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LEARNING FUTURES PROGRAMME FINAL REPORT

TEACHING IN LEARNING IN SUSSEX (TILIS)

PLUMPTON COLLEGE

PARTNER ORGANISATIONS

Bexhill College
BHASVIC
Central Sussex College
Chichester College
City College Brighton & Hove
East Surrey College
Guildford College
Northbrook College
Sussex Coast College, Hastings
Sussex Downs College
Varndean College
Worthing College



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Project title

Teaching in Learning in Sussex (TILIS).

Name of lead organisation

Plumpton College/FE Sussex (the consortia organisation of Sussex colleges).

Project summary

The project had two major aims and hence strands of activity:

- Aim one built on already established shared services arrangements and used these to introduce strategic leaders, governors and managers to the implications of investment in learning technologies through the design of a strategic planning toolkit.
- Aim two developed a toolkit for teachers to update their skills and use learning technology in the classroom. Both strands are part of addressing the FELTAG agenda.
- Strand one project outputs include the delivery of face-to-face workshops that introduce the strategic planning toolkit. The latter provides a high-level, twelve question self-assessment on the use of e-learning and links directly to an action plan for its introduction. The operational stage of the toolkit provides an in-depth financial calculator of delivery costs/savings/investment levels and return on investment. The final section of the calculator toolkit is a risk assessment of action/non-action of inclusion of technology within a strategic plan.
- Strand two focuses on developing the understanding, acceptance and use of learning technology by teachers through access to an audio/visual presentation. This introduces and demystifies the topic and focuses on the use of VLEs in terms of delivery and assessment resources.

Who should read this report and why

This report will be of benefit to:

- All governors, leaders and managers of colleges who wish to benefit from the completion of the self-assessment aspect of the strategic planning calculator to assess capabilities and actions required;
- Governors, leaders and managers of colleges involved in executive strategic planning who have a need to be able to calculate the return on financial investment made, determine future delivery implications and compile a related risk register;
- Senior Leadership Teams, Vice Principals and Finance Directors who may want assistance in the form of a calculator that will help in assessing the finance aspects of change and advise on the impact of planning a three year investment strategy;
- Academic staff who are new to (or lack confidence in) the implementation and use of learning technologies in and outside the traditional classroom;

- Support staff who need an appreciation and understanding of the development and potential of learning technologies.

CPD resources developed

- Strategic Planning Toolkit;
- Scene Setting Strategic Planning Presentation;
- 'Getting Started' toolkit (audio/visual presentation) for practitioners.

Project lead contact details

Plumpton College is a land-based college in East Sussex. For the project, Plumpton College worked in cooperation with FE Sussex, the consortia organisation of the twelve post-16 colleges in Sussex and three associate member colleges in Surrey.

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Members of partnership

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What the project set out to do and why

In the past five years, reports to and from government have highlighted the need to address the learning technology agenda (e.g. FE Workforce Strategy July 2014, para. 13, Jisc and FELTAG) and the necessity for colleges to use technology in teaching and learning. Sussex college principals considered a consortia approach to be the most cost-effective and logical approach to addressing FELTAG requirements.

Research by the FE Sussex Quality Improvement Group into existing and intended use of learning technology was conducted throughout 2013/14 across a selection of colleges, awarding bodies, technology suppliers and Ofsted inspectors. Outcomes of the research

included the need for a cooperative approach to the introduction of learning technology together with a staff development tool to assist in embedding learning technology into the curriculum.

The training and development needs of governors of Sussex colleges are partly met through the FE Sussex Governors' training programme. A recent survey of Sussex Clerks (FE Sussex, June 2014) showed a lack of understanding of emerging learning technology and a low appreciation of how, strategically, there is potential to profoundly improve teaching and learning outcomes alongside reducing operating costs. These findings are congruent with the national FE Workforce Strategy report (para. 18) that outlines the need for leaders and managers to be sufficiently trained to understand the wider benefits of learning technology.

The challenges this project set out to solve centred on:

- The need to introduce and incorporate the use of learning technology into the strategic planning process of colleges by governors, leaders and senior managers;
- Assisting and facilitating teachers to introduce and use learning technology as a regular activity associated with teaching and learning;
- Bridging the cultural divide separating staff who embrace new learning technology and those who do not;
- Sharing good practice to ensure as many learners as possible benefit from exemplars of planning and performance.

The process

Two tool kits have been developed:

- For Governors, Leaders, and Managers - The Strategic Planning toolkit provides a self-assessment for the introduction/enhancement of the use of learning technologies, and an online calculator together in an Excel spreadsheet workbook. Completion of the toolkit will provide an indicator of an organisation's performance in relation to the FELTAG recommendations and a forecast of the financial impact of changes in teaching contact time.
- The 'Getting Started' toolkit comprising a recorded presentation introducing the topic and providing access to four further brief sessions on getting started with using a VLE.

The results

Challenges overcome

Challenge: The lack of awareness of the FELTAG agenda and expected actions to be taken by governors. This was overcome by face-to-face explanations of the anticipated changes.

Challenge: Reluctant or new teachers who have no experience of technology. This was overcome by assisting and facilitating teachers to introduce and use learning technology as a regular activity associated with teaching and learning.

Challenge: Bridging the cultural divide separating staff who embrace new learning technology and those who do not. This was overcome by simple guided tutorials (one-to-one and online) to reinforce confidence and understanding.

Challenge: Sharing established good practice to ensure that as many learners as possible benefit from exemplars of planning and performance.

Challenge: Awareness-raising of all staff to the need to consider all aspects of IT when planning college strategies and responses to IT demands.

Impact identified

Through the life-span of the project, the following staff were directly engaged:

- 154 governors, leaders and managers at workshops, meetings and quality forums (original target 100)
- 57 practitioners/assessors at meetings and quality forums (original target 50)
- 45 technical team members at workshops with speakers from Google and Microsoft (original target 20)

Strand One and Strand Two toolkits have been produced.

The Strategic Planning toolkit has provided a mechanism for predicting possible savings over a three-year strategic planning period while allowing for decisions to be made on which areas of the curriculum to target or phase in as appropriate. The impact of the use of the toolkit is an informed prediction, in terms of cost and performance, relating to Ofsted and FELTAG recommendations.

The 'Getting Started' toolkit has been developed for staff new to teaching or for experienced staff not yet engaging with technology. The toolkit in the form of a Powerpoint presentation with an audio overlay outlines the basic skills needed to introduce learning technology into teaching practice using a VLE.

The need for such a toolkit at this level came about from discussions with:

- A Vice Principal – “it would be good if all members of staff had a good understanding of our VLE, knew how to use it effectively and were motivated to use it more extensively
- An IT Champion – “it would be good if I had a CPD module that staff could access readily, especially those new ones who ask for advice with an OHP!”
- An experienced practitioner – “I have tried to get the members of my department to change their practice but I think they are sensitive about their lack of relevant basic skills. Training sessions are too time consuming for them and sometimes too public. An explanatory CPD video would be great.

It has been produced as a relaxed audio introduction to the topic with practical demonstrations on the use of a VLE. The impact has been a resource that can be

accessed by staff at any time and highlights the benefits to them as teachers whilst not overlooking the necessity of meeting the needs/expectations of today's increasingly self-directed learners. This toolkit is a readily available CPD resource.

Feedback from managers, governors and senior leaders following participation in workshops that introduce the planning process for learning technologies, the strategic planning calculator and the teachers' toolkit:

"A really worthwhile event – useful, informative and thought provoking."(Strategic Planning Toolkit)

"Discussions were helpful; resource provided will be of use." (Strategic Planning Toolkit)

"I found the subject matter and associated explanations very insightful and thought-provoking." (Strategic Planning Toolkit)

"This is a new area for me at this strategic level. Thank you for the invitation. It was very interesting." (Strategic Planning Toolkit)

"Items provided some useful points to be taken back to SLT." (Strategic Planning Toolkit)

"As a governor, it was a steep learning curve but very useful information." (Strategic Planning Toolkit)

"As an ILT champion in my college, the 'Getting Started' toolkit is something I will use as a CPD resource with staff". (Practitioners' Toolkit)

"As a teacher, I now realise that using learning technology can reduce the time I spend on marking assignments and enable me to check learning in a timely manner. This means I can utilise my face-to-face contact time with learners to full advantage." (Practitioners Toolkit)

Key learning points

The following were key factors leading to success:

- Financial viability following funding cuts is a major concern for colleges;
- Careful consideration needs to be given to the appropriate funding source and curriculum level for the introduction of online learning. Its introduction should not always be associated with a corresponding reduction in direct teaching time;
- The strategic planning calculator should be used as a decision-making tool;
- Introducing learning technologies should not be misconstrued as merely a means of reducing staff or saving monies;
- The use of the calculator may need to be supported with a consultation on the implications of managing staff in a period of change;
- The input of data as a starting point for the calculator needs to be accurately sourced and managed;

- A senior manager for curriculum planning, the finance director and the HR director should be involved;
- Governors should be briefed on and involved in the strategic planning of change, appreciation of return on investment, future implications, and risk management of introducing technology into learning;
- Governors, leaders and managers should be aware of their current investment in technology, e.g. VLE and Moodle, the range of free applications and resources available, and support that can be provided from Google, Microsoft and Jisc;
- Introduction into the use of learning technology need not be complicated or difficult. The simple examples provide an 'instant win'.

With hindsight, we would have:

- Thought through the style of the practitioner toolkit more carefully. We changed from an excel-based self-assessment and action plan approach to the audio presentation format as our end product.

To sustain our achievements and as next steps, we will be:

- Reviewing any future bulletins with regard to the FELTAG recommendations;
- Monitoring the use of the 'Getting Started' toolkit and considering a follow-on toolkit or adaptations in the light of feedback.

Resources

STRATEGIC PLANNING TOOLKIT

Based on Excel, the Strategic Planning Toolkit guidance worksheets at the beginning explain the various tabs/worksheets. It opens with twelve self-assessment questions, each of which have a choice of three answers. The final outcome of responses leads to a full action plan for the introduction, improvement or enhancement of the use of technology in learning.

The strategic planning calculator starts with the insertion of known data: i.e. financial statement, QSR, staff rates of pay, etc. from MIS (where possible). The final aspect of the calculator includes a return on investment indicator, impact of future implications, and ends with a risk register.

Scene Setting Presentation: This presentation introduces the concept of FELTAG and how the proposed changes to conventional teaching, learning and assessment may profoundly influence curriculum design and delivery both in how it is taught and the financial implications.

THE PRACTITIONERS' 'GETTING STARTED' TOOLKIT

The toolkit consists of a PowerPoint presentation with an audio overlay and is aimed at those new to teaching and experienced teachers who have not yet engaged with the use of digital technology and, in particular, their VLE.

The introductory video outlines the purpose of the presentation followed by five additional short videos (including a suggested 'getting started' activity):

- *Session 1* *Overview of learning technologies and VLEs*
- *Session 2* *Getting started with a teaching resource*
- *Session 3* *Getting started with an assessment resource*
- *Session 4* *Getting started activity*
- *Session 5* *Summary and next steps*

The toolkit aims to demystify the topic and focus on using the VLE as the most efficient and productive way of 'getting started' using digital technology within teaching practice. The learning objectives include a session on identifying learning resources and providing access for learners, and an important session on how knowledge, understanding and attainment can be assessed and tracked.

The practitioner is then encouraged and motivated to 'get started' using the VLE and using digital learning technology in their teaching practice.

In the Autumn Term this toolkit will be used as part of the CPD programme for staff.

The CPD session will start with a brief self-assessment questionnaire (graded 1-10) and how they rate their knowledge of learning technology and how confident they feel to use the VLE.

Having viewed the whole CPD video staff will be asked to identify a learning resource and upload it to the VLE and device an appropriate quiz to assess learning.