OUTSTANDING TEACHING, LEARNING AND ASSESSMENT
TECHNICAL SKILLS NATIONAL PROGRAMME

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A has diagnosed autistic spectrum condition and engaged in PBL as part of his L3 BTEC Extended Diploma in Construction and the Built Environment

A was given the choice to work in a group of students of his choice. He is very close to another student, who has also got additional needs, and we in the team have noticed they are both more motivated to do work when they are allowed to work together. So both of them ended up working in the same PBL group and I think that impacted positively on both their performances to a good extent. Whenever A showed signs of tiredness during the PBL classes, which thankfully was not often, he was given space and time to rest, or even go home if he was too tired to continue. A, according to his own words, likes solving problems as long as they are not repetitive or not too difficult to understand. In most PBL classes, I would spend about 10 minutes with A on one-to-one basis to motivate him and explain any areas of ambiguity. A’s engagement levels with his team can fluctuate, but once he is given some support and encouragement he can be back on track very quickly. A always responded positively to the support given in terms of both his attitude and performance. A has made very good progress and showed reasonable (and sometimes high) levels of motivation and engagement. A certainly seems to respond well to the idea of the assessment being part of a bigger project.

R has diagnosed autism and development coordination disorder (DCD) and engaged in PBL as part of his L1 Maths Functional Skills

R’s condition affects how he acts socially as he only tends to talk to people older or younger than himself so collaborative PBL was challenging. However, he has been paired with another student who is helping him socialise in the class and the teacher has noticed that this pairing helped him to engage with the task and the pairing will continue during the rest of the year. R states that the PBL experiences have helped him settle into a new course and place. When he left school, there were only 4 people that he managed to talk to, and now he is comfortable talking to all seven peers in his group.

V has diagnosed attention deficit disorder and engaged in PBL as part of her L3 Extended Diploma in Computing

V has diagnosed attention deficit disorder, a developmental disability with neurobiological causes, which results in impulsive and inattentive behaviour. PBL presents some challenges for V as she struggles with getting organised and sustaining attention, knowing what to say, how much and when. To promote sustained interest and attention, the teacher summarised the session with V’s group, facilitated session targets to break large tasks into short term “chunks”, enabling the group to decide responsibilities, and at the start of the PBL episode provided a range of organising frameworks from which V selected one to trial. Using questioning with V also supported concentration. Group role cards also helped with focus on the “bite-size” ‘chunk’ too. So additional scaffolding enabled V to be included and to achieve. V enjoyed the self-directed challenge and was positive about the learning experience.

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