



## Foundation Learning Support

# Provider case study

## Basingstoke College

### Implementing a whole college approach to the development of employability skills

#### Introduction

Basingstoke College is a large and diverse general further education (FE) college that also offers higher education (HE) courses. They cater for learners aged 14–19, adult learners and those wishing to combine work with studying for professional qualifications.

#### Aim

The College was keen to focus on a personalised learning approach that would develop independent and autonomous learners, and in particular, learners equipped with the skills, knowledge and abilities required by employers and HE institutions.

#### Approach

Having assessed their state of readiness for implementation of the Qualifications and Credit Framework (QCF) and Foundation Learning, Basingstoke decided to adopt a whole college approach with an implementation plan produced and agreed by curriculum heads and corporate middle managers.

They developed a curriculum model that integrated the delivery of personal and social development (PSD) and functional skills – re-branded internally as employability and enterprise development (EED) – and could be applied across all programmes of study, irrespective of the vocational area and the level of study.

The new cross-college delivery model, which will be implemented across all Foundation Learning programmes from September 2010, was developed as a result of a successful internal pilot that involved construction students studying an Entry-level qualification and staff changing focus from technical skills to EED.

The emphasis for the first nine weeks is on prioritising PSD/EED delivery. Enterprise and entrepreneurial skills are developed within vocational programmes alongside employability values and expectations such as 100% attendance and punctuality, mutual respect, strong work and behaviour ethics. By week 9, all full-time 14–19 year-olds and adult learners will have developed and demonstrated the knowledge, skills and abilities to achieve the BTEC Workskills Award at an appropriate level.

Specialist functional skills staff will support vocational lecturers in delivering functional skills within the relevant vocational context. They will also work with discrete groups of learners on developing transferable functional skills in preparation for their final assessments.

During weeks 9–18, there is an increased focus on assessment of functional skills for learners who are ready.

The rest of the programme will focus on assessment of the vocational elements of the programme while continuing to develop PSD and functional skills appropriate to each learner's needs.

All staff, including the senior management team, support managers and their teams and the local Connexions Personal Advisers, will receive guidance on introducing the QCF and Foundation Learning by April 2010. All course teams are encouraged to work in innovative and holistic ways mirroring the Construction pilot model.

Progression to the next stage of learning will depend on credit achievement and individual suitability.

### Impact

In the pilot, staff used enterprise activities and active/applied learning that engaged learners and supported employers' requirements.

As a result, learners developed independent learning techniques, team working and problem-solving skills and their commitment to the programme improved.

The college is hoping to use these staff as ambassadors for Foundation Learning with other departments as Foundation Learning is rolled out across the college in September 2010.

### Lessons learned

The whole college approach will allow learners to:

- enter the programme at various stages to achieve credits from QCF qualifications;
- transfer into different curriculum areas, particularly at weeks 9 and 18;
- personalise their programmes of study. Individuals in the same vocational area could be studying at different levels for their functional skills, PSD and vocational skills while on a common Foundation Learning programme.

Staff now recognise that focusing on developing the learner aids retention and, they hope, success on higher-level programmes.

### Next steps

Curriculum department teams are now identifying qualifications from the QCF for delivery in September 2010 and concentrating on holistic delivery models that develop enterprise, employability and entrepreneurial skills alongside functional skills across all lessons. They see this as their 'unique selling point' to parents, employers and other stakeholders.

There will be extra staff training and development to ensure teams and awarding organisation support for the PSD element has already been sought. Some staff will get extra support in classroom and behaviour management techniques as the College moves towards a slightly less structured, more interactive and project-based delivery style for Foundation Level learners. They also plan to introduce cross-college mentors for learners who have identified barriers to participation.

From 2011/12 all full-time programmes at Levels 2 and 3 will include an embedded PSD development qualification delivered through a range of enterprise and entrepreneurial activities within the first six weeks on programme.

Overall, they are confident that using the QCF and Foundation Learning will enhance their existing curriculum offer and support their drive to engage young people who are not in education, employment or training (NEET) or at risk of becoming NEET.

### Contact

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