



# Provider case study

## Southport College The Pathways Programme

Southport College is a well-established further education (FE) college on Merseyside providing a range of education and training programmes to adults and young people in the North West. It is the area’s largest provider of vocational courses with 3200 adult enrolments, 1900 16–18 year-olds and over 250 14–16 year-old learners.

### Aims

Southport College recognised that their existing programmes were not enabling learners to progress; they wanted to use Foundation Learning to develop better progression opportunities.

### Approaches

Southport College is currently piloting Foundation Learning programmes in four areas – construction, horticulture, cookery and IT.

The College created a pro-active curriculum planning group that met fortnightly and was drawn from across the College. It consisted of the four heads and four deputy heads of faculty, and department managers. The group held two awaydays specifically to discuss the implications of Foundation Learning – what it is, how best to deliver it, recruitment practices, and so on. There were no fixed agendas – but all contributed and had their say.

They used NOCN qualifications ‘Step Up’ at Entry level 3 and Level 1 with progression routes to Level 2 and beyond. In the construction pathway learners at Entry level 3 did a combination of units in painting and decorating and brickwork, which allowed them to choose a pathway for Level 1.

To maximise student choice, in addition to the four vocational pathways the College offered students seven options for personal and social development (PSD): two for Entry level 3 students and the remaining five for Level 1 students All the options are outlined below.

Option	Level	Units	Units	Units
1	E3	Induction to college	Developing skills for a healthy lifestyle	Introduction to group and teamwork skills
2	E3	Induction to college	Introduction to understanding self and others	Introduction to skills for employability
3	L1	Induction to study	Developing group and teamwork communication skills	Introduction to drug awareness
4	L1	Induction to study	Developing personal confidence and self awareness	Healthy lifestyles
5	L1	Induction to study	Developing personal confidence and self awareness	Preparation for work
6	L1	Induction to study	Developing group and teamwork communication skills	Developing personal confidence and self awareness
7	L1	Induction to study	Preparation for work	Introduction to drug awareness

## Impact

The pilots helped to lay the ground for all Level 1 courses to transfer to Foundation Learning in 2010 and helped staff to understand how a credit-based qualification system works, thus preparing them for QCF.

Learners now have the opportunity to study vocational pathways from Entry level 3 and can also choose from a range of PSD units that provides better opportunities to develop skills relevant to the workplace, such as team-working and communication skills. It is too early to see the outcomes of the changes, but the College anticipates that successful Entry level 3 students will be equipped to progress to Level 1.

Staff enjoyed the intensive CPD and really got to grips with credit-based qualifications. They will share their expertise with other staff in preparation for 2010 implementation.

In the past there were no Entry level 3 construction programmes but there are now an Entry level 3 programme and two programmes at Level 1 (painting and decorating and brickwork) available as part of Foundation Learning.

## Lessons learned

To accommodate the wide range of choice in PSD options, the College decided to timetable and deliver functional skills separately but this was not felt to be ideal. Next year functional skills will be integrated within the vocational provision and within faculties. Apart from this, the range of credit-based units and the different options for PSD offered were very successful.

## Next steps

The College recently appointed a Foundation Learning coordinator, there has been positive buy-in across the whole organisation and good foundations have been laid for wider QCF implementation in 2010.

Foundation Learning will be extended to all Level 1 provision from September 2010 and the College plans to expand its range of Entry level 3 provision.

There will be an extensive CPD programme on QCF and Foundation Learning for staff from March 2010.

## Contact

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