



Provider case study

The Isle of Wight College Change management and the move to Foundation Learning

Introduction

The Isle of Wight College is a general further education college with a broad curriculum that reflect the needs of the Island community.

Aims

The College focused on the communications and change management required to enable a large provider to transfer Entry-level and Level 1 provision to Foundation Learning and the Qualifications and Credit Framework (QCF).

Approaches

The management team decided to treat the transfer to Foundation Learning as a discrete project rather than as part of a phased approach to curriculum development because they wanted to ensure it got the high-profile attention it needed.

They nominated a staff member with experience of change management, pre-Level 2 learning and disengaged learners to be the Foundation Learning champion and go on the LSIS three-day champions' training programme.

The Foundation Learning champion had senior manager support and so was able to keep Foundation Learning high on the agenda at planning days, staff briefings and curriculum development meetings. They were tasked with coaching and mentoring the College managers to lead their teams to a successful transition to Foundation Learning.

The management team started by using the LSIS Foundation Learning action-planner to establish exactly where they were in terms of readiness to deliver Foundation Learning and what they needed to do next. The implementation plan developed from this was shared with senior management.

As timescales were challenging, monthly planning meetings were arranged for the managers of all the College departments including management information systems (MIS), data, quality and student services. These were booked in well in advance and senior management support was called on to make them mandatory.

The meetings helped to encourage a whole organisation approach and simplified communications significantly. They identified that various aspects of the College needed to change in response to Foundation Learning and the QCF, and separate working groups on the following themes were established as a result:

- information, advice and guidance (IAG) procedures;
- central enrolments;
- initial assessment/diagnostics;
- course structure/course codes;
- entry criteria for Level 2 courses;
- school link provision;
- core timetables;
- functional skills delivery;
- consortium links.

The College also set up an informal working group – a round table – which met each month and was open to anyone who felt they should attend. The main focus was on curriculum development and course content.

In addition to these activities, the Foundation Learning champion formed an informal peer group with the other representatives on the LSIS champions' training programme who came from five colleges across the south east. They kept in touch during and after the course to share experiences and good practice.

Impact

This programme of work has raised the profile of Foundation Learning – not only across the College but across the Island.

Managers and lecturers alike are taking the changes seriously, investigating the new curriculum and communicating the changes to their teams.

Communications have improved and support comes from the top down so that staff feel supported in the developments.

All the staff from support areas are also involved; understanding how these changes affect other areas is crucial to successful implementation. The changes cannot be made by one department, or one person, in isolation.

Lessons learned

- Good communication is vital when working across departments and functions.
- Get senior management team support.
- Schedule regular meetings and book in planning days.
- Attend the Foundation Learning champions' training programme and establish peer groups.

Next steps

The next step will be to book in staff development days with all curriculum staff and support them to write the new schemes of work and lesson plans. This will take about six months and ensure that all areas of the curriculum are ready for the changes.

The College is also planning to give Foundation Learning its own branding; the colour magenta has already been selected from the College's corporate colour palette. It is felt that a strong identity is a critical next step.

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