FINAL REPORT: AOC/SFA E-LEARNING ACADEMY PROJECT 2013-2014

Christina Conroy OBE
Project Director
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1. **PROJECT SYNOPSIS**

**PROJECT FUNDERS**
AoC/SFA (Association of Colleges/Skills Funding Agency) Collaboration and Shared Services Curriculum Development Fund

**PROJECT VALUE**
£535,300

**PROJECT OBJECTIVES**
- Design a new qualification framework at Level 3 and Level 4 for E-Learning Designers based on research in industry and international best practice
- Co-create blended learning content that can be shared across the sector
- Develop a number of e-learning academies within the sector to raise capability and e-learning design capacity in industry and the sector

**PROJECT OUTPUTS**
- A new qualification framework for E-Learning Designers at Level 3 and Level 4 for both adults and young people based on best practice research in North America and with the UK e-learning industry
- An approved apprenticeship framework in Digital Learning design
- Enhanced funding for the Apprenticeship with the SFA
- Shared blended learning content and resources to support the delivery of the qualification
- Recruitment of apprentices and adults to the programme in 8 Pilot Colleges within the Design eLearn Network in 2014/15
- Dissemination to the wider sector for engagement in this initiative [www.designelearn.com](http://www.designelearn.com) as a self-funded good practice network

**BRAND**
The shared brand for this project is [www.designelearn.com](http://www.designelearn.com)

**TIMESCALES**
The timescale for the Project was August 2013 - September 2014. The first fledgling e-Learning Designers started training from September 2014.

**LEAD COLLEGE**
Worcester College of Technology (now Heart of Worcestershire College)

**PARTNERS**
Worcester College of Technology, Sparsholt College in Hampshire, Highbury College (Portsmouth), South Essex College, Norwich City College, North Hertfordshire College, The Grimsby Institute, Furness College, Ascentis (Awarding Body), the Creative and Cultural Skills Sector Council, Coralesce Ltd (Curriculum Development & Project Management Agency) and Logicspot (Web Development Agency).

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2. INTRODUCTION

This is the Final Report of the E-Learning Academy Project. The project was funded under the AoC/SFA Collaboration and Shared Services Curriculum Development Grant that ran from July 2013 - September 2014. This report provides an overview of the project, the methodology and a review of the outcomes. It has been compiled by Christina Conroy OBE, Project Director, Coralesce Ltd on behalf of the lead College, Heart of Worcestershire College.

Project Aims

The aim of this project was to help the sector increase capability and capacity to generate high quality blended learning through the innovative development of a new qualification framework and shared curriculum content for training a new workforce of e-learning designers using a new Advanced Apprenticeship/Diploma programme. The lack of capability to create high quality e-learning impacts on the sector and industry’s capability to radically change the delivery of teaching and training.

The project was undertaken by a consortium of 12 partners covering 8 Further Education Colleges, a Sector Skills Council, an Awarding Body, a Curriculum Development Agency and Web Design Company. The consortium shared expertise and co-created a new qualification framework and online curriculum content to train the next generation of e-learning designers. By working in partnership across 8 leading Colleges, Ascentis Awarding Body, the Creative and Cultural Skills Sector Council, Coralesce Ltd (Curriculum Development Agency) and Logicspot (Web Development Agency) the e-learning consortium shared best practice across IT Software Skills, Digital Media & Design, Learning Pedagogies and Cognitive Psychology to co-create an innovative programme of skills training.

New Qualification Framework and Curriculum Content

The Project developed a new unit based skills qualification programme for young people and adults who want to gain individual units of skills or a full qualification (Level 3 and 4 Certificates and Diplomas). The Project partnership worked with the
Creative and Cultural Skills Sector Council and Ascentis Awarding Body to develop a new OFQUAL approved qualification framework as part of the development of a new Occupational sector. Alongside the development of a new qualification framework the partners developed all of the curriculum content for the Level 3 and Level 4 programme through co-creation. The new programme for e-Learning Designers was a ‘mash-up’ qualification covering IT, Digital Media & Design, Learning Pedagogies and Cognitive Psychology (as it relates to online learning). It therefore required the sharing of best practice in these areas across the partners to enable rich content to be developed. No one partner had the expertise to develop this programme in isolation and it was by sharing expertise that this consortium was able to share capability and capacity to build the development and training for a new occupational sector.

**Business Model for Sustainability**

In addition to developing the qualification, framework and curriculum content, the Project also developed a business model for sustainability to ensure that the sector benefitted from this investment in two ways. Firstly, once the qualification and curriculum content had been developed by the e-learning consortium, each of the 8 Colleges was able to create regional e-learning Academies to train apprentices and Higher Level Apprentices, new graduates and adults in the skills to create blended and e-learning products in partnership with subject specialists. Secondly, it also developed a business model so that other colleges could join the consortium as a member organization and utilise the curriculum content and qualification framework to create their own e-Learning Academy. The concept of a shared brand and website, Design eLearn, was an important building block and portal to promote the Project and secure its future sustainability by offering an inclusive approach to other sector colleges.

This has proved attractive to the FE sector as there has been a lack of high quality online FE-specific content and a lack of trained e-learning staff in colleges yet the driver to use e-learning to make efficiency gains with the new study programme funding methodology is making it easier for colleges to deliver blended learning and fund e-learning positions. If the sector is going to realise its ambition to change its delivery strategies through technology, drive down the cost of learning whilst increasing quality, increase accessibility to a wide range of learners, engage with the needs of 21st century business training and offer global products then it needs to capacity build an e-learning manufacturing solution.

3. **BACKGROUND**

**Policy Context**

The Project sought not only to capacity build the sector but also to provide an e-learning manufacturing solution in the UK to support high growth industries. As a result the Project met the needs of the government’s most recent skills strategy (Skills for Sustainable Growth 2012) which identified several priority areas:

- The delivery of Advanced or Higher Level Apprenticeships, particularly for those aged 19 to 24
• Retraining programmes to assist unemployed people back to work, which might include the Intensive Traineeships for 18 to 24 year old jobseekers and unemployed graduates
• Addressing a skills shortage area that will support the growth of small e-learning and technology businesses in the UK
• Growth sectors within knowledge intensive traded services, including professional and business services, the information economy and traded aspects of higher and further education.

The project was developed to chime with Government policy developed in its further education reform plan (New Challenges, New Chances 2011) which wanted to see the FE sector realise its ambition to:

• change its delivery strategies through technology,
• drive down the cost of learning whilst increasing quality,
• increase accessibility to a wide range of learners,
• engage with the needs of 21st century business training and
• offer global learning products

Whilst the Project took place it also was consistent with the emerging policy developed by the Further Education Learning Technologies Action Group (FELTAG 2014) which indicated that:

• The sector has to keep abreast of change
• The sector needs to deliver more and better online learning
• Regulation and funding must not inhibit innovation and its effectiveness in improving learners’ outcomes
• Relationships between the FE community and employers should become closer and richer, and enhanced by learning technology inside and outside the workplace
• Learners must be empowered to fully exploit their own understanding of, and familiarity with digital technology for their own learning, and
• The entire workforce has to be brought up to speed to fully understand the potential of learning technology.

In June 2014 the Minister responded to the FELTAG recommendations endorsing the direction of travel and encouraging support to the sector on the behalf of Government from JISC, SFA and the Education and Training Foundation. However one of the most important elements was to assert that it is down to individual providers to take responsibility for investment, particularly around capital expenditure whilst at the same time setting funding drivers to ensure that the sector increases the amount of online learning by 2015/16. As Julian Gravatt, Deputy Chief Executive succinctly put it in the AoC Board Policy Update March – June 2014 “Colleges have dealt with countless changes and reforms in recent years but the size of the task facing them in the middle of 2014 is nevertheless daunting….The sense that technology might transform education but the uncertainty how this might happen and where investments should be made...there is no magic bullet here”. These new targets are both challenging and bewildering in equal measure as the agenda has moved from inducements to penalties if the sector does not get its ‘tech act’ together.
Precursor Projects

This project built on three very successful projects – one funded by the AoC/SFA (Adult Enterprise Project 2011/12) and two LSIS Projects (2012/13) - that focused on e-learning and the impact on traditional job roles in FE. The Adult Enterprise Project 2011-12 devised a teaching and learning strategy for wider sector roll-out which was ‘a blended learning solution’ on a Moodle learning platform hosted by Worcester College of Technology (acting as a community Cloud) to enable more efficient and effective implementation across the sector. The Adult Enterprise Partnership developed e-learning content to go on to a Moodle 2 platform which was then customised to commercial standards (Worcester/Logicspot collaboration). The platform was designed to facilitate easy management and tracking of delivery of over 50 standardised, separate L2 and L3 units to students across a large number of partner learning providers as well as delivering e-learning products with high user interface and user experience. The results of this shared curriculum project was implemented by 34 Colleges and Adult Learning Services from across the country contributing funding to continue sharing the qualification framework and curriculum content during 2012-2014 after the end of the project.

In itself, the Adult Enterprise Project developed - through co-creation - a new, innovative qualification framework and shared curriculum across a group of partners, was original and inventive and met a market need. However what can be learnt from this for the sector is not what other curriculum areas can be manufactured in the same way (leaving colleges in a dependency relationship with the creator) but what are the elements within the value chain that could be further developed to capacity build the whole sector to develop high quality blended learning products to reduce teaching costs and generate real business value. It also demonstrated that:

- exploiting new skills markets or using the ‘innovation code’ for the development of new qualifications is only feasible when there is scale through partnership
- innovation through co-creation requires a diversity of partners but it needs to be held together by strong and effective project leadership
- curriculum sharing can work across diverse partners particularly when the task is complex and expensive
- high quality blended learning can save considerable costs whilst retaining a high quality learner experience

The two LSIS Projects 2012-2013 focused on the impact of e-Learning and Social Media and ‘next generation’ professional roles in teaching and learning (LSIS Organizational Effectiveness Project – Project Lead City of Bath College) and creating a prototype online store to sell bite-size e-learning products (LSIS Technologies Project – Project Lead Worcester College of Technology). These two innovative projects demonstrated that:

- the role of the teacher needs to change in Further Education as a result of the need to make efficiency gains with the impact of e-learning
- Creating high quality e-learning products is expensive and complex particularly when there is no tutor support
- The lack of any kind of a qualification structure for e-learning staff was reflected in the diverse range of qualifications asked for in JDs from different
institutions e.g. IT degrees, multi-media qualifications, teaching qualifications - none of which on their own equip someone for this role

- There is a dearth of skills in Further Education to produce high quality, stimulating and cost effective e-learning content
- Commercially the cost of creating e-learning products is expensive as a result of significant industrial demand and the dearth of a skilled workforce
- To exploit the benefits of technology requires a manufacturing process that cannot wholly be dependent on the enthusiasm of individual teachers
- A new hybrid role is required in FE to support the development of high quality e-learning content

Employer Demand

The project was designed to not only train a new workforce for the sector but also address a national skills shortage area in industry. The skills required to be an ‘e-Learning Designer’ cut across a number of subject specialisms and sector skills areas and this project aimed to explore what is required to enable a skilled workforce to be developed to increase the UK’s global advantage in e-learning. Whilst the use of e-learning is growing in industry and education globally, there is a big skills gap in the UK for the design and development of high quality online products despite large demand from education and industry. The IPSOS study of e-learning across Europe in 2012 found that 27% of the total European industry training budget was spent on e-learning and this had grown by 10% from 2011 (1st European E-learning Barometer - Cross Knowledge & IPSOS). In 2012 they found globally that in 30% of firms at least half of their employees had taken at least one e-learning course whilst in the UK it was 39%. The switch in training spend from face-to-face to e-learning principally to save money is growing as more businesses take up e-learning strategies for their training schemes. E-Learning is the only part of the corporate training market that is growing rapidly. Whilst the UK has the largest e-learning industry in the EU, with more than 400 companies specialising in e-learning for the corporate market generating over £540 million in 2011, yet there is no clear qualification pathway to train e-learning designers. In addition whilst industry is moving strongly into e-learning, there is only limited take up of high quality e-learning and blended learning strategies in further and adult learning as a result of a lack of capability and capacity in the sector. The project sought to learn from employers both within the sector and from across industry about what skills are required for a new occupational sector of E-Learning Designers.

Learning from North America

North America has led the way globally on e-learning design and the role of ‘Instructional Designers’ in USA and Canada offered the Project a potential role template for designing a new Advanced Apprenticeship. The Project explored how the US and Canadian Community College sector had utilised the vocational role of e-learning designers/instructional designers in relation to skills and qualifications to advance the delivery of e-learning. It explored the impact of e-learning on the manufacturing process for developing e-learning content in relation to the roles and responsibilities of the teacher/lecturer and instructional designers. It also reviewed strategies for developing and embedding e-learning within the North American college sector and gained insight into the leadership of new teaching and learning
delivery strategies and the concomitant financial consequences of e-learning in relation to fees, funding and charges in colleges

4. METHODOLOGY

The methodology was carefully planned in advance of the bid being successful which enabled the large partnership to provide effective action from commencement date.

The methodology was as follows:

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<tr>
<th>ACTION AREA</th>
<th>ACTIVITY</th>
<th>TIMESCALES</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Planning &amp; Project Governance</td>
<td>Building the E-Learning Consortium team with clear roles and responsibilities Setting up Steering Group and Curriculum Project Group (8-15 College subject specialists), Awarding Body and SSC working together to develop detailed Action Plan and accountabilities Bringing together the Steering Group - 8 Principals, 2 CEOs and national Project Director to set a performance management framework to meet quarterly targets for Project completion and making provision for 4 Face-to-face meetings and one group workshop</td>
<td>August- September 2013</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Qualification</td>
<td>Identifying and mapping best practice in Instructional Design/ E-Learning in USA through desk research and contacts developed via American Association of Community Colleges as well as commercially within industry in the UK via the Learning and Performance Institute (an international group of Learning and Development Professionals involved in organizational learning and learning technologies)</td>
<td>September – November 2013</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Construction</td>
<td>The development of a new qualification framework at Level 3 and Level 4 with College curriculum staff and Ascentis Awarding Body for OFQUAL Approval. Feedback from industry led by Creative &amp; Cultural Skills Sector Council and the needs of the FE sector via the AoC Conference</td>
<td>October – December 2013</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assessment Design</td>
<td>Development of appropriate formative and summative assessments(‘can do’) to meet the learning objectives</td>
<td>October – February 2014</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OFQUAL and Framework Approval</td>
<td>Submission of framework for OFQUAL approval and framework approval via the SSC to the NAS/SFA</td>
<td>January – February 2014</td>
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### 5. PROJECT MANAGEMENT & GOVERNANCE

Given the complexity of the Project in relation to number of partners, timescales and the importance of collaboration and co-creation, Coralesce Ltd, a project management and curriculum development agency, was procured to independently manage the Project, coordinate partners and organise overseas and employer engagement and brand development.

The project was organised tightly into key milestones and deadlines that were closely monitored by an appointed Steering Group of CEOs/Principals from the 12 Partners and with a quarterly review by AoC. Creating an effective Project Governance Framework ensured senior management buy-in to enable the curriculum group from the 8 Colleges, sector skills council and awarding body to work effectively to achieve the project goals. A commencement meeting was held in London for all members of the Steering Group and Curriculum Group across all of the partners to agree terms of
reference, project action plan and timetable for meetings. Investing in face-to-face time really helped to get the project off to a good start. (Photograph: Inaugural Project meeting)

RESOURCES: TERMS OF REFERENCE OF STEERING GROUP & CURRICULUM GROUP

6. QUALIFICATION RESEARCH & DEVELOPMENT

This phase of the project involved two strands: research with employers and also by undertaking a North American study visit by the 8 Colleges (4 Steering Group Members/4 Curriculum Group members) and Coralesce Ltd.

Employer Consultation
The curriculum group hosted a half-day employer consultation workshop in London in October 2013 to seek the views of the e-learning sector to the proposed qualification for e-learning developers. The focus of the workshop was the draft qualification structure and units. The curriculum group worked with the Learning and Performance Institute¹ to identify and invite a representative group of employers

¹ The Learning and Performance Institute is a global Institute for Learning & Development professionals. Through an unrivalled range of membership, certification, accreditation, events and bespoke consultancy services, the Institute focuses on enhancing and recognising the skills and professional status of individuals and organisations engaged in learning activities, and assessing the
to attend, including dedicated e-learning companies and corporates with in-house e-learning staff. Attendees were provided with a project information sheet prior to the workshop.

The following employers/employer representatives attended:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Organisation</th>
<th>Role</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Stephanie Dedhar</td>
<td>BP</td>
<td>Learning and Performance Consultant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Matt Brewer</td>
<td>Chubb</td>
<td>Technology Training Consultant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rob Hubbard</td>
<td>Learning Age Solutions</td>
<td>Owner/Director</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sam Taylor</td>
<td>Tesco</td>
<td>e-Learning Manager, Tesco Academy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Barry Sampson</td>
<td>Onlignment</td>
<td>Director</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sindhu Radhakrishnan</td>
<td>GOSH</td>
<td>Instructional Designer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peter Phillips</td>
<td>Unicorn Training</td>
<td>CEO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jackie Kennedy</td>
<td>Unicorn Training</td>
<td>Chief Operating Office</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Andrew Joly</td>
<td>Line Communications</td>
<td>Design Director</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Imogen Casebourne</td>
<td>Epic Group</td>
<td>Director of Learning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marco Faccini</td>
<td>eTalento Consulting</td>
<td>CEO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kim George</td>
<td>Getty Images</td>
<td>Learning and Development Manager</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>James Cory-Wright</td>
<td>Brightwave</td>
<td>Head of Learning Design</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lesley Price</td>
<td>Learning and Performance Institute</td>
<td>Membership Services Manager</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Overall there was universal agreement on the need for the development of an Apprenticeship route for this job role. All respondents agreed that there was a lack of a clear development route available to new entrants, and poor understanding and awareness of what the job role entails. There was a great level of support and enthusiasm for the proposal of a Level 3 and 4 apprenticeship and the opportunity to bring in young people at a pre-graduate level. The summary of feedback received was as follows:

- **Use of the term ‘digital’ vs ‘e-learning’** – The proposed title of the qualification (Level 3 Diploma in Digital Learning Design) was well received with many of the attendees commenting that ‘digital’ was a more useful term than ‘e-learning’. Digital learning is modern, more forward thinking and less restrictive. This comment was echoed in the quality of learning services. The Learning and Performance Institute consists of over 3,000 individual members and 400 accredited organisations.
feedback on individual units, where respondents favoured ‘digital learning’ or ‘all learning’ rather than a focus on just ‘e-learning’.

- **Language** – Should reflect the language used by industry for example ‘Human Computer Interaction’ should be changed to ‘User Experience Design’, less focus on learning theories and curriculum design and more on psychology, brain science, memory and retention and learning architectures

- **Balance between IT Development and Design** – the term ‘Design’ within the title was well received as it placed emphasis on the design skill set over the IT skill set more widely associated with the term ‘development’. There was discussion about the need to reach a balance between the IT related and the creative/design related elements. There was suggestion that this could be achieved through the creation of additional optional units to cover missing aspects of learning design and pathways within the optional units to signpost learners to the appropriate units for their job role

- **Learning Theories** – There was a consensus that the Learning Theories unit as it has been written is not relevant to industry. One respondent commented…

  ‘(learning theories are) controversial, most people in the online learning world disagree that learning theories and styles exist, most employers do not feel these are relevant’

  The group felt it was more important for learners to have an awareness of brain science/psychology as it relates to the learning process, memory and retention, and action mapping. Respondents also thought the unit should emphasise the context in which the learning would be taking place, the motivation factors, push/pull, and business problem and learner analysis.

- **Emphasis on creative writing/journalistic skills** – Several respondents commented that the single most important skill needed by an e-learning designer is the ability to create well-written copy and story boards. There was a link made to the skills needed by journalists

  ‘there is a strong overlap with journalistic skills e.g. interviewing, negotiating and writing, being able to write fast and well is the key skill, as is storytelling.’

- **Analysing digital learning data and metrics** – Several respondents felt this should be an optional unit rather than mandatory.

- **Missing units** – The group felt there were still many areas missing from the proposed units. The list below captured all of the areas identified:

  **EMPLOYER’S VIEW OF UNITS TO BE ADDED:**
  - Digital storytelling (using video, audio etc.)
  - Storyboarding
  - Scriptwriting
  - Social Learning
  - Game theory/Gamification
  - Question writing
  - Usability and accessibility (APA formatting, standards, specifications)
  - Development methodologies (ADDIE vs. SAM, rapid prototyping)
  - Visual thinking
• Introduction to the digital learning environment
• Instructional analysis
• Audience analysis
• Organising content
• Curation of learning assets
• Working within budgets Community building/management

North American Study Visit

To achieve a global standard for developing a new e-learning workforce research and development was carried out. Mapping of best practice in Instructional Design/ E-Learning in USA was undertaken through desk research and by arranging a US visit for project participants to visit leading colleges in Seattle and Vancouver to share expertise. This involved taking a senior representative from the 8 participating Colleges to visit/meet with Shoreline Community College, Seattle Central Community College, Washington State Education Board and Vancouver Community College, Camosun College (Victoria, Vancouver Island) and BCC Campus (British Columbia State Board for Education).

The aim of the trip was not only to explore the role of instructional designers but also understand how the community college sector approaches e-learning. The aims of the study visit were as follows:
1. To review strategies for developing and embedding e-learning within the North American college sector
2. To gain insight into the leadership of new teaching and learning delivery strategies in colleges
3. To gain insight into the financial consequences of e-learning in relation to fees, funding and charges
4. To explore the impact of e-learning on the role of the teacher/lecturer
5. To explore the vocational role of e-learning designers/instructional designers in a North American context in relation to skills and qualifications
6. To understand the manufacturing process for developing e-learning content in relation to roles and responsibilities

The Visit programme ran from Monday 28th October – Wednesday 6th November 2013 as follows:
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Activity</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Monday 28.10.2013</td>
<td>UK-Seattle</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tuesday 29.10.2013</td>
<td>Shoreline Community College</td>
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<tr>
<td>Wednesday 30.10.2013</td>
<td>Shoreline Community College /Washington State Board and Northeastern/Washington Governor University and their online learning work with community colleges</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Visit to meet Microsoft learning team at Redmond, Seattle</td>
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<tr>
<td>Thursday 31.10.2013</td>
<td>Seattle Central Community College</td>
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<td>Friday 1.11.2013</td>
<td>Tour of Seattle</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Hosted event at Seattle News</td>
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<tr>
<td>Saturday/Sunday</td>
<td>Seattle- Vancouver</td>
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<td>Monday 4.11.2013</td>
<td>BC Campus Vancouver and Vancouver Community College</td>
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<td>Tuesday 5.11.2013</td>
<td>Camosun College, Victoria , Vancouver Island</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wednesday 6.11.2013</td>
<td>Vancouver – London UK</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The key learning points from the trip were recorded through interviews with college and education staff in North America and compiled into a video diary. The trip enabled the group to identify the following characteristics of effective e-learning in North America which were:

1. Strategic planning at National & State Level on an E-Learning Framework for Colleges
2. Commitment and Resources for shared procurement against this framework
3. Collaborative implementation of shared quality standards for e-learning
4. Effective Coordination of e-learning within institutions by Senior E-Learning Directors supported by Instructional Designers
5. As teachers in Community Colleges are not teacher trained, Instructional Designers are trained to post-graduate level covering high level educational pedagogies to ensure that e-learning is educationally sound
6. Student centred approaches to the design of e-learning courses with effective support systems
7. Technology curious and enabled teachers
8. Understanding e-learning as a college strategy for growth of new learners or enhanced flexibility for existing learners
9. High quality e-learning can improve success rates for apprentices and increased engagement from employers

The outcomes of the educational visit were fully shared with participants at the AoC Conference in November 2013 and feedback was received on the needs of the FE sector for the e-learning design workforce. The visit reinforced the view that an advanced technician level for e-learning designers was more appropriate in the UK given the level of teacher qualification of UK College staff rather than the more academic instructional designer role.

RESOURCES:
Websites:
www.bccampus.ca
www.camosun.ca
www.shoreline.edu
www.seattlecentral.edu

Video Diary
https://www.dropbox.com/s/cudfpr3qxtq10n9/E%20Learning%20mov

AoC Annual Conference November 2013 Presentation

7. QUALIFICATION FRAMEWORK

The project developed a new qualification framework at Level 3 and Level 4 which achieved full OFQUAL approval and subsequent framework approval for an Advanced Apprenticeship via the Sector Skills Council to the NAS (National Apprenticeship Service) and the SFA (Skills Funding Agency) was achieved in January 2014. Units were developed as follows and they are combined into mandatory and optional units to form awards or whole qualifications:

Level 3 Units
• Introduction to the Digital Learning Environment
• Professional and Personal Development
• Working in a Digital Learning Lifecycle
• Effective Communication for Digital Learning Design
• User Experience Design
• Quality and Standards
• Investigating and Analysing Requirements for Digital Learning Designs
• Collaborative Technologies and Outcomes
• Emerging Digital Software
• Introducing Immersive Technologies
• Technical Advice and Guidance
• Using Social Media Technologies
• Developing Skills, Understanding and Confidence of Others in E-learning
• A/V Production
• Converging Digital Technologies
• Graphic Design and Imagery
• Introduction to Website Production
• Mobile Technologies
• Storyboarding

**Level 4 Units**
• Professional and Personal Development
• The Digital Learning Project Lifecycle
• Managing Communications to Investigate and Define the Requirements of Digital Learning Designs
• User Experience Design
• Science of Learning and Design
• Quality and Standards
• Digital Assessment Design
• Platform Development and Software
• Video Production
• Audio Production
• Gamification
• Digital Storytelling
• Accessible Learning Design
• Managing Digital Learning Environments
• Supporting Social Learning
• Safe and Responsible Online Use
• User-Centred Design
• Authoring Tools
• Digital Law and Compliance
• Developing Skills, Understanding and Confidence of Others in E-learning
• Collaborative Technologies and Outcomes (Level 3)
• Emerging Digital Software (Level 3)
• Introducing Immersive Technologies (Level 3)
• Technical Advice and Guidance (Level 3)
• Using Social Media Technologies (Level 3)
• Converging Digital Technologies (Level 3)
• Graphic Design and Imagery (Level 3)
• Introduction to Website Production (Level 3)
• Mobile Technologies (Level 3)
• Reflective Practice in the Development of Digital Learning Design

**RESOURCES:**

**Level 3 Award and Diploma in Digital Learning Design**
http://www.ascentis.co.uk/qualifications_files/level%203%20award%20and%20diploma%20in%20digital%20learning%20design%20spec.pdf

**Level 4 Diploma and Extended Diploma in Digital Learning Design**
http://www.ascentis.co.uk/qualifications_files/level%204%20diploma%20in%20digital%20learning%20design.pdf

**8. CONTENT DEVELOPMENT**

Content writing of subject content was undertaken to provide curriculum resources on a 50%/50% blended learning model across the 4 main subject domains across the partners (IT Software Skills, Digital Media & Design, Learning Pedagogies and
Cognitive Psychology). The curriculum writing was coordinated by a Curriculum Group made up of specialist staff from across the 8 colleges managed by a Curriculum Project Manager. To achieve the deadlines the curriculum group also secured freelance writers to support the joint endeavour. The curriculum development also involved the development of appropriate formative and summative assessments (‘can do’) to meet the learning objectives. Central editing of co-created content was undertaken by Worcester College of Technology to ensure standardisation and consistency. Careful monitoring of the process was undertaken by both the Curriculum Group and Steering Group to ensure all partners made a contribution to the joint endeavour. All of the subject content was written for Level 3 and Level 4 by April 2014 to support the roll out of the new qualifications.

The content was then converted into high quality e-learning to provide a blended learning model- offline and online. The curriculum group used Quality Mark standards used in the USA to quality assure the online content. The content was hosted on MOODLE and when complete the files were shared with each provider for delivery of the new courses from October 2014.

RESOURCES:

AoC ANNUAL CONFERENCE PRESENTATION NOVEMBER 2014
TASTER REVIEW OF ALL RESOURCES VIA THE DESIGNELEARN NETWORK

9. WEB PORTAL & BRAND DEVELOPMENT

A shared web portal was set up to showcase the project and a shared learning platform to host the blended learning content whilst it was in development under the identity www.designelearn.com

This was an attractive commercially developed brand and site with a strong design brief. The website featured the project teams, the 8 participating Colleges and project partners. Design eLearn also developed a distinctive social media presence with 598 followers on Twitter from the e-learning community in industry and FE.

To promote the brand in industry a number of trade shows were undertaken including the AoC Annual Conference (November 2013), the Learning Technologies Show in London (January 2014), the Education Innovation Show in Manchester (February 2014), JISC Digifest in Birmingham (March 2014) and JISC RSC North West (July 2014) and JISC RSC South East shows (July 2014). These trade shows involved talking to employers from FE and industry who potentially would employ e-learning apprentices.
10. RECRUITMENT

By July 2014 the participating colleges started to commence marketing of the new e-learning academies and commenced recruitment of students via the new e-learning consortium website, CCS student portal, Ascentis Awarding Body and on college websites. Two national launch events were hosted by Ascentis in London and Manchester in July 2014 attracting over 50 new colleges, potential employers and private sector providers.

Given the generic nature of the new qualification framework, four main types of recruitment strategy has emerged across the 8 Colleges as follows:

IN-HOUSE RECRUITMENT FOR OWN STAFF - This model is where a College has recruited all the apprentices as in-house employees and they are being deployed in-house. The funding rate of £9,500 is very attractive and offsets the wages to provide a new labour force to enable the College to drive forward on the FELTAG agenda. Example: South Essex College with 5 new Apprentices delivered online and through supervision in the workplace.

RECRUITMENT ACROSS A COUNTY – This model is where a college collaborates within a sub-region for each College to have at least one apprentice and they work together to develop shared content. Example: Sparsholt College has 7 trainees of
which 3 are Apprentices from Hampshire Colleges (2 from Sparsholt College and 1 from Fareham College) delivered by block residential, online and one day per month.

RECRUITMENT OF ADULTS – This model is where the College is delivering the Level 4 Diploma in Digital Design and stand-alone units on a 90% online basis. Example: Heart of Worcestershire College who has 30 Diploma students and is delivering nationally.

OPEN ACCESS RECRUITMENT OF YOUNG PEOPLE ON APPRENTICESHIP WITH EMPLOYER PLACEMENTS – This model is where the course is marketed openly with a mixture of industry and in-house apprentices. Example: Highbury College and Furness College are actively seeking to recruit young people delivered on a blended learning basis of online and one day per month.

Since the new qualification has gone live several Colleges have adopted an open access recruitment and are joining the network to share the materials. These include Barnsley College (7 Apprentices running an in-house elearning design company – Elephant Learning Design @eledesign) and Accrington & Rossendale College (3 full-cost trainees starting in Jan 15).

JOB DESCRIPTION
A generic job description has been put together for Apprentices that has been shared across the network (see below).
E-Learning Design Apprentice

JOB DESCRIPTION
The e-learning Design Apprentice will undertake a range of tasks to support e-learning development within the company.

- To assist with the creation of VLE (Virtual Learning Environment) content.
- Providing assistance with MOODLE and CANVAS VLE Administration.
- To create interactive, blended online learning resources and activities.
- To develop resources for emerging technology.
- Preparing well-designed reports and presentations using a variety of software.
- To support staff to convert traditional resources to online versions.
- To assist with the creation of audio and video resources.
- Design online learning that reflects an understanding of the diversity of learners.
- To provide advice and guidance about the development of e-learning technologies.
- Assist in the effort to define standards/style guides for training materials and online environments.
- Develop appropriate online assignment activities.
- Be responsible for the quality control and copywriting of material developed for online learning.
- Assisting with office administration as required.
- Completing project and administration tasks as required.
- Undertake a Level 3 / 4 Diploma in Digital Learning Design at ……. College to achieve an Advanced Apprenticeship.

11. DESIGNELEARN NETWORK

Two potential business models for sustainability were identified at the commencement of the Project:

- Model 1: Developing a business model for selling services for each of the learning companies with a marketing strategy to produce income for a wage premium.
- Model 2: Developing a business model for franchising the Academy to other Colleges to ensure sustainability of funding for content refreshing, hosting and ongoing curriculum development with a comprehensive dissemination strategy across the sector.

In light of the varied pattern of recruitment the Steering Group determined at their September 2014 meeting that they should set up a Design eLearn Network based on Model 2 to carry on sharing in 14/15 and that for a low cost they should encourage other providers to benefit from the shared materials. All of the Colleges host the shared content and take responsibility for their own course but an agency/individual college is procured to provide central refreshing of content through a good practice
peer network. The agency/individual college would also be responsible for shared brand updating on website and social media and making links to College systems. It would also engage with employers nationally on behalf of the consortium. The shared network would work together on staff development and support to ensure joint practice development. In September 2014 this network was set up and it is proposed that this network will also look at Model 1 as the numbers of apprentices grow throughout the first year of operation.

Coralesce Ltd has been contracted to manage the Design eLearn Network in 2014/15 to carry on sharing the framework and content with new colleges to increase the capacity of the sector. The 8 founder Colleges will have free membership of the network for 2014/15 which will involve employer engagement activities (including exhibiting to industry at various trade shows such as the Learning Technologies Show at Olympia, London), maintaining website and social media presence, meeting online and off –line to maintain the curriculum and sharing good practice, disseminating at Conferences and connecting up students to enable them to progress in their careers and share projects. Three new colleges have sought to share content and join the network. It is proposed that this network will seek to widen the benefits of the project across the sector.

12. CONCLUSIONS

This project has proved very successful in meeting its overall aims and objectives to time and to schedule. It has created:

- A new qualification framework for e-Learning Designers at Level 3 and Level 4 for both adults and young people based on best practice research in North America and with UK employers
- An approved apprenticeship framework in Digital Learning Design
- Enhanced funding for the Apprenticeship with the SFA
- Shared blended learning content and resources to support the delivery of the qualification
- Recruitment of apprentices and adults to the programme in 8 Pilot Colleges within the Design eLearn Network in 2014/15
- Dissemination to the wider sector for engagement in this initiative via a good practice network [www.designelearn.com](http://www.designelearn.com)

The effective use of external project management enabled the colleges to keep to task and to schedule across a complex project. Problems faced involved ensuring that all partners effectively contributed to curriculum development to time within a complex writing schedule that also impacted on the creation of e-learning content by a small centralised team at Worcester. The role of the Curriculum Project Manager was key in ensuring full compliance. Some problems were experienced when there were staff changes but these were overcome by utilising staff resources within partner colleges and readjusting funding allocations.

A key strength of this Project was that the partners had an interlocking history of previous partnership of working together across a multiplicity of projects and initiatives. The Project Director had experience of leading a complex multi-college consortium working effectively with both Principals and Curriculum Project
Managers. Each Principal and CEO made a personal commitment to the Project and the nominated Curriculum/ILT lead was a fully participating member of the curriculum group. 7 out of the 8 Colleges had previously worked together as partners to roll out Adult Enterprise using a centrally developed blended learning curriculum. Worcester College of Technology has established itself as leading the way on the development of high quality e-learning content to support the partnership. Creative and Cultural Skills had an established National Skills Academy for Creative & Cultural Skills with 5 out of the 8 Colleges. Ascentis has experience of working with 3 out of the 8 Colleges. Each partner brought a particular set of curriculum specialisms to this partnership and the diversity of the partners fostered innovation to generate a more robust national solution. This strong set of relationships spread across England supported by a dedicated and experienced independent Project Director and Curriculum Project Manager provided the social capital for a successful project.

Key learning outcomes were:

- Importance of independent project management
- Value of a global study visit to build team working and also learn from best practice from North America
- Value of a shared brand and website for sustainability
- Innovative use of curriculum staff from 8 Colleges with different subject expertise building a new multi-disciplinary qualification working with an Awarding Body and Sector Skills council
- Value of working with professional membership group from industry (Learning and Performance Institute) to engage employers from industry
- Value of trade shows to calibrate demand
- Finding the right model for sustainability
- Building a shared approach to content development and quality assurance