## KIRKLEES COLLEGE

# Case Study

# Contents

# Summary

Kirklees College is a large general Further Education college in Yorkshire, with main sites in Huddersfield and Dewsbury, serving over 20,000 students each year. It employs 800 FTE staff, amounting to a headcount of around 1,000.

With a new Principal in post and a proactive Governing body, Kirklees College made what Ofsted called a "remarkable transformation" from an overall Grade 4 inspection rating in May 2011, to a Grade 2 'Good' college with a number of outstanding features including college leadership and management in November 2012. Planning began for a cross-college 10% online learning target as Kirklees moved into a new main campus in Huddersfield. Building upon the Heart of Worcestershire model and adapting it to meet their own needs, the college is successfully implementing its blended learning programme as it aims for Grade 1 status.

# The Drivers for Change

In pursuit of continuing improvement the College produced a Business Plan in July 2013. This identified two significant drivers for a shift to an institution-wide reliance upon technology for delivery of a proportion of the curriculum:

a. The need to create independent learners
*"We are failing students if we continue to spoon feed them. They get to university or work without the skills they need to succeed"* Peter McCann, Principal

*"It's preparing them for either going into further education or into employment where they'll be expected to be independent learners or independent workers."* Jane Bracewell, Vice Chair of Corporation

b. Cutting operating cost

**"We *feel that the benefits of blended learning could be summed up by the 'iceberg' effect. The bit above the water equates to the financial benefits whereas the bit below the water is the impact and confidence to students from the independent learning it generates.*** Alan Riley, Director of MIS, IT and Risk

*"...we were looking for ways to continue delivering good quality learning but also to be looking to use our resources in the best way possible. Resources are not infinite and we needed to make sure that we had the best equipment and were able to give the students a good opportunity."* Jane Bracewell

**Contextual Issues**

These drivers were underpinned by a number of contextual issues, most notably:

A drive for further improvement to outstanding status, on the back of what had been achieved in so short a space of time and excellent student results – with 96% pass rates and 93% completion rates.
The move into a newly built main centre at the Waterfront Quarter, Huddersfield in September 2013 which had been designed and resourced to fully support the use of technology for learning
The need to upskill teaching staff. An audit of staff skills carried out in 2012 showed that most staff simply used the Moodle learning environment (VLE) for content storage.
"*If we revisited that survey today we would find a vastly improved set of resources being used in significantly more creative ways.*"

# From Vision to Plan

Introduction of the blended learning programme was originally planned for September 2013. It was decided that the move into the new Waterfront Quarter premises in Huddersfield should be accomplished and running smoothly before any further upheaval, so it was delayed until September 2014/15.

Staff were made aware of the impending changes after publication of the Business Case for Blended Learning in September 2013. A copy of this Business Case can be found in the Additional Resource section.

The implementation was guided and monitored through a formal project management process. The planning and development activities followed a common schedule across all curriculum Departments, beginning on 1st April 2014 and concluding in the second week of August, in good time for the start of the Academic Year in September. A copy of the Blended Learning project plan can be found in the Additional Resource section.

**Points to ponder**

**How prepared is your college for a shift to increased reliance upon technology for learning?**

**You may find it helpful in answering this to look at the self-assessment tools developed specifically for governors by projects in the Learning Futures programme delivered by the following lead organisations:**

**1. Association of Colleges in the Eastern Region (ACER)**

**2. FE Sussex**

**These can be found on the Excellence Gateway website:**

**http://www.excellencegateway.org.uk/**

**A more in-depth institutional self-assessment tool, *The Learning Technologies Self-Assessment Tool,* was commissioned by the Education and Training Foundation for leaders and managers.**

**A documented version of the questions in this online tool can be found here:**

**http://rcultd.co.uk/survey/coralesce/Survey%20Questionnaire.pdf**

**The Edtech Assess website http://www.edtech-assess.com/ will take you to:**

**- The latest online version of the tool**

**- A separate Digital Literacy self-assessment tool for individuals to identify skill levels and training needs**

**- Details of benchmarking and other services**

# Implementation

**What they did**

**The learning and teaching model**
The concept of a study programme with a certain number of hours provided a core and a guide.

**The challenge**
SFA funding regulations require that all hours need to be part of the college's working pattern and attendance evidenced for a mandated number of hours, e.g a minimum of 540 hours for full time courses.

**The solution**
A blended learning approach which mixes face to face (classroom) sessions with learning delivered online by technology. Kirklees College took the view that it was not necessary to conduct the online component in college hours or on college premises. However, to ensure they were not discriminating against students who could not afford their own technology they timetabled groups across 6 Learning Centres and factored in extra capacity including 140 PC's, power, data and additional furniture and recruited one extra IT facilitator. Learning Centre opening hours were also extended. This gave flexibility to learners who could either study in their own time or have the guarantee of a PC to work on.

The blend consists of:
- Scheduled classroom sessions with a subject specialist teacher
- structured online learning activities that can be completed by learners at any time, using SOLA packs developed by Kirklees teaching staff.

Kirklees timetable the Learning Centres, but saw demand reduce over the year. The college did not take registers of these sessions; instead it opted to provide evidence that guided learning hours met the Skills Funding Agency requirement by using e-badges (see below).

**Delivery model for online learning**

After considering the Heart of Worcestershire College model and experience, Senior Managers decided upon:

 1 hour per week of online learning for a Level 2 learner
1.5 hours per week of online learning for a Level 3 learner

Exclusions:
Level 1 learners were left out in the first instance. The college began a controlled pilot with Level 1 learners from January 2015 and will base future policy on the observed outcomes. Learners in the second year of programmes who had no experience of blended learning in their first year were also excluded, following the Heart of Worcestershire's experience.

To ensure the quality of outcomes and to further the drive for outstanding practice, the college judged that each online learning course should have a Coordinator:
-  A fully qualified teacher with remission of teaching hours
-  With responsibility for quality assurance: monitoring, tracking and reporting progress.

The total number of hours remitted in 2014/15 amounted to 3,200 hours

*Organisation and staffing*
The main organisational oversight and direction was provided by a Blended Learning Steering Group consisting of:
Head of Quality & Teacher Training
Director of IT
Head of Learning Resource Centres
Head of HR and CPD
2 x tutors
1 x Advanced Teaching and Learning Coach

The Steering Group reports to the Senior Leadership Team. It held weekly meetings in the first instance which then reduced to fortnightly when it was deemed appropriate.

**Preparing Staff**

Teachers had a full academic year's notice of the introduction of blended learning when early implementation was put back to allow the organisation to deal with the move to a new build main site. This allowed detailed planning and preparation supported by staff training to be in place by April 2013.

An audit of VLE use in the planning process revealed a need to raise levels of skills and understanding in order to deliver online learning of the highest quality. Many staff were concerned about their own personal skills and were motivated by the need to raise their game.

Blended learning is built into the course planning process and embedded in a written Scheme of Work integral to the course. This identifies the subject area and hence the opportunities for online activity.  You can see a sample Scheme of Work in the Additional Resources section.

**Staff roles, training and skills development**

Kirklees does not have a large ILT team and so did not introduce an equivalent of the Heart of Worcestershire Blended Learning Advisor role whose purpose is to create content or find and tailor it.

In line with its stated goal of upskilling the organisation, the college has empowered subject specialist staff to create their own content and has used its ILT team to support them: delivering training in content creation and good practice. The existing model of ILT training programmes had bronze/silver/gold structure for staff. This gave opportunities for a relatively small number of enthusiasts to develop higher level skills, but the majority of staff have not been taken beyond the basic levels.

From April 2014 preparation for the imminent introduction of college-wide blended learning was underpinned by:
- Bookable drop-in sessions for individuals throughout the day
- agreed sessions with curriculum groups by the ILT team
The college's existing group of Advanced Teaching and Learning Coaches supported colleagues with specialist subject issues.

Kirklees supplemented staff-created resources with external content where appropriate, including SOLA packs bought from the Heart of Worcestershire College.

**Preparing Learners**

Learner induction in the first instance relied upon subject tutors to introduce learners to the SOLA packs and process. Some did, but others left it to the Learning Centre staff. This lack of clarity was quickly identified as a weakness within the process and remedial action was taken to improve the learners' understanding of:
- The skills, actions and behaviours required for success
- The resources available to them.
Curriculum Heads have subsequently created a common video to inform learners about the study programme, what is expected of them and where to go for support.

**Evidencing online activity: the use of e-badges**

Kirklees College uses e-badges to evidence Guided Learning Hours by demonstrating that the activity has been undertaken and work has been completed.

**What is an e-badge?**
An e-badge is a permanent marker, designed to look like a badge, which can be attached to a learner's permanent online record when they successfully complete an assessment task (a quiz, an exercise etc).
You can find a good explanation on the Mozilla open badges website at http://openbadges.org/about/ .  You can see examples of the e-badges used by Kirklees College here:

**Where do they come from?**

E-badge capability is already built into Moodle.  It allows a teacher to:
 - Create a badge to acknowledge successful completion of a task
 -  Set the criteria to be met to achieve it
 -  Award the badge and attach it to the learner's permanent record.

**Why are e-badges important in the Kirklees Model?**

The Moodle VLE records when individual learners have logged onto the system and for how long they remain online, but it does not record actual work. This is achieved by awarding e-badges.
The badges are designed by subject specialist staff so that they can only be awarded if:
- A learner has worked through the assigned learning activity
- The assessment outcome demonstrates that effective learning has taken place

Award of the badges therefore ensures that:
- Guided learning hours for the requisite period can reasonably be judged to have taken place
- The intended learning outcomes have been accomplished

**How well does it work**

Kirklees' experience has shown that learners like the concept and they are motivated by the badges.  Learners can port the badges out of Moodle into a backpack (a personal account) on an internet-based system (Mozilla) which they can retain when they move on or at job interviews as a permanent record of achievement. You can see an example of a learner's Moodle page showing e-badges that have been awarded here:

Points to ponder

What information would you like to see as a Governor about each of the following groups:
- learners
- teaching staff
- employers
- other stakeholders

a. during implementation college-wide increase in the use of technology for learning

b. after implementation

# Cost Model

**What it costs**

These calculations are based upon the **Delivery model for online learning**

**Cost of classroom learning**
Treated as the hourly rate for a basic grade lecturer and a 36 week year.

**Calculating the cost of online learning**

- Each **Level 2** course has an online component of 1 hour per week x 36 weeks = 36 hours online
- Each **Level 3** course has an online component of approximately 1.5 hours per week x 36 weeks, amounting to 45 hours online

Each course delivered online currently has a fully qualified teacher acting as a Coordinator with responsibility for quality assurance. These roles have remission from teaching duties as follows:

- Each **Level 2** course has a Coordinator with remission from 18 hours of teaching time,
- Each **Level 3** course has a Coordinator with remission from 22 hours of teaching time.

The total remission across the college has amounted to 3,200 hours in the first year of operation, which is around 5 full time equivalent staff. This will be reviewed for 2015/16.

Some of the net savings accruing from the reduction in direct teaching, offset by the remission cost, goes to fund the blended learning structure. **Kirklees has not increased its staff complement over and above the levels that existed previously, either teaching, support or technical staffing. It has instead refocused their effort to support the blended model.**

**Alternative cost models**

1. The Heart of Worcestershire College model uses a different approach to calculating the cost

2. The FE Sussex Learning Futures project, which can be found on the Excellence Gateway website http://www.excellencegateway.org.uk/ created a spreadsheet to identify the reduction in direct costs arising from different levels of replacement of face to face teaching with online learning.

**Points to ponder**
**What are your expectations or concerns about the impact on costs? Where will costs be incurred, where will savings come from, and over what timescale?**

# Quality

A recognised risk/challenge was to ensure that online learning is:
-  A high quality experience for learners: enjoyable, purposeful, and productive
-  With outcomes at least as good as were achieved before the Blended Learning programme. The college's successful re-inspection outcome, its aspiration for outstanding performance and its record levels of student outcomes have created an expectation that the rate of improvement should continue – outcomes should be better.

**Governors were reassured by:**

**1. Existing college practice:**
- A turn around in inspection grading from Inadequate to Good with outstanding features in just 18 months under the new Principal, an achievement praised by Ofsted in its re-inspection report.
- In the national top 10 for learner success rates, with a commitment to continue to deliver these levels of success

**2. Successful practice elsewhere**
The college was advised by and worked closely with the Heart of Worcestershire college team, who had three years of experience and a demonstrably successful programme in terms both of quality and cost savings. Kirklees bought in both consultancy services and the SOLA packs from Worcestershire.

**3. The nature of the delivery model for online learning**
Commitment to learners and student-centeredness was built into the delivery model, providing practical reassurance that this was not a hollow cost-cutting exercise.
- Teacher time is budgeted to quality assure online learning
- Online activity is monitored and evidenced by an innovative e-badging approach

## 4. Preparation of staff and learners

- Staff were given a full year notice of change and began training in April for a September start
- Staff were trained, prepared and resourced for the new skills required, including planning and managing online learning
- Staff are supported in creating and finding content and in good practice
- Learners are supported by teaching staff and/or Learning Centre staff. This was identified as an area of weakness in the early roll out, with remedial support put in place where monitoring identified a need.

## 5. Monitoring, reporting and feedback

Governors and leaders are committed to keeping up the quality process that took the college from Ofsted inadequate to good in 18 months and ensuring it encompasses both face to face and online work.

All online activity is delivered through the Moodle VLE by learners who are identified by their log in. This allows monitoring and reporting at the level of:
- The individual learner
- Course
- Department
- College as a whole

Curriculum Heads have a performance monitoring dashboard to track progress. This information also feeds back to the Steering Group and to senior managers. In the early stages this provided evidence of where it was working and where additional support was required. There was a total commitment from the leadership team to success, which reassured managers and staff of the importance of the programme.

## 6. Technical and learning infrastructure

- Appropriate levels of technical and CPD support were in place
- A well established IT and learning infrastructure and staff with experience, including a county/regional technology advisor.
- Kirklees is a longstanding user of the Moodle learning system, with a significant body of content and course materials already in place
- brand new IT and information systems infrastructure were designed into the new build premises, including 109 new interactive whiteboards.

*"Because we were moving into a new building I knew that we were thinking hard about the type of equipment we were going to be putting into the building and therefore I think we Governors were reassured by that."*

## Outcomes

This is the first year of operation of the Kirklees programme, so qualification successes are not available. The monitoring and assessment of learner performance which was carried out points to outcomes at least as good as in previous years.  Careful integration of class and online activities means that learners will complete  the SOLA packs and then any issues arising are dealt with in class, providing both a safety net and an opportunity to enhance and extend learning.

There is not universal acceptance or enthusiasm, but overall, learners like the opportunity to undertake online learning and value the skills and independence they acquire. The latest available student survey (as at June 2015) showed:

71% of learners saw the value of the programme
55% enjoyed it

The adoption of e-badging has not yet been separately tested, but anecdotal evidence coupled with learner performance suggests that it is increasingly popular and a powerful motivator.

## Next steps

Managers are aware of the need to take the long view**:**
*"Culture change takes a long time - years, not months "*
*"Change happens 'warts and all."*

The practical outcome of this has been a decision that Year 2 will consolidate quality. The year will be spent *"getting it right"* rather than looking for further reductions in taught hours. Staff and learner experience of Year 1 taken together with the unremitting commitment of

senior leaders to the quality of the blended learning programme has eased initial concern amongst staff that blended learning is *"just cutting costs and a prelude to redundancies"*.

*"**Let's consolidate, make sure we've got Level Two and Level Three learners using the packs appropriately and that they do fit in with the overall curriculum. And that we are making use of staff who have understood and worked hard to make the packs something which students want to complete and succeed in."***
Jane Bracewell, Vice Chair of Governors

**Points to ponder**
**How will the quality of learning be maintained and improved if your college implements  increasing use of technology to deliver learning programmes...**
- **In terms of learning outcomes**
- **In terms of learner experience**

# IT and Learning Infrastructure

The new Waterfront Quarter site in Huddersfield and a number of further new centres including an Engineering building, a brand new manufacturing centre which is soon to be opened have all had IT provision built into their design from the outset.

**IT infrastructure**

Across all centres, including the merged Dewsbury College site, there are approximately 3,000 devices available to students for IT based learning.  This includes purchase of an additional 140 PC's at a cost of £50,000 specifically to support the Blended Learning programme. The college has also invested in around 150 tablets in the last 12 months to assist learners to make use of new content that is available on the internet outside the classroom environment.

**Renewal and the replacement cycle**

*The rate of change in IT still continues at pace.  Not only are mobile devices becoming more and more accessible to our student population giving them 24x7 access to learning resources, the complexity of the software and content is also driving demand for more powerful processing capabilities.*

***The landscape for learning is rapidly changing and whilst we would not expect to replace the PC's before the end of 6 years we anticipate that a significant uptake in demand will come from the 'mobile' community either through a Bring your Own Device (BYOD) demand or through access from home.*** *Currently we are providing 10% of learning through this model but if this increases, which there are plans to, then we anticipate an upgrade on the back-end servers to occur probably on a annual basis.*

**What implications has Blended Learning had for your broadband**?

*Difficult to quantify, I don't doubt that it has had some impact, we see a greater amount of traffic 'out of hours' including a 5 fold increase in access to the VLE, however, the advent of campus wide wireless infrastructure (wifi) has probably clouded the figures as we now regularly have around 1,500 devices connected to the wifi each day.*

The current 100 Mb internet connection will be upgraded to 1Gb for September 2015. The cost of this is around £10,000 which is partly funded by JISC as the primary link.

## Bring your Own Device (BYOD)

*We have the capacity to cope with additional devices and welcome the use of BYOD, which releases resources for students who do not have the facility, but we know we cannot rely upon it as a substitute for our own infrastructure.*

## Learning infrastructure

### In the classroom

The use of technology in the classroom is a key feature of the Blended Learning programme and of the upskilling of staff.   Most classrooms have a smartboard. 109 new Promethean whiteboards with the company's ActivInspire software were bought and installed in during the Summer 2014.

### Virtual Learning Environment (VLE)

The core platform for the SOLA Blended Learning programme is a VLE. Kirklees uses Moodle. The college is a member of the longstanding Yorkshire and Humber Moodle user group. The college has invested in around 150 tablets in the last 12 months to assist learners to make use of new content available on the internet outside the classroom environment. **"*What we now need is to invest in software to develop better, more engaging content for students.*"**

### Technical staffing

The college employs 26 IT staff broken down as follows:

1 IT manager

4 network & telephony staff

3 server and storage staff

7 client support staff

5 developers & systems integrators

3 VLE support staff

1 Web developer

2 process improvement staff

Despite the significant increases both in physical infrastructure and the amount of use made of it, the number of technical staff has **not** had to increase to cope with the Blended Learning programme.
***"In real terms the number of technical staff has actually reduced by 2"***

There may be a need to rethink the contribution of technical staff, however.

*"Curriculum staff response to having to develop Blended Learning content has been mixed.  We have found that there is probably a business case to increase technical specialists to develop the content especially in areas where IT competency is medium to low."*

Has the role of technical staff and their relationship with learning and teaching in the college changed as a result of Blended Learning?

*" In terms of ILT staff, no.  The ILT team have always worked closely with teaching staff, providing support and advice.  General IT Staff do have a greater understanding of how important systems such as the VLE are now."*

# Governor View

## A  Governor perspective

Governors have no anxiety about the progress of the Blended Learning programme and are content that they have been adequately consulted, but there were questions about their level of understanding, what they might reasonably be expected to address and how they should handle it.

## Awareness of the Blended Learning programme

Governors were aware of the programme and satisfied that it was being effectively managed but sketchy about some of the details:

"*I know that there is a 10% target for online learning and had heard of SOLA, but I am not sure I understand what Blended Learning actually is. I have not seen a SOLA pack and don't know how it is developed or used by learners. I would like to know more.*"

"*At the first Learner Voice forum this year, it was obvious that learners were not all fully prepared. The Student Governor said that her student group asked "What's a SOLA pack?"  (This is not as damning as it might sound given that no second year students and no Level 1 students were involved in the programme).*"

"*Governors want to know that it is successful for learners. All of us need to understand the way the College is developing.*"

## The role of Governors

"*We must identify and understand what is important. If it is big money then governors need to know*"

"*If we are looking at new ways, then we must understand not the details, but the implications, consequences, risks of doing and of not doing.*"

The key issues raised were of strategy:

"*Were we doing the right thing to deliver it **across** the college.  We've got very good quality learning and we wanted to continue that and I*"

*wanted to be sure that everyone, all staff and students, had had the right amount of time to prepare."*


*Governors need to know about:*
*- How targets are set and if there are enough resources to meet them*
*- How the blended learning programme fits with the whole mission*
*- How it fits within the overall learning programme and its impact on student experience*
*- Meeting our responsibility to other stakeholders, including employers who look to the college to use industry standard equipment and develop 21st Century skills.*

## How does the Corporation handle technology?

Kirklees Governors do not have a separate technology specialist/ champion.  The Blended Learning programme therefore falls under the remit of the Quality, Performance and Standards Committee.
 *"The existing responsibilities account for it perfectly adequately. We are already getting updates on the progress of rolling out blended learning, its costs and its impact on students' success.  The committee's existing remit is sufficiently broad to meet priorities as they arise. There is no need for further specific focus."*

The Clerk to the Governors further observed that:
*"Not all Boards will have someone with the skills to be a technology champion."*

Kirklees College has run a series of walkthroughs for governors called Seeing is Believing. These events have yet to be extended to Blended Learning. There is also a governor link to strategic objectives, but none as yet specifically for this topic.

**Points to ponder**

**What do you as a Governor feel about the proposed increase in reliance on technology for learning in your institution:**

- **What excites you?**
- **What worries you?**
- **What risks do you see?**

**What do you think are the most important actions for you as a governance body to help to ensure the early and continuing success of the programme?**

**Points to ponder**

**What are the key lessons or messages for you from the experience of Kirklees College?**

# Resources

The following Additional Resources link to this case study and are available in the Additional Resources section:

**What they say: short video interviews**

Jane Bracewell, Vice Chair of Corporation
Peter McCann, Principal and Chief Executive
Elona Thomas, Curriculum Team Leader, Hair and Beauty

**Selected Documents**
Preparing for implementation
- Business Plan
- Blended Learning project plan
- Staff Development programme for Blended Learning

Scheme of Work

**Picture resources**
E-badge images x 5
Sample page with 5 badges

**E-badges**
Mozilla Open Badges site (http://openbadges.org/about/ )

**Points to ponder**

**All of the Points to ponder have been gathered together in the Additional Resources section with some additional guidance, links and tools.**