Southern
Regional
College

**Blended model
to deliver HLA
in Applied
Industrial Science
with Norbrook
Laboratories**

Case Study of Innovative
Practices for Teaching
and Assessment in NI FE

Blended model to deliver HLA in Applied Industrial Science with Norbrook Laboratories

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Background

This project complies with the Department for Employment and Learning (DEL) apprenticeship strategy Securing our Success. This strategy aims to ensure that Northern Ireland's economy has a highly skilled workforce to compete and grow globally. DEL aims to increase the number of those in employment with qualifications at levels 4–8 from 38 % in 2008 to 52 % in 2020. To meet this target, workplace learners cannot be overlooked. Higher level apprenticeships (HLA) underpinned by foundation degrees, provide a viable opportunity for workplace learners to engage in accredited courses. Using a blended learning delivery model provides flexibility and accessibility to work-based students. They benefit from using digital technologies for collaboration, delivery of content, assessment and teaching support.

The project

Project 10 aims to support delivery of higher education teaching provision in further education by offering HLAs through a blended learning and teaching model. It is expected that by using digital technologies a blended learning model can be adopted. Learners are expected to complete about 25 hours of study each week and using the online environment is crucial to achieving this. It provides a flexible and accessible learning environment that adds to the one day of face-to-face study release apprenticeships provide for work-based learners.

Southern Regional College (SRC), the project lead, joined with Ulster University (UU) to pilot an HLA in Applied Industrial Science funded by DEL. The project uses blended learning and started in January 2015 with 13 students. Ulster University provided continuing professional development for the teaching staff on using digital technologies to enhance the student learning experience. SRC's learning technology team helped the teaching staff prepare an appropriate Moodle virtual learning environment (VLE) to support learners.

Before the course started in January 2015 the SRC teaching team received significant training, including:

• UU delivered Viewpoints curriculum design workshops;

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- software and hardware training to enable the development of e-learning materials;
- an e-moderating workshop and a three week bespoke e-tutor (UU) online training course; and
- a one day practical Viewpoints assessment and feedback workshop on effective assessment and feedback design and using Turnitin for submitting and marking assignments.

Way forward

There are a number of actions to be taken in order to continue to develop this blended learning programme. The actions needed to support tutors are:

- to provide multimedia training materials for staff on using online assessment and feedback;
- to undertake accredited continuing professional development (CPD) modules which are part of the PG Certificate in Digital Learning;
- to deliver the pilot of a 'Curriculum Design in a Digital Society' module (level 7). This has 15 university credit points linked to UK Professional Standards Framework (UKPSF); and
- to deliver the remaining modules in the level 7 to full certificate level.

There are a number of actions needed to support students on this programme. These are:

- to design, distribute and report on a digital learning skills analysis;
- to provide online student training resources on submitting online assessment and collecting feedback;
- to advise and support on academic induction for blended learning students; and
- to advise and support on course director area for blended learning students.

Evaluation

The blended delivery of the HLA has been running successfully since January 2015 and a template can now be sent to the five other colleges in the sector to help them with their own HLA programmes. The structure of the model means it can be transferred to any VLE platform.

An interim evaluation was conducted at the end of June 2015 and a formal post-project evaluation will be conducted thereafter. This evaluation will involve all stakeholders in the project.

Accreditation