Project title: A New Challenge and a new chance for flexible, blended learning? The Do's and Don'ts

Exploring and developing a model to provide high quality, sustainable blended and flexible learning of English and maths in the workplace

Objectives:

- Develop a flexible, sustainable, high quality provision of maths and English learning that meets the needs of our local learners, communities and employers.
- Identify the changing needs of both learners and employers in relation to English and maths
- Develop a delivery model that responds efficiently to austerity measures affecting both providers and employers, particularly local small and medium businesses
- In light of our predominantly rural environment, develop a model that meets the needs of learners who, due to distance and working hours/shift patterns are precluded from accessing traditional, college-based maths and English classes
- Respond to the increasing need for good maths and English skills in light of a changing job market moving from low-skilled jobs to automation

Methodology

- Summarising of an extensive review of current related literature*
- Interviews and group discussions with work based assessors representing 17 different vocational areas.
- 6 interviews with employers
- 1 interview with the employer focused college skills broker
- 20 discussions with learners and written feedback from 'Exit Interviews'
- 1 interview with the college MIS manager
- 3 interviews with college quality assessors
- 3 discussions with Skills for Life practitioners
- 1 interview with college manager

* Quality Strategy 2011 Sussex Downs College
Developing Models of Flexible Delivery of Skills for Life provision
http://sflip.excellencegateway.org.uk/resources/modelsofflexibledelivery.aspx
WCS Developing Responsive Provision Programme LSIS
http://www.excellencegateway.org.uk/node/751
New Chances, New Challenges
http://www.bis.gov.uk/assets/biscore/further-education-skills/docs/f/11-1380-further-education-skills-system-reform-plan
Notes
Confidentiality (and preservation of anonymity) guaranteed where requested.
Discussion groups facilitated by project researchers

Planning and developing a new model incorporating the skills and experience of two teams who do not usually work together
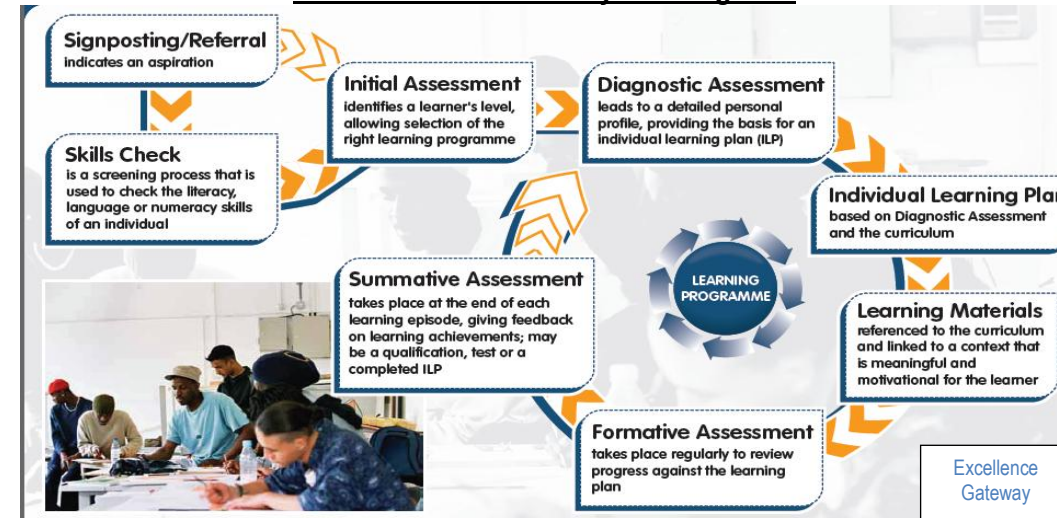
Skills Check - Signposting/Referral - Initial assessment
Completed by our Skills Advisors who work with all our employers and employees advising them on the most suitable qualifications. The initial assessment forms part of the sign-up process. Once signed-up a Work Based Learning (WBL) assessor is assigned to the learner.

Diagnostic assessment
The WBL assessors have all completed a "Getting to grips with the Skills for Life Agenda" course and are able to sensitively introduce the diagnostic to the learners. The diagnostic is marked and interpreted by the Skills for Life (SFL) Team.

Individual learning plan
An individual session plan is written for the learner and given to the allocated WBL assessors along with the relevant individual printed resources and session plan.

Learning materials
The SFL team have written resources for each of the elements of literacy and numeracy at Levels 1 and 2. Each element follows the format of factsheet, worksheet, 'checking for understanding quiz' and websites that support the specific identified element. Learners are also given a dedicated telephone number or email address to speak with a Skills for Life specialist should they, or their assessors, need support or if they do not achieve a minimum score in the 'check your understanding quiz'. All the resources are predominantly paper-based with additional identified websites. The WBL assessors keep the learners on track by regularly visiting them in the workplace to check on progress and to "chivvy" them along. They complete monthly and 12 weekly reviews with the learners.

Formative assessment
Each element has a specific "Check your understanding" quiz. Learners are directed to the dedicated SFL tutor if they do not achieve a minimum score. Each learner has to pass at least 3 practice tests online or paper-based before they are put in for their actual test.

Summative assessment
When ready, learners take their exams online in the workplace.

NB Our learners never come into the college...

The Do's and Don'ts

1. Understand the funding, evidence and MIS requirements
2. Caution: there is a big difference between ER and ALR funding
3. Ensure the learning resources are vocationally relevant
4. Ensure all resources are available in different formats not just online
5. Engage the vocational tutors to promote, support, monitor and keep the learners on track
6. Ensure the learners can access the learning at anytime
7. Ensure the learners and assessors have access to a qualified SFL tutor
8. Regularly review and update the resources, check links remain 'live'
9. Ensure the learners can check their own progress
10. Keep all the teams updated with the delivery model
11. **Keep it simple**

Next steps

- Develop & refine resources to embrace Functional Skills, explore & incorporate use of ICT e.g. i-learn etc.
- Continue to facilitate the joint working with WBL teams and others as appropriate
- Trial new model, review with all stakeholders and develop as required
- Work to enable sufficient time for review process – this was more time-consuming than anticipated for this project

Strength of Project:
Good use of several teams skills /experiences
Limits of Project:
Limited time: Continuous circle of consultation and redesigning required
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