

Webinar script

Pre-Employment Provision

Using Blended Learning to Deliver Functional skills in Pre-Employment Provision

Time: 1 hour

Style: information giving with activities, and question and answer (Q&A)

Introduction

Welcome to this webinar on Using Blended Learning to Deliver Functional Skills in Pre-Employment Provision. The webinar will provide you with an opportunity to examine the importance of functional skills learners and to consider the use of blended learning to support your provision.

In the webinar, we will cover three main points.

- The reasons for embedding functional skills in pre-employment provision.
- The different approaches to delivering functional skills.
- The background to using blended learning.

There will be set points for you to consider your current practice and to begin planning how you can work best with learners.

Why do we embed Functional skills in Pre-Employment provision?

Voting buttons – which one is the correct definition of functional skills?

Option A

Functional skills are defined as:

“Functional skills are the vocational skills we need to be able to find a job, do a job and keep a job.”

Option B

Functional skills are defined as:

“Functional skills are the work and life skills we need to have in English and mathematics.”

Option C

Functional skills are defined as:

*“Functional skills are the fundamental, applied skills in **English, mathematics, and information and communication technology (ICT)***

which help people to gain the most from life, learning and work.” (Ofqual, 2012)

You may need to talk to learners about functional skills and the reasons for embedding them into their course. It will be useful for you to think through the importance of functional skills, both for the employer and the employee. The following may help.

Functional skills are important for a wide variety of reasons.

- They underpin the skills needed for work, life and learning.
- Appropriate English, maths and ICT skills improve an employee's performance, now and in the future.
- Being able to read, write, use number and access technology effectively are basic human rights in our society.

Try some of these with learners.

- If you don't understand your payslip you can't check that you're being paid the right amount.
- If you can't read the Health and Safety notices you or someone else could get hurt.
- You need to be able to use FaceBook to make sure your children are safe on-line.
- People with English and maths qualifications earn more than people who haven't got them.
- If you go on a training course, you need to be able to understand the English and the maths they use so that you can do your job properly.
- Every job needs English and maths – for instance, if you're cleaning the floors you need to be able to read the warnings on the bottles of cleaner or if you're caring for people you need to be able to measure accurately any medicine you give them.

What's the right sort of Functional skills course?

Before designing a blended learning programme, you need to take three things into account.

- The starting point of the learner.
- Their vocational aspirations.
- The requirements of their chosen job.

To decide on the materials and pedagogy for the course, you will need to undertake several activities as suggested below.

- Undertake a thorough initial and diagnostic assessment process with the learner to gauge their starting level, strengths and weaknesses.
- Discuss with the learner any previous learning experiences that may positively or negatively affect the way they work through blended learning materials.
- Consider how to meet general employability and specific vocational requirements with the aspirations and skills of the learner.

You will then need to consider whether the course should be delivered:

- face-to-face in groups;
- face-to-face with individuals; or
- using blended learning.

There is a fourth option based on remote learning. This is not a successful model for this type of learner as they need to have high level learning skills before they start.

In many cases, blended learning will be the most appropriate option but may not be the way that you have delivered courses in the past. We will now discuss how to use blended learning to deliver functional skills in pre-employment provision.

What is blended learning?

Blended learning is increasingly being accepted as a key way of delivering learning opportunities in a range of settings. It can be defined in many ways but is generally defined as:

“A blend of classroom teaching combined with online, independent learning.”

Blended learning is often used with learners who are developing their skills at level one or two because:

- learners need to be fairly confident to learn without teacher-led activities;
- learners need to have good ICT skills to access online materials;
- learners need to be able to identify when they need help and to ask the teacher (in person or online); and
- learners need to be sufficiently self-motivated to undertake tasks outside the ‘classroom.’

Blended learning can also work well for learners who:

- have difficulty attending formal classes;
- have a learning style which benefits from on-screen or online activities;
- need reinforcement activities to embed learning;
- have had negative experiences of teacher-led sessions;
- have difficulties interacting with other students; and
- have a disability which can be supported by online delivery.

Let's have a look at some definitions through these YouTube clips:

[Blended learning—the best of both worlds](#)

(1minute 8 seconds)

[Clive Shepherd's interview on blended learning](#) (selected extract)

(43 minutes 39 seconds)

You may be using these approaches already but it is worth spending time considering the following:

- how much of the course needs to be delivered face-to-face;
- do learners prefer online or face-to-face learning;
- what quality checks will you build in to the delivery of online materials;
- can blended learning reduce the delivery costs; and
- can blended learning improve outcomes?

Voting buttons – how many of you have been a learner on a blended learning programme? **YES/NO**

Voting buttons – how many of you can think of an existing course that might be better as a blended learning programme? **YES/NO/MAYBE**

Barriers

Many learners may have had a poor learning experience in relation to maths, English and ICT at school. You may need to work with them to break down barriers and misconceptions about functional skills. For instance, they may be resistant to the idea of 'more maths and English' giving reasons such as the following.

- I don't need any of that for the jobs I want.
- It was rubbish at school and it'll be rubbish again.

- My Dad got a job and he can't use a computer.
- It's boring.
- I just want to learn about the job.

Presenter note:

This could be an opportunity for some interaction with attendees. Ask them for some examples if they're willing to share.

Go back to the ideas we mentioned earlier. Can you see how some of these might help?

- If you don't understand your payslip you can't check that you're being paid the right amount.
- If you can't read the Health and Safety notices you or someone else could get hurt.
- You need to be able to use FaceBook to make sure your children are safe on-line.
- People with English and maths qualifications earn more than people who haven't got them.
- If you go on a training course, you need to be able to understand the English and the maths they use so that you can do your job properly.
- Every job needs English and maths – for instance, if you're cleaning the floors you need to be able to read the warnings on the bottles of cleaner or if you're caring for people you need to be able to measure accurately any medicine you give them.

Can you see how using blended learning may help to overcome some of this resistance? You may want to design materials such as:

- example payslips that explain the words and calculations used;
- real Health and Safety notices linked to workshop layouts, images of Personal Protective Equipment and a risk assessment sheet;
- a hyperlink to the Child Exploitation and Online Protection (CEOP) website to show materials about staying safe online – use this to stimulate discussion or for an activity to design a safety poster for the workplace;
- a quiz showing the different earning potential based on qualification levels and types;

- a case study of an employee who is unable to get promoted because she doesn't understand the English used in a training course; and
- primary source examples, photographed/scanned and uploaded, for learners to discuss and identify where the maths, English and ICT skills are needed to use these in the workplace.

Remember, for some jobs it is a requirement for the employee to have functional skills at a specific level. This is why it is essential that you are clear with learners from the start exactly what will be needed for them in terms of functional skills.

Getting positive outcomes

As with any programme, you will want to maximise the success rate for your learners. But, like any programme, learners may experience difficulties.

When e-learning and blended learning programmes suffer from poor completion rates, it is often due to:

- learner isolation;
- lack of personal feedback;
- technical problems; and
- lack of social interaction.

Learner support reviewed (2007) Ufi / learndirect and Kineo

Taken from the [Move On E-tutor Guide](#). You will need to register to access this material.

To ensure that you maximise the impact of blended learning in pre-employment provision:

- provide face-to-face support for learners before they embark on online activities – it is much easier if they know who the person is on the other side of the screen and have met other learners who they can network with online;
- establish regular online contact backed up by telephone tutorials as necessary;
- remember to match the maths, English and ICT levels of the online materials with the learner;

- remember that functionality in maths, English and ICT should support the development of problem solving and transferable skills within a work context;
- use an online resource bank to tailor activities to the specific learning needs and vocational interests of learners – you can set up systems where learners choose activities based on their skills level and the career they are pursuing but you need to make sure that learners understand their progress and targets to do this effectively;
- use group sessions to reinforce online learning outcomes;
- encourage learners to network through an online learner forum
- test out the technology before launching it and have a protocol for learners to follow if there are difficulties;
- integrate networking and learner feedback into the online activities;
- encourage learners to post their own ideas on forums or to use blogs as part of their learning activities; and
- make it fun!

Sources of information

The Excellence Gateway has a wide range of materials on functional skills and approaches to learning. Try some of these for materials:

www.move-on.org.uk

www.bbc.org.uk/skillswise

www.jisc.ac.uk

<http://www.excellencegateway.org.uk/node/18272>

www.elearningnetwork.org

Q&A

If you have a question, raise your hand to speak or type a question if you would rather not speak aloud.