression has clearly been successful. In 2009-10, 46 % of i-project learners went on to Entry or Level 1 courses, 17 % to Level 2 and 4 % to Level 3; 19 % went on to volunteering, apprenticeships or employment. Some learners take up volunteer roles in the college. One learner, for example, volunteered as a technician on a Key Stage 4 programme. This has now led onto paid employment at the college within both the re-engagement and construction areas.

This prepared them to progress into the Art Department in February and to continue to develop their functional skills in addition to achieving a vocational qualification.

Progressing into the mainstream curriculum is challenging for some i-project learners and so a preparation for college programme has been developed in order to support that transition. The 12 hour programme addresses key factors for successful progression such as timekeeping, study

Gareth and Amy joined the Horticulture i-project. Gareth was referred to the i-project after being withdrawn from his Foundation course for minor disruption. Amy was referred by Connexions and was keen to explore her progression opportunities whilst she was on the programme.

At first Gary was very reluctant to engage with the practical aspect of the project. After working with staff, in particular the Transition Co-ordinator, it became clear that Gary was more interested in working on literacy skills and finding a progression route. He has now enrolled on to a Foundation Learning Programme.

Amy emerged as a very independent worker and loved the outdoor aspect of the project. Working with the Transition Co-ordinator, Amy devised her own progression path:

i-Project Horticulture mid year start on a City & Guilds PSD Level 1 Certificate Level 2 Horticulture

Ongoing challenges for the project team are around recruitment, progression, funding and the negative perceptions of their target learners.

A continual influx of learners is required throughout the year in order to recruit sufficient learner numbers and so a significant amount of time and money is invested in marketing.

Learners need to progress in order to free places for new starts and to maintain small groups. Tailored programmes in the mainstream college have therefore been created to support the progression of i-project learners ready to move on mid-year. For example, young people who were enrolled on the Creativity i-project worked towards and achieved the Trinity Arts Award as well as accessing some functional skills.

skills and behaviour management. Currently, this is not accredited or funded.

i-project is funded using 16 to 18 Learner Responsive Funding. As this is qualification led, the key challenge is to deliver an appropriately sized qualification for the learner – that is an Award – whilst generating sufficient funds to sustain the programme.

i-project learners are often perceived as having behavioural issues and of being of a low academic level which is not always the case. A shift in culture change and training is needed for many mainstream teaching staff and partners who work with these learners.

Looking forward, the college has exciting plans to develop and broaden its i-project offer by developing more progression opportunities throughout the year; developing a mentoring programme for community volunteers and a peer to peer mentoring scheme within the project and piloting a re-engagement project for Level 2 and 3 learners with a focus on academic and employability routes.

If you want to find out more about Sussex Downs' i-project contact:

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Ecology project group begins the Eco garden

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Learning and Skills Improvement Service (LSIS)

The Learning and Skills Improvement Service's aim is to accelerate the drive for excellence in the learning and skills sector, building the sector's own capacity to design, commission and deliver improvement and strategic change. LSIS's vision is that every learner acquires the skills, knowledge and appetite for learning, living and working and every provider is valued by their community and employers for their contribution to sustainable social and economic priorities.

Disability equality policy

LSIS is committed to promoting equality for disabled people and we strive to ensure that all our communication and learning materials are available in various formats including large font, audio or braille.

Please contact us at enquiries@lsis.org.uk or 0870 162 0632 quoting the document reference number to request an alternative format.

Qualifications and Credits Framework (QCF) Support (Sept 2010 – August 2011)

This sector led programme aimed to support managers and practitioners as they began to deliver the new qualifications from the QCF and use the distinctive features of the QCF to develop more flexible and responsive provision to meet the needs of learners and employers. Support was provided by regional QCF lead providers, with specific support for colleges, independent training providers and ACL/VCS providers.