

## Breaking the Digital Barriers

## FEATURED



This site is a summary of a piece of research carried out into blended learning for ESOL learners. This research has been carried out with the support of the Education & Training Foundation, and of EMCETT and more information about this programme of practitioner led research can be found [here](#).

The research would not have been possible without the support of the ESOL learners and staff at Kirklees College, and although the research has been based on their input, the conclusions and recommendations are those of the author and do not necessarily represent the views of Kirklees College, its staff or its learners.

Please use the links to the left, (or by clicking on the box in the top right corner, if you are viewing this on a mobile device) to explore the findings and the methodology of the research.

Thanks again to everyone involved.

Sam Shepherd

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Clear and effective induction for all learners taking into account the diversity of ICT skills and ability to access.

Support for learners must be sympathetic to their needs as language learners, consistent and regular. Learners who have been identified as not having regular access to ICT outside of college may need to be prioritised where internal resources are limited.

Effective infrastructure of hardware and the appropriate software installed on all student machines. This should include hardware that functions effectively for the purpose at hand, rather than being slow to log in or unresponsive.

Online learning elements need to be of a good quality – engaging and interesting, as well as clear, uncluttered and easy to understand.

Online learning elements must be directly linked to the classroom. The online element could be accessed within the face-to-face time in the induction and early stages of the course to ensure that all learners are clear about what is expected.

Teachers will need further development and guidance in what makes good online learning.

It was too often seen as a given that learners would come digitally enabled, and enthusiastic for online learning, using their own devices, and with an expectation that online learning would form part of their learning.

Based on this study at least this is clearly not the case, with ESOL learners representing a range of readiness for an online learning element – from digitally competent and enthusiastic learners already making use of online learning to enhance their face to face learning, to those learners who would be severely disadvantaged by the mandatory introduction of an online/face to face blend.

It would seem that learners in FE are not universally enthusiastic e-learners who expect to see and access technology in class, and that this diversity of readiness for blended learning absolutely must be taken into account by all providers and by those making grand statements about the benefits of blended learning.

