

FE Week SUPPLEMENT

LEARNING TECHNOLOGY: A SHARED FUTURE

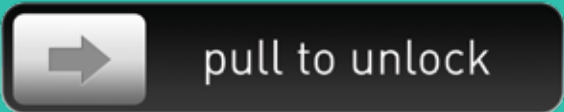


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EMBRACING TECHNOLOGY AND SHARING KNOWLEDGE



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Welcome to *FE Week*'s technology supplement, Learning technology: a shared future.

It's been 21 months since the launch of the Further Education Learning Technology Action Group (Feltag) report, with its recommendations for how the sector could make better use of technology.

In that time, in the face of challenges such as ever-shrinking budgets and the area review process, the sector has shown itself willing to embrace new technology and to share its knowledge and expertise about

what works. As a result, technology is playing an ever-greater role in the delivery of learning.

On page 3 we look at what the government has been doing to take forward the Feltag agenda. We also speak to Maren Deepwell, chief executive of the Association for Learning Technology, about funding pressures. It's one of a number of issues for which an exclusive *FE Week* survey was carried out and the results are on pages 4 and 5.

For those who are innovating, there are a number of organisations that can provide support — either financial or technical. On pages 6 and 7 we look at two of them — the Ufi Trust and Jisc.

In July last year, the Education and Training Foundation awarded the Gazelle group a £1m learning technology contract. On pages 10 and 11 we look at what the contract delivered.

Support for tech innovation can come from any part of the sector, and on page 12 we look at what the Learning and Skills Research Network is doing.

On page 13 we interview Colin Gallacher, technology learning adviser, about the good, the bad and the ugly of FE learning tech.

Our experts on pages 14 and 15 talk about how they've been using technology to improve learning — and why sharing what they learn is important. We also look at an online course for improving practitioners' understanding of learning technology.

It's striking that with each innovation there's an underlying thread of co-operation. It's clear therefore that technology is proving most useful not only once it's implemented, but also in development as it draws practitioners and the sector together. It is perhaps one of the greatest and yet least acknowledged benefits of technology.



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FELTAG AGENDA TAKEN FORWARD INTO AREA REVIEW PROCESS

THE NATIONAL PROGRAMME OF POST 16-EDUCATION AREA REVIEWS ARE BEING INFLUENCED BY RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE FURTHER EDUCATION LEARNING TECHNOLOGY ACTION GROUP (FELTAG), A GOVERNMENT SPOKESPERSON TOLD FE WEEK.

Feltag's "agenda," which was laid out in 39 recommendations for widening the use of learning technology in FE and skills in a report in March 2014, was being "incorporated" into the area review process, according to a spokesperson for the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (BIS).

Thirteen area reviews across two initial waves, covering more than 130 general FE and sixth form colleges, have been launched so far by government, which has said the "need" to move towards "fewer, often larger, more resilient and efficient providers," underlies the process.

"Going forward, the Feltag agenda has been incorporated into the area review process," said the BIS spokesperson.

"Effective use of technology is vital for efficient and effective curriculum delivery and back office functions, so that the needs of students and employers in each area can be met through financially viable colleges."

Bob Harrison, Feltag representative on the area review advisory group, agreed the "spirit of Feltag" had been "embedded in the guidance".

"However, I do have concerns that the speed, complexity, pressures and scale of the process could mean the digital dimension could get lost," he said.

The "realignment of assets" from land and buildings to "workforce skills and digital infrastructure to ensure

a sustainable, online and blended learning digital future" would be a "challenge", said Mr Harrison.

Among the key Feltag recommendations was that all publicly-funded learning programmes should have a minimum of 10 per cent online learning.

But the government said in February it had "reviewed this in the light of concerns raised about setting a target without first testing the impact" and asked the Skills Funding Agency (SFA) to "undertake information gathering" to "help baseline current levels of online activity".

The work has now been carried out, said the BIS spokesperson, and the findings would be published "in due course" but there were "no plans" to set online

delivery targets.

The spokesperson also said that "some 100 colleges" took up additional funding from the government to improve broadband resilience. This funding programme, which ended in March, was in response to a Feltag recommendation that providers should "aim to provide industry-standard technological infrastructure".

Meanwhile, the SFA said it would be publishing a follow-up to the government's response to the Feltag report in the New Year.

A spokesperson for the SFA said the report, which will be published in the New Year, would "respond to the recommendations made by the government in response to the Feltag report".

#FELTAG



Bob Harrison

@BOBHARRISONSET

LEARNING TECHNOLOGY - RE-THINKING WHAT'S ESSENTIAL @MARENDDEEPWELL



While many in FE and skills may have breathed a sigh of relief following the government's spending review last month, many financial unknowns and challenges remain.

For Maren Deepwell, chief executive of the Association for Learning Technology, rather than negatively assessing tech spending this is precisely the time to utilise it to help meet those challenges.

She outlines what and who to turn to and also outlines further just how and why technology should be seen as friend rather than foe.

"At times of pressure our focus often has to be on the essentials," said Ms Deepwell.

"Essential skills, essential provision, essential income — and learning technology is seen by many as an optional add-on, something that's nice to do — but not essential. Or is it?"

With technology playing an increasingly essential role in our day-to-day lives, said Ms Deepwell, its role in FE was no less vital.

"Delivering learning online, on mobile or in a blended format for learners and for continuing professional development

(CPD) is becoming increasingly essential to meeting 21st century demands from employers," she said.

"That is why we need to re-think what's essential and make sure that we include learning technology on that list for learners, teachers and providers."

While she conceded that making good use of technology "isn't easy", there is support out there to help providers.

Organisations such as Jisc can help with infrastructure, said Ms Deepwell, while others such as the Association of Colleges (AoC) and the Association of Employment and Learning Providers (AELP) can offer expertise around cloud computing or the "ubiquitous need for WIFI provision".

With technology changing so rapidly, it can be difficult for providers to keep up-to-date and to ensure their staff have the right skills — not just in using the technology, but also in "redesigning their curriculum design, delivery models and assessment to take advantage of what tech can offer in their area".

It's an area in which forums that allow people to "upskill and share lessons

ALT chief executive Maren Deepwell



between organisations" come into play, said Ms Deepwell.

It's not only practitioners who benefit from sharing expertise — it's just as important for senior decision makers.

"Providers should be looking at applying a digital lens to their current strategies and explore how digital technologies can enable them to meet their vision and strategic goals," said Ms Deepwell.

While impact may still be "one of the persistent questions about the use of learning technology", Ms Deepwell

said providers should "reflect on the impact of not engaging with technology, in supporting learners as well as their employability skills".

Ultimately, she said, providers should "look at technology as a solution to problems, not just another problem that has to be solved".

"If we need to do even more with fewer resources then learning technology is one of the most powerful tools we have at our disposal to achieve success for all learners," said Ms Deepwell.

TECHNOLOGY VS BUDGET

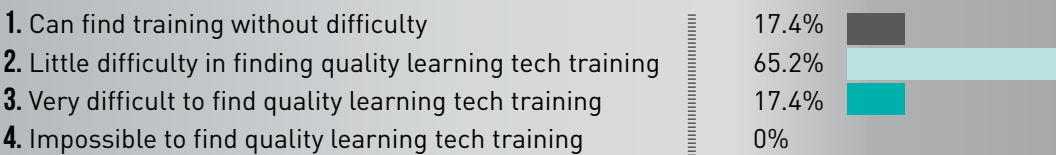
Q1

TO WHAT EXTENT ARE BUDGET RESTRAINTS LIMITING IMPLEMENTATION OF NEW TECHNOLOGIES?



Q2

HOW DIFFICULT IS IT TO FIND QUALITY LEARNING TECH TRAINING FOR STAFF?



Q3

WHAT TECHNOLOGY IS PROVING THE MOST USEFUL IN THE CONTEXT OF GROWING FINANCIAL PRESSURES?

- "Thin client" – anon
- "E-portfolio" – anon
- "Office 365" – anon
- "Good learner management software and real time access for mobile staff" – anon
- "Internet and cloud technology" – Mell Turford, head of broadcast media, Strode College
- "Dashboards" – Sue Rimmer, principal, South Thames College
- "Office 365" – John Billington, head of services, Hugo Baird College
- "Online e-portfolio" – Jonathan Wells, director, Forskills
- "Free - Google drive and docs; apps, Prezi, Pinterest etc" – anon
- "Remote access" – anon
- "Online resources" – Paul Rolfe, head of IT, Barnfield College
- "Virtualization" – anon
- "Moodle" – anon
- "Open source software" – anon
- "Laptops for all staff" – anon
- "Collaborative learning online using cloud technology" – anon
- "e-Learning" – Lori Randall, head of i-Academy, Youth Sports Direct i-Academy
- "Automation of processes" – anon
- "Pics" – Caroline Murphy, operational manager, DH Associates
- "Technology to enhance blended learning experiences for students" – anon
- "Good online system" – Noha Yousef, head of marketing, The Oxford Partnership – KSA
- "Electronic portfolios and Windows 365" – anon

Q4

IS THERE ENOUGH OFFICIAL GUIDANCE ON NEW TECHNOLOGIES?



Q5

HAS THERE BEEN ANY TECHNOLOGY



47.8%

IF



T: THE FE WEEK SURVEY

YOU WOULD HAVE LIKED TO IMPLEMENT BUT CAN'T DUE TO BUDGET RESTRAINTS?

52.2%

NO

IF

"Although ticking "NO", introduction of new technology has had to be prioritised, so some enhancements that would be useful have been delayed, rather than prevented" - anon

"VDI" - anon
 "Video scribe" - anon
 "New LMS, wider use of authoring tools" - anon
 "Access to online servers without always being blocked with firewalls when just wanting to experiment with ideas" - Mell Turford, head of broadcast media, Strode College
 "Online learning (e.g.MOOC), dashboards, online payments, Web-based developments/platforms, curriculum developments in online learning" - Sue Rimmer, principal, South Thames College
 "Xerte, Moodle external hosting and EBSCO discovery service. Also, we have had to roll out upgrading our classroom projectors in a piecemeal fashion instead of replacing all outdated kit in one go, and as such some staff and students are using kit which is technically past 'end of life' use." - anon
 "Desktop refresh" - anon
 "Assistive technology and online reading in exams" - anon
 "Mobile devices / more classroom computers" - anon
 "Plasma screens in all sites" - anon
 "E-portfolios" - Caroline Murphy, operational manager, DH Associates

YES

Q6 WHAT TECHNOLOGY?

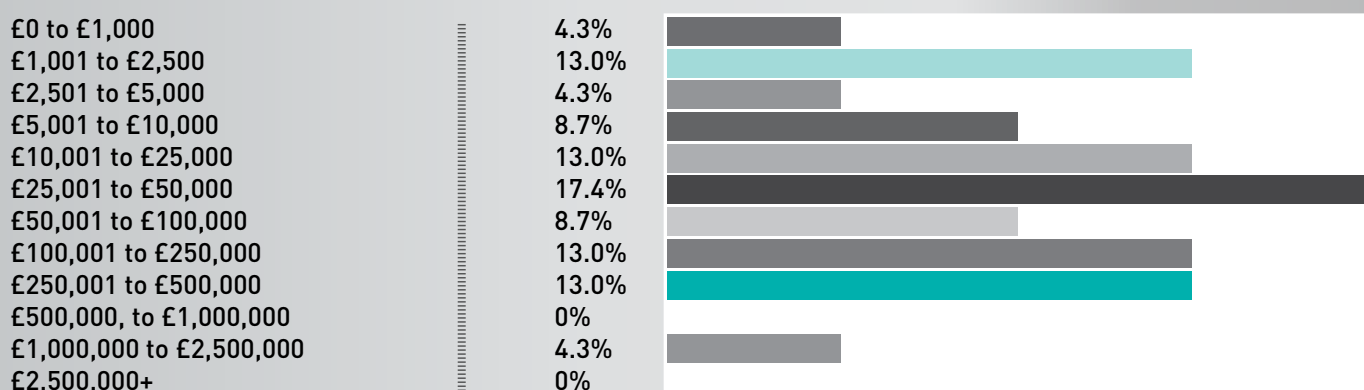
Q7

WHAT WAS THE LAST LEARNING TECH PROJECT/HARDWARE/SOFTWARE YOUR PROVIDER INVESTED IN?

"Microsoft 365" - anon	"Touch screen display boards" - anon
"Virtual welding equipment" - anon	"Upgrade all servers" - anon
"E-learning for rail sector" - anon	"Wireless handheld presentation devices for all tutors" - anon
"Improvements to desktop computer speeds" - anon	"Creation of Learner Management System" - Lori Randall, head of i-Academy, Youth Sports Direct i-Academy
"Learner management" - anon	"Upgrade of servers" - anon
"Adobe CC v 1" - Mell Turford, head of broadcast media, Strode College	"Pics" - Caroline Murphy, operational manager, DH Associates
"Promonitor, Tribal Pan-intelligence" - Sue Rimmer, principal, South Thames College	"Currently upgrading all our PCs to higher specification machines to allow them to run high demand software more effectively; recently invested in major upgrade of our IT network to improve speed and access to the internet" - anon
"College-wide Office 365 implementation" - John Billington, head of services, Hugo Baird College	"Finger print attendance system" - Noha Yousef, head of marketing, The Oxford Partnership - KSA
"Mobile apps" - Jonathan Wells, director, Forskills	"One file, corporate app, website and intranet all in 2015!" - anon
"Clickview" - anon	
"Finance system" - anon	
"Interactive screens instead of smartboards" - Paul Rolfe, head of IT, Barnfield College	
"Virtualization" - anon	

Q8

HOW MUCH DID YOUR PROVIDER INVEST IN ITS MOST USEFUL LEARNING TECH PROJECT?



UFI TRUST — DEVELOPING VOCATIONAL SKILLS THROUGH TECHNOLOGY @UFITRUST

Who are they?

The University for Industry (Ufi) Charitable Trust is a grant funding body that focuses on developing adult vocational skills through the use of digital technology.

It was founded following the sale of Learndirect in 2011, and launched in May 2012. The trust uses the proceeds from the Learndirect sale to fund its charitable work. Last year it had funds of £55m.

What do they fund?

The trust is funds “projects that have the potential to catalyse change in the UK vocational learning landscape”.

It is particularly concerned with scale, and will only invest in projects that have the potential to “make a significant difference to the number of people gaining

skills and the way in which they learn”.

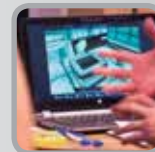
The trust has four areas of focus — digital learning in the workplace, digital learning collaborations, understanding the learning journey and seeding the market.

As well as open funding rounds, through which it funds projects in specific skill areas or industries, or at specific stages of development, the Ufi trust also directly commissions projects in areas of strategic importance.

When is the next funding round?

The next open funding round will be in 2016, and will open for applicants in the spring, according to a spokesperson.

Full details, including criteria and timescales, will be available in the New Year.



VOCATIONAL LEARNING TECH FUND #VOCLEARNTech



Rebecca Garrod-Waters, chief executive Ufi Trust

This £750,000 fund, which launched in April, aimed to support early-stage vocational teaching and learning projects that showed “the potential for using digital technology in novel and imaginative ways”.

The 16 successful projects, announced in October, all received up to £50,000 to help develop their product or service.

The projects included instructional videos for golf greenkeepers, developed by Myerscough College, staff training via Moocs (massive open online courses), developed by Tamarisk Capital Ltd,

a free online video learning library for charities, developed by Giveback UK, and a virtual reality training tool for emergency response commanders, developed by West Midlands Fire Service.

The variety of projects chosen was a “deliberate decision” by the trust.

“We don’t believe there is a single solution for FE and training, and the blending of a range of tools woven into more traditional teaching methods will be key to the successful growth of workforce training,” a spokesperson for the trust said at the time of the launch.

CITIZEN MATHS @CITIZENMATHS

Citizen Maths is a free online maths course that was directly commissioned by the Ufi Trust. Its director, Seb Schmoller, explains what the project is about and what it hopes to achieve.

“There was evidence that self-motivated adults could learn online about technical subjects at degree level, and it seemed worthwhile establishing if the same could be done at level two,” he said.

“So I got a consortium together — led by Calderdale College and including University College London Institute of Education and the awarding body OCR — and bid to the Ufi Trust in 2013 to develop Citizen Maths as a level two learning opportunity for self-motivated adults who wanted to improve their grasp of maths.

“The first section of Citizen Maths went live in September 2014. The next section went live in October, and the final section will go live in spring 2016.

“We’ve had over 6,000 people do the pre-course

self-assessment, and we’ve had well over 2,500 sign up for the course. Our target is for 10,000 users by the end of Ufi Trust-funded phase of the project in 2016.

“Our pre-course self-assessment is not a diagnostic test. It’s more a way of ensuring that learners who are thinking of doing Citizen Maths know what they’re letting themselves in for, and have an appreciation that it’s not a numeracy course — it’s at a higher level than that — and that they need to be sufficiently technically proficient to access the course.

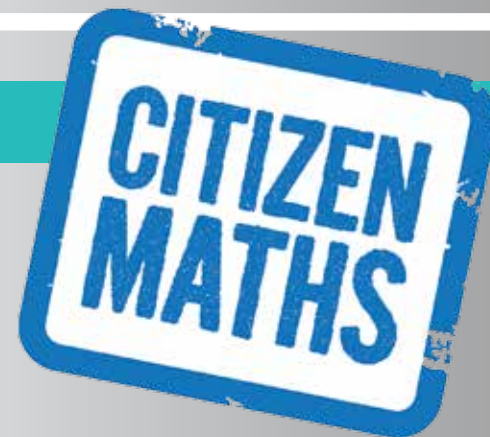
“There are three broad types of content in the actual course. Short video tutorials, practical exercises and quizzes. The best way of thinking about this is that the practical exercises allow the learners to do some experimentation with the mathematical ideas that they’re learning.

“The practical exercises range from using tools like spreadsheets and purpose built, self-standing

apps of various kinds and a modicum of coding in the educational programming language Scratch.

“There’s clearly a proportion of users who take to it strongly and say extremely positive things about what it’s like being a learner using Citizen Maths — but the phase we’re in at the moment is the one that’s going to give us really solid evidence one way or another about the utility of what we’ve created.

“We designed Citizen Maths so that it would be sustainable at the end of the funded period at a very, very low cost per user. The intention is that it will be kept available to people as a free service indefinitely.”



JISC — PROVIDING SUPPORT AND DEVELOPING RESEARCH

@JISC

Ask around FE and skills about technology and the chances are you'll at some point be directed towards Jisc. So, asks Jude Burke, who is 'Jisc' and what does it do?

Jisc (formerly the Joint Information Systems Committee) was founded in 1993 and is a not-for-profit organisation that provides digital services and support to the FE and skills sector as well as to higher education.

More than 80 per cent of its funding comes from higher education and FE funding bodies, including the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills which is giving Jisc £19.5m in the current financial year. This funding covers the core services for FE and skills sector organisations, who do not need to pay a subscription charge.

What does Jisc do?

Jisc's support falls into the three main strands — shared digital infrastructure and services, negotiating sector-wide deals to offer IT cost-savings, and providing advice and practical assistance.

Some of the services Jisc offers for the FE and skills sector include the Janet network and eduroam, which give colleges internet and WiFi access; a shared data centre; and telephony purchasing. Jisc also offers a range of support and advice, including a number of best practice guides and tools, for making the best use of digital technologies.

Jisc is also providing support for colleges going through

the area review process. Paul McKean, head of FE and skills at Jisc, explains more about this support below.

As well as this support, Jisc also carries out research and development work around the use of technologies in education.

Does Jisc provide funding?

Jisc is not a commissioning body, and does not provide funding. Instead, it invests in research and development that delivers "large scale, high impact returns for deployment across the sector as a whole," a spokesperson for Jisc told *FE Week*.

The organisation uses a co-design process to decide what to invest in. It works with its steering group, which is made up of representatives from a range of organisations including the Education and Training Foundation (ETF) and Association of Colleges (AoC), to identify the priority areas, and develop ideas for projects.



Photo credit: Jisc and Matt Lincoln, CC BY NC-ND

What FE and skills sector projects is Jisc currently working on?

- A continuing professional development (CPD) service for FE and skills that will enable every member of the teaching and leadership workforce to become a professional digital practitioner
- A national learning analytics dashboard and student app, that students and staff can use to track students' learning progress and get warnings when students are at risk of dropping out so that interventions can be planned
- A digital capability programme to develop digital leaders in FE, delivered via blended learning, consisting of two face to face events, a series of webinars and online materials and resources
- An app and content store, both for Jisc services and content and that of third party services, that will make educational technology resources and content easy to find and easy to use
- An employability skills match website designed to bridge the education to employment gap, bringing learners and employers together and using Open Badges to endorse soft skills

EXPERTS > slide to unlock



PAUL MCKEAN

Head of FE and skills, Jisc
@MOODLEMCKEAN

TECHNOLOGY CAN UNLOCK OPPORTUNITIES IN THE AREA REVIEWS

For all the talk of the Government's Area reviews in England, the Further Education Learning Technology Action Group (Feltag) agenda can feel somewhat forgotten — but look closer, and you'll still find technology at the heart of sector transformation.

Achieving the balance demanded by area reviews between financial resilience and quality learning and teaching that better feeds into the local economy — is simply not possible if technology is not utilised to optimum effect.

As the not-for-profit digital services organisation, Jisc has long championed the use of technology in FE. So much so, the FE Commissioner Dr David Collins, Department for Education (DfE) and Department for Business, Innovation

and Skills (BIS) invited us to join their conversations about how technology could support the delivery and implementation of the area reviews.

It was quite clear in our discussions that this aspect of the area reviews was something that Jisc could support. So, while we're not involved in actually delivering the area reviews, we are able to offer ourselves as a resource to colleges going through the process.

In order for Jisc to best offer advice and guidance to providers, we recognised that we'd need to get a deep understanding of current technology provision and to benchmark technology expenditure at both the institutional and regional level, which saw us develop a process for engagement.

As each wave gets underway, we'll be contacting the FE and sixth form colleges involved to meet with principals and governors, even before the initial steering group meeting.

After this, we'll provide colleges with free tools that enable them to properly interrogate their operations — an online technology review tool that enables a college to understand its use of technology including back office systems, curriculum delivery tools and platforms; and an online financial review tool to gauge expenditure relating to technology.

The data gathered from both tools will then be presented back to principals and governors about what technology solutions could benefit them. For example, if a college has significant data requirements and holds lots of infrastructure and servers on its estate, data analysis may suggest that they consider using a shared data centre. Or the college may have a state-of-the-art virtual learning environment (VLE), but its staff lack the digital capabilities to make best use of it, for which a recommendation may be made for targeted continuous professional development (CPD).

It's worth reiterating that the decision behind implementing the recommendations is entirely up to college senior leaders and governors. Jisc will give them the intelligence to make informed decisions — and the support to help them embed any technology services and

practices should they choose to do so — but they are the ones who need to take it forward.

As each wave gets underway, we'll be contacting the FE and sixth form colleges involved to meet with principals and governors, even before the initial steering group meeting

So far our engagement with participating colleges has been positive, with those we've connected with being open to the opportunities of technology and keen to embrace its full potential. We'll naturally now the second wave has been announced, be contacting the colleges involved, but I would urge anyone wanting to find out more to contact their Jisc account manager, who'll be able to help them on this journey.

T R I B A L



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LEARNING FUTURES EMBEDDING INNOVATION

The Learning Futures programme was an “early priority investment” for ETF, according to its director of vocational education and training, Jenny Williams.

It was also one that aimed to build on the work of the Further Education Learning Technology Action Group (Feltag) in supporting the use of technology in the education and training sector.

“We know that there are innovative examples of technology in action right across the sector — not only in colleges, but in work-based and community learning too,” said Ms Williams at the time of the programme launch.

“But how should we stimulate, spread and embed that innovation more widely, and in ways that are sustainable?”

At the heart of the programme — led by the Gazelle Foundation and supported by a steering group made up of sector bodies including the Association of Colleges and the Association of Employment and Learning Providers, training providers and technology companies — was a “suite of innovative action research projects, a community of practice and a continuing professional development programme underpinned by industry experts”, said Ms Williams.

The 17 projects, run by colleges and training providers, were chosen by the

The Gazelle Foundation won a £1m contract through the Education and Training Foundation (ETF) learning technologies programme in July last year. With that project, called Learning Futures, having come to an end, *FE Week* looks at what was delivered.

@E_T_FOUNDATION

programme’s steering group in October last year, following an open invitation to bid.

The successful projects addressed five key areas — curriculum design and digital literacy, engaging with employers, English and maths, governance and vocation learning — and involved teaching staff, managers and leaders, and employers.

All the resources produced by the 17 projects, which range from ‘how-to’ guides to complete online courses, are now freely available via the Learning Futures website. The ETF is working with Jisc to “secure the sustainability of the resources long term,” said Ms Williams.

Now that the project has come to an end, “the challenge is to spread this practice more widely within institutions and across the sector as a whole,” she added.

FE Experts



David Russell | 17:34, Jul 11, 2014

Gazelle ‘front-runner’ for ETF’s £1m learning tech contract

The Gazelle Foundation has been awarded a £1m learning technology contract from the Education and Training Foundation (ETF) amid concerns about a lack of evidence surrounding its effectiveness. David Russell acknowledges such scepticism as he defends the award.

“If the sector is to respond to changing demands as digital services experience massive growth and the education market becomes more global, there is more to do to tackle digital learning and the workforce development needs,” said Ms Williams.

Continuing to support digital leadership remains a “priority” for the ETF and it expects next month to announce who will be delivering a programme of continuing professional development for governors, board members and leaders, building on the



Jenny Williams, director of vocational education and training, Education and Training Foundation

work of the Learning Futures programme.

“The hallmarks of our Learning Futures programme were collaboration, sharing, peer review and an outward-facing approach,” said Ms Williams.

“We will continue to apply these principles as we develop our work and look to build partnerships that provide the support the sector needs, maximising the reach and impact of that support.”

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FINTAN DONOHUE

Chief executive of Gazelle
@FINTANDONOHUE

MORE THAN 100 APPLICATIONS IS TESTIMONY TO HIGH LEVEL OF INTEREST IN DIGITAL DEVELOPMENT IN FE

The Learning Futures programme was designed by the Education and Training Foundation to help address the learning technology priorities identified by the Commission on Adult Vocational Teaching and Learning and by the Further Education Learning Technology Action Group (Feltag). Gazelle as the lead contractor for the programme was asked to, firstly, commission a series of action research projects and, secondly, create a community of practice that would enable the spread of emerging learning into local forums, networks and sector-based organisations.

The fact that 118 applications were received in the first round of commissioning is testimony to the high level of interest in digital development across the sector.

The creation of an exceptional steering

group with unprecedented representation from all sections of the FE and training sector together with global players such as Microsoft and Google contributed hugely to the success of the programme.

Collectively the group developed interventions and support to project teams that enabled them to consider their work as part of a national programme. Project teams universally welcomed the CPD, mentoring and expert input that was put in place to ‘raise the bar’ in terms of enhancing vision, facilitating the sharing of practice and strengthening the quality of final resources.

Participation in the programme has had a significant and lasting impact on the organisations and partnerships involved. More than 8,000 learners, governors, leaders, teachers and employers directly engaged with the programme over an

11-month period, contributing to and reviewing the CPD resources being developed.

The design and implementation processes have, the project leads report, established new frameworks, ways of working and quality standards for enhanced digital literacy in their institutions and across their partnerships. For example Gateshead Council, working in partnership with seven other local authorities in the North East have developed a CPD framework, process and quality standard for enhancing the digital literacy of the teaching workforce which they have tried and tested with over 300 adult tutors.

All of their experience, resources and branding are now available to support other hard pressed adult learning organisations who may wish to embark on similar training programmes. Similarly, a consortia of colleges in Sussex led by Plumpton College have developed a strategic planning toolkit that supports governors to understand the financial implications of introducing e-learning.

Collaboration has been at the heart of the programme and the sector, in my opinion, will need to embrace partnership working in order to derive affordable models of innovation for the future.

In addition to the resources produced by project teams Learning Futures has created a free and unique CPD framework

to support the digital literacy of staff. The programme has also presented key lessons to inform future commissioning of technology programmes in the sector. These include the value of action research to underpin programme design and the necessity for a CPD programme to support commissioned projects.

The sector, in my opinion, will need to embrace partnership working in order to derive affordable models of innovation for the future

In conclusion, the Learning Futures programme introduced a very new approach to the commissioning and management of sector based projects. The level of intervention, quality control and targeted mentoring/CPD was exceptional. It had a very positive impact on the quality of the resources generated. Gazelle is pleased to have made its contribution to that success.

LEARNING FUTURES ... THE PROJECTS

We give a brief overview of each of the 17 projects below – further details, as well as all the resources produced through the project, are available through the Learning Futures website: www.lfuturesnews.co.uk



ABINGDON AND WITNEY COLLEGE

'Link into your professional network' focused on helping teachers to build confidence in their own technical and professional networking skills, showing teachers how to use and become proficient with LinkedIn and how to transfer those skills to students.



ASSOCIATION OF COLLEGES IN THE EASTERN REGION

'Digital approaches to English and maths with traineeships and apprenticeships' supported tutors and assessors to use learning technologies to improve the delivery and assessment of maths and English within apprenticeship and traineeship programmes. The team also worked with governors and senior leaders to develop tools to embed learning technology within strategic planning and decision-making.



BLACKBURN COLLEGE

'CultureShift: Embedding technology in staff and student practice' supported a cross-college culture shift to embed learning technology within staff and student practice through the development of: 'DigiPals': staff and students who are recruited to work with their peers as learning technology champions. LearningWheels: Simple graphic devices that model how specific learning technologies, such as Twitter, can enhance learning delivery. See page 14 for more.



FURNESS COLLEGE

'Digital learning assets for Performing Engineering Operations' supported a team of engineering tutors build confidence and develop skills and knowledge in using learning technology. The team worked with BAE Systems to co-develop an online interactive learning package to support the delivery of Performing Engineering Operations.



GATESHEAD COUNCIL

'NETSPass' developed a CPD framework, process and quality standard for enhancing the digital literacy of the teaching workforce by working collaboratively with seven local authorities in the North East.



HARLOW COLLEGE

'Applying the successful Kube model to 16-19 study programmes' supported vocational tutors in business, media and journalism and hairdressing, to build upon an existing effective curriculum model to create innovative, relevant and diverse online content.



HEART OF WORCESTERSHIRE COLLEGE

Through its 'Mastering governance of technology for learning' project, the college created an online resource to help governors understand and address the issues of implementing institution-wide technology for learning.



HULL COLLEGE

The college's 'Improving success by flipping the learning' project explored how four different technologies, across four different curriculum areas, would support the model of flipped learning.

LEWISHAM SOUTHWARK COLLEGE

'Blending In: Motivating, monitoring and tracking students working online' is a staff CPD programme to develop teachers' skills in designing and applying blended learning tools and techniques to their own practice. The project developed an online Moodle course called 'BlendingIn' plus a 'Tools for Blended Learning' course that contains a series of practical 'how to' guides for staff.



NEW COLLEGE SWINDON

The college's 'Developing staff with technology enabled learning project' supported governors, managers, teachers and students to develop their understanding of learning technology by creating three interactive online learning modules and supporting materials.



OLDHAM COLLEGE

The 'All ears?' project developed an online CPD tool that shows how to create video assessment feedback using Screencast-O-Matic.



PETA LIMITED

'Video learning for engineering apprentices' supported engineering instructors to develop their confidence and competence using tablets devices, video editing, mobile learning pedagogies, and tools including Quick Response (QR) codes and augmented reality software within an engineering training workshop.



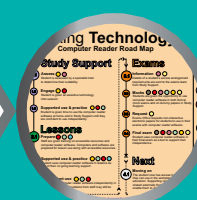
PLUMPTON COLLEGE

The 'Teaching In Learning In Sussex (TILIS) project' developed two toolkits: A strategic planning toolkit for leaders and governors including a self-assessment on the use of e-learning; an in-depth financial calculator; and a risk assessment of action/non-action of inclusion of technology within a strategic plan. A practitioners' 'Getting started' toolkit to develop the understanding, acceptance and use of learning technology by teachers, focusing on the use of VLEs.



RUNSHAW COLLEGE

The college's 'Assistive technology to support curriculum accessibility' focused on developing the skills of staff to use assistive technology software in their everyday practice and in exam settings. The aim was to increase accessibility to the curriculum for students who struggled to read standard print, and to foster greater student independence by removing the need for human readers in examinations. A web and mobile 'app' aggregates all of the videos, case studies and resources used during the project into one simple-to-access package.



WESTMINSTER ADULT EDUCATION SERVICE

DoMedia is a complete training solution for tutors to learn the fundamentals of planning, designing and developing effective media based learning modules that can be incorporated in a range of delivery modalities. Users are taken from the basics to competency in producing successful media-based products that convey information with confidence and clarity.



WORKERS EDUCATIONAL ASSOCIATION

The 'Digital diversity' project created a flexible CPD offer to support tutors to embed learning technology within face-to-face teaching, learning and assessment. The modules can be used as part of initial teacher training programmes or as stand-alone resources for more experienced tutors. The 'FIT governance' project worked with governors and trustees to capture the skills and knowledge needed by strategic decision makers to drive forward the management and use of technologies in learning.



LEARNING AND SKILLS RESEARCH NETWORK — SUPPORTING FE AND SKILLS RESEARCH



Throughout this supplement, practitioners and leaders in learning technology talk about the importance and benefits of sharing knowledge and expertise. One organisation that's helping to do this is the Learning and Skills Research Network (LSRN).

The network, founded in 1997, is a voluntary group of practitioners and academics working to develop and support a culture of research within the FE and skills sector.

While learning technology is not its main focus, a number of its members are involved in carrying out tech-related research.

When and where does LSRN meet?

It holds two themed workshops at Pearson's offices in London every year. The most recent workshop, held in November, was called 'Spreading a culture of research: ideas and impact'.

Regional LSRN coordinators also host occasional events, organised on a regional basis.

Who funds LSRN?

It has no formal funding, according to LSRN founding chair Andrew Morris. Its workshops and other events

are supported by a number of sponsors. These include Pearson, which provides LSRN with accommodation for its events; the National Foundation for Educational Research, which provides administrative support for its meetings; and the Education and Training Foundation, which provides a small grant to cover the costs of events so they are free to attend. The rest of LSRN's work is done on a voluntary basis.

Who can join LSRN?

Anyone can join, and there is no formal membership.

WHAT RESEARCH HAVE LSRN MEMBERS BEEN CARRYING OUT?

HEATHER MCGOURAN

SUPPORT LECTURER AT WIRRAL MET COLLEGE

Mobile phones: can they support dyslexic students in retaining information from lessons?

"I teach dyslexic students at an FE college and I found that they often had problems remembering the maths concepts which they had used during their lessons," she said.

"I wondered if taking short video clips on their mobile phones of worked examples would be a resource they could use for reference to refresh their memory when working away from the lesson.

"The idea was for students to explain the example in their own words and preferred method and capture this on their own mobile phone.

"The research was supported by Learning Skills East Midlands Centre for Excellence in Teacher Training

(EmCETT) practitioner-led action research (PLAR).

"I asked eight students to take part in the research; three didn't want to do so and another two said yes but didn't see me often enough afterwards to complete anything. I had three students complete the research.

"For those who took part, there were a number of benefits. Explaining their learning enabled them to process it at a deeper level. It also tested their understanding of the topic and gave a chance to correct any misconceptions.

"It gave students ownership of the learning, with a record in their pockets and explanations their way in their language. It also gave them an incentive to look at the subject before the lesson and helped them to see their phones as learning aids rather than distractions. They also found it fun.

"There were also a few negatives. Apart from the low take-up, problems included students not having a

phone they could use, forgetting their phones, low battery, poor signal and fumbling the record button.

"There were also a few organisational issues, such as arranging time to do it and any visual resources needed, and creating an atmosphere which gave them the confidence to 'have a go'. If students made mistakes they had to be intercepted and refined to leave accurate recordings.

"In conclusion this certainly did not appeal to all students, but a few found it fun and useful, so the idea could be viewed as another tool in the toolbox for teaching."



Heather McGouran

SARAH CROWSON

CRITICAL LEARNING TUTOR, HEREFORD COLLEGE OF ARTS



Hereford dissertation tea party

Creating a multimodal learning space

"Our multi-modal learning site developed from an action research project we undertook last year with support from emCETT and the Education and Training Foundation (part of their PLAR programme)," she said.

"The original project identified areas of 'least learning' within taught sessions and sought to transform these 'grey spaces' into non-formal learning spaces. Joss, our research consultant, had suggested a multi-modal presentation and supported us in constructing a Wordpress site.

"Student feedback was very positive, and although this was a very small project with many variables, we did find evidence that students working at pass/fail boundaries had developed confidence and performed better in summative assessments than those from control groups. The research culminated in a series of informal discussion groups and 'dissertation tea parties' that proved very popular with students and staff.

"We have now further developed our investigation by creating an online learning space we hope will have the potential to become collaborative and responsive to student need.

"We wanted to create something less formal than the

traditional Moodle — a non-formal learning space in the cloud that supported all students, but particularly those from non-traditional backgrounds who can lack the confidence to contribute to a critical discussion or those who have particular issues that impact on attendance at formal sessions.

"The site has developed organically. It now has pre-learning spaces where tutors post brief tasks, videos or overviews of the session to come. Lecture materials are posted on the site before sessions to support students with their learning during contact time with tutors. Staff write reflections on session outcomes and post images from workshop activities so that those learners who could not attend the session can still benefit from the content.

"The project has yet to be formalised within a research framework, but early feedback and data (the site went 'live' in October and to date has 3,125 views, which averages out as around 31 views per L5 student) suggest that this will be worthwhile.

"Student feedback is very positive, and we feel that the site has supported teaching practice and saved staff time by providing a central point through which they can create and signpost guidance that otherwise might have to be repeated in tutorials."



Q&A: COLIN GALLACHER



'BROADBAND AND SMART DEVICES ENABLE TECHNOLOGY TO BE IN THE LEARNERS' POCKET, IN THEIR HOME, IN THEIR WORKPLACE'

@GALLACHC

Colin Gallacher, specialist FE technology learning adviser, tells *FE Week* reporter Jude Burke about his views on what technology has worked for learners and where the sector could make better use of advances.

What has been the greatest technological development in FE in the last few years?

Broadband — that's assuming providers can access it a major problem for a large sector. And smart devices that do so many things in and out of the classroom.

Broadband and smart devices enables that kind of technology to be in the learners' pocket, in their home, in their workplace, to deliver online teaching and learning.

What has been the greatest technology failure in the last few years?

On reflection, the failure to make Feltag recommendations a requirement rather than a choice.

For example, Feltag called for digital learning resources to be made available 24/7. It'll require advanced use of delivery platforms instead of paying lip service to it and it'll require appropriate staff development. It was a carrot and stick. This is what you're going to do, this is how much you're going to deliver, this will affect your funding — and they took the stick away.

What do you see as the greatest threats and opportunities tech-wise for the sector?

What it comes down to, the biggest barrier for progressing is people. When we run a technical review, for example, we're being told there's no time to learn, it's too expensive, the staff won't like it, and all of these things. Little of which stacks up against the evidence.

The exceptions to that are the fantastic pockets of people within an organisation making their own way with technology and doing the best for their learners.

In terms of the opportunities, frankly they're endless — and getting more so as people prove what can be done, and they copy what works and they share knowledge.

What role do you think technology will play in the area reviews?

As I understand it the area reviews are about financial stability and therefore implementing appropriate technology can be a major contributor to that.

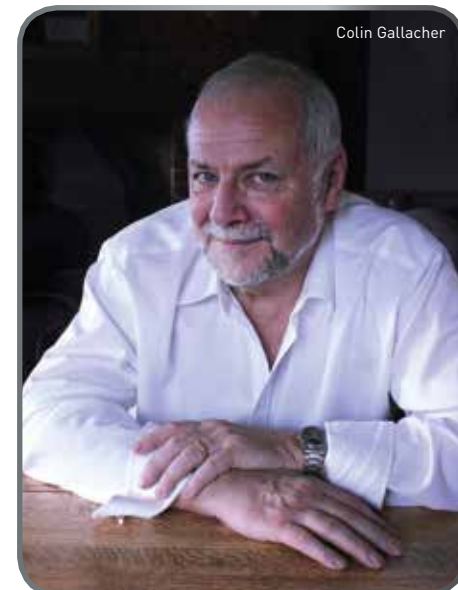
For example, if a college that's being reviewed has already put in place the technology that will raise the quality, reduce the costs and enable the organisation to reach and provide a service for its immediate community and beyond — it ties in with the review, because those are all the things they're looking for. If not, then they have some serious catching up to do.

How can providers keep up to date with the latest technology particularly given budget constraints?

If I may, I would suggest — in fact I demand — that those two things don't automatically go together. They are the standard barrier put up by an organisation.

My point here is that an IT department will be keeping up to date with the infrastructure, they usually do. The information on teaching software is available on tap, easy to be directed to — and it's a damn sight easier to use than Microsoft Office suite ten years ago.

What it costs is their time. It doesn't take long and it makes all the difference.



WHO IS COLIN GALLACHER?

Colin Gallacher is a learning technology adviser with more than a decade of experience providing advice and support to the FE and skills sector in the use of appropriate technology.

He currently heads up a consultancy, incentive-8.info, through which he provides advice, guidance and support in applying new and emerging technologies within post-16 education, with a specialism in work-based learning.

From 2007 to 2015 he was an eLearning adviser for work-based

learning with Jisc, at its North West regional support centre based at Lancaster, providing strategic and practical support and guidance on using technology in post-16 education.

Prior to that, he was a work-based learning coordinator at Mid Cheshire College, from 2002 to 2007.

His specialty is overcoming barriers to implementing technology, and he says he would change his title to troubleshooter "except that too many organisations aren't aware they have any trouble".

EXPERTS > slide to unlock



JAMES CLAY

Chair, Association for Learning Technology (ALT) FE and cross-sector engagement committee

@JAMESCLAY

TAKING A SPECIAL INTEREST IN LEARNING TECHNOLOGY

James Clay outlines how practitioners are joining together to consider how Further Education Learning Technology Action Group (Feltag) might affect them and their learners.

Following the official launch of the Association for Learning Technology Further Education Learning Technology Action Group (Feltag) special interest group at the annual conference in September, we have seen interest from across the FE sector in joining the mailing list, contributing ideas and discussing ways in which FE colleges can move forward in embedding and embracing digital to support, enhance and enrich teaching, learning and assessment. There are now 150 members.

There have been many discussions online as to how FE colleges can address and meet the Feltag agenda. These have included how to measure online activity by learners to ensure that it can be audited and what tools and processes were colleges using to do this. The discussion looked at whether we should be concerned with auditing or outcomes, as well as efficiencies in delivering online learning.

The group mailing list has provided a forum for disseminating information on the many events happening across the UK which members of the group may find useful in informing and challenging the many opinions and views about the importance of digital in changing how FE colleges deliver learning.

The ALT chief executive, Maren Deepwell, was invited on behalf of ALT to give oral evidence to the House of Commons Business, Innovation and Skills Select Committee on the digital economy inquiry on Tuesday, November 10. Our Feltag group was part of the evidence that ALT provided to the committee.

The ALT has also contributed to the former Feltag recommendations to Government including the role of disruptive technologies in education. The key issues identified for businesses such as education or

training providers we can summarise thus: lack of awareness, preparedness and skills to engage with disruptive technologies; lack of support for senior staff to effectively assess, procure and recommend implementation of new technologies and as a consequence over-reliance on commercially procured advice and guidance and thirdly a lack of understanding of the importance of digital technology and related skills for learners and employers. One example of ALT supporting its membership in this

There have been many discussions online as to how FE colleges can address and meet the Feltag agenda. These have included how to measure online activity by learners

area is its Feltag group.

The interest in the Feltag group continues to grow and as membership increases we are expecting to see more discussion, but also more action, events and collaboration to support FE colleges to embrace the digital agenda and enable change in how technology is used for curriculum design, curriculum delivery and assessment.

Click the following link to join the Feltag special interest group <http://bit.ly/10gFLc7> and to get involved.



DEBORAH MILLAR

Head of e-Learning, Blackburn College

@DEBMILLAR24

GOING ROUND IN TECHNOLOGY CIRCLES

Deborah Millar was among a host of FE delegates at a conference last month showcasing digital skills and learning. She explains what she took to conference – and what she took away.

On Monday, November 30, I was invited by the e-Platform for Adult Learning in Europe (EPALE) to present an overview of the #LearningWheel at their 'Digital Skills and Learning Conference' in Manchester.

The theme of the conference was 'Digital Learning: What Works?' – a theme which sought to bring together a variety of examples of good practice from both presenters and delegates from across the FE and adult learning sector.

The conference provided a range of insights into ways in which digital learning is being successfully utilised through creatively showcased presentations, workshops and networking opportunities.

Professor Neil Morris from University of Leeds set the tone, delivering a thought-provoking and powerful keynote to an audience of engrossed FE college practitioners, adult learning organisations, digital leaders, policy makers and learning technologists from the UK and Europe.

My role on the day was showcasing the #LearningWheel, a tool which I designed to make sense of terminology such as Pinterest, Tumblr and Prezi, and suggest ways in which these resources can be used in an educational environment.

Essentially, #LearningWheel is a visual guide to using learning technologies with the intention to drive blended learning, translate and direct those teachers less familiar with the modern tools and related terminology to a range of digital resources used for technology enhanced learning.

More recently, after the Learning Futures project funded by the Education Training Foundation, the #LearningWheel has evolved in to a range of wheels.

The #LearningWheel concept is a blended learning model, which places the learner at the centre of four modes of engagement: learning content, assessment, communication, and collaboration. Further to this are 'Resource' and 'Contextualised' wheels.

Within the 'Resource' collection are suggestions, which revolve around a single resource such as Twitter, QRcodes, Pinterest, which include general use aligned to each mode of engagement. These wheels are ideal for those who wish

to learn more about the potential of a particular resource.

The 'Contextualised' subject wheels are currently the larger collection where each wheel collates 68 suggestions, crowd-sourced from teachers located in various parts of the world who are already experienced in using resources in their subject specialism. Spokes on contextualised wheels typically direct peers to industry related forums, activities, resources.

For example, for hairdressing tutors, these include: follow @CapitalHair on Twitter for latest styles, products; join the discussion #CapitalHair; Tweet photos of

The #LearningWheel concept is a blended learning model, which places the learner at the centre of four modes of engagement

#HairDisasters... What would you do to rectify? Feedback shows that these wheels are typically well received by teachers who are just starting their technology-enhanced learning journey.

The content for each wheel is crowd-sourced via Twitter and GoogleDocs. With each new #LearningWheel that is created the resource becomes richer as the number of contributors increases from farther corners of the globe. I feel it is important to capture this expert knowledge, energy and willingness to share practice to build strong foundations for our future learning landscape.

At Blackburn College, we have a visionary leadership team who are supportive in collaborating and sharing initiatives such as the #LearningWheel. Our intention to develop a more digitally savvy community that will thrive in a digital era is now spreading beyond the college thanks to external support from organisations such as Jisc, LearningFutures, NUS and of course, fabulous events such as the EPALE conference.



PAULA PHILPOTT

ILT learning manager, South Eastern Regional College, Northern Ireland
@EDTECH7

DIGITAL SHIFT TO THE CUTTING EDGE BLADES OF TEACHING AND LEARNING

South Eastern Regional College's Blended Learning and Assessment Designed for Essential Skills (Blades) won the Jisc award for the effective use of technology in FE in the 2015/16 Association of Colleges Beacon Awards. Paula Philpott, who led the project, explains what it achieved

A significant proportion of school-leavers exit post primary with poor standards of literacy and numeracy. The college sought to raise essential skills achievement rates by 10 per cent within five years, which required tutors to have the appropriate pedagogical and technological skills to re-engage these learners; new learning models to support learners both inside and outside the classroom and learners being empowered to exploit technology, to enable them

to become more confident, self-directed learners.

Blades is a holistic approach to re-engage learners through the professional development of tutors, leveraging the advantages of technology to develop a contextualised, innovative curriculum through a range of delivery models.

Embedding technology-enhanced learning (Tel) necessitated tailoring the continuous professional development (CPD) of existing staff, developing digital literacy and pedagogical skills to address the needs of the learners. The college developed and piloted the ILT pedagogy mentoring programme (ILTPMP), a peer mentoring initiative tailored to the needs of ES tutors and their learners. ILTPMP involves peer mentors working alongside the mentee, in their class, using

demonstration lessons, team teaching and peer observation to inspire change. Feedback is sought from the students following each classroom session and this is used to determine the training, technology and classroom approaches used going forward.

Each tutor has their own Moodle site. In 2014/15, there were 4.1m Moodle hits, 26 per cent of which were accessed from outside the college campuses

As part of Blades, tutors designed and developed a range of contextualised resources and Tel approaches to engage their learners and reinforce learning both inside and outside of the classroom. A range of initiatives to improve the blended learning experience include; piloting and roll out of a cloud based

e-portfolio (OneDrive), gamification and e-assessment.

The Literacy team developed a blended approach to content delivery using Office Mix. Each tutor has their own Moodle site. In 2014/15, there were 4.1m Moodle hits, 26 per cent of which were accessed from outside the college campuses.

Effective approaches to teaching and learning are shared through Moodle Mondays and Webinar Wednesdays, where tutors highlight good practice and innovations in Tel from their own practice.

Alongside measurable gains such as improved achievement, the use of digital technology in the classroom has made step changes in learners' skills. Many ES learners have never used technology in an educational context and these approaches have exposed them to opportunities to learn autonomously at a time and place of their choice, engage actively, self-assess, contextualise their learning and develop their digital literacy.

A 13 per cent improvement in ES achievement rates has been obtained over the last five years. This has enabled learners to explore employment progression opportunities or further study. Following the success of Blades, the College has developed an online GCSE English and is developing an online GCSE maths course.

UPSKILLING STAFF THROUGH BLENDED LEARNING ESSENTIALS @THINKSITTHROUGH

A major challenge for providers wanting to make better use of technology is ensuring their teaching staff have the right skills. The Blended Learning Essentials (BLE) course, commissioned by the Ufi Trust and launched in November, aims to tackle this issue. *FE Week* finds out more.

"One of the great difficulties for the teaching practitioner is that they all are expected somehow to embrace new technologies while also doing the day job – and it's a very hard day job already," said Diana Laurillard, professor of learning with digital technology at University College London (UCL) and co-director of the BLE course.

"And on top of that you've got to invent how you use these new technologies, which aren't only tricky and numerous and difficult to understand, but keep changing."

The idea behind the course, Ms Laurillard said, was to give practitioners the opportunity to improve their knowledge and confidence in using the different technologies available to them, and to learn from the experiences of other practitioners.

The course, which launched in November, is delivered entirely online via the Futurelearn platform.

It's completely free and is open to practitioners from around the world as well as the UK.

So far 15,000 people have signed up for the course, and over 50 per cent of them have actively engaged with the course, with over 16,000 comments posted, said Ms Laurillard.

BLE is delivered in two parts. The first, called Getting Started, is intended to be an introduction to the concept of blended learning and some of the tools available to practitioners. It's split into five weeks, although participants can complete the activities at their own pace.

The second part, which starts in 2016, will focus on embedding the learning from part one into teaching practice.

Each part of the course is delivered via a mix of video tutorials, articles, quizzes, exercises and discussion.

In this way, participants get to try out some of the technology that they can then use in their own teaching, said Ms Laurillard.

"We might show a one minute video of how you might use this piece of technology, and then there'll be an activity where we ask participants to post to a padlet wall," she said.

"So as one of the tasks the participants will be doing the kind of things they

could be doing with their own learners, and that's a way of sharing."

The opportunity to share experiences and learn from other participants is another benefit of the course, Ms Laurillard said.

"You get contributions from people who've tried things and experienced things, so people who are complete novices can see the range of activity there is, can learn from other people's lessons learned. So it's a very collective learning process."

Participants are supported by other practitioners who are experienced in using online or blended learning, acting as digital champions.

One of these is Gail Hall, programme area leader for science and the humanities, Bradford College.

"I think people have been engaging extremely well with the course," she said.

"It's been very, very positive and there's been a lot of good networking that's come out of it and there's been a lot of good advice."

The first part of BLE will run again from March 2016, although all the materials from the first run of course will remain live for participants to use at any time.



Diana Laurillard

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