Sharing Innovative Approaches to Implementing 16 – 19 Study Programmes

Accrington and Rossendale College
“Our new model places English and maths at the heart of every learner’s study programme. We intend to enthuse learners about subjects that they may have found irrelevant at school, making the links with the world of work clear, and adopting a personalized approach to make a real difference to perceptions and skills”

Wendy Higgin, Director of Curriculum Development and Delivery

About the College

Accrington and Rossendale College is located in Pennine Lancashire, serving the communities of Hyndburn, Rossendale and Ribble Valley. The college’s main aim is to provide high quality, career focused education and training opportunities for individuals, communities and employers, both locally and nationally. Most of the college’s provision is taught at the main campus in Accrington, but it also has sites in each district and uses a number of other community locations.

The college serves over 6000 students on programmes from Entry level through to Higher Education, in most sector subject areas and across a broad range of vocational subjects for 14 to 19 year olds and adults. The majority of the college’s provision is vocational.

The area served by the college faces multiple challenges. For example, Hyndburn is ranked 36th on the 2010 Index of Multiple Deprivation, with ten districts in the 10% most deprived in the country (of which 2 are in the 1% most deprived). It ranks in the bottom 20% nationally for average gross weekly earnings. The unemployment rate for 18-24 year olds is 9% (May 2013) and current NEET figures are 7.1%.

The college has over 2000 students aged 16-18 and around 1,000 apprentices. It makes outstanding use of information learning technology (ILT) to contribute to teaching and develop independent learning, along with strong educational and social inclusion, employer engagement and external partnerships. As well as their educational programmes, young people have the benefit of careers coaching. The college has a workplace training subsidiary. Among its sporting activities is a Football Academy for both male and female students. All Students benefit from a modern campus with state of the art facilities including its Library+, 3G sports pitch, fitness suite and purpose built social spaces.

Students have access to a range of additional services including careers guidance, counselling, assistive I.T and learning support. Students are also offered a wide variety of enrichment opportunities and educational visits to enhance their skills, experience and progression prospects.
Study Programmes

The structure of Study Programmes from September 2013 will include the following elements: a main, substantial qualification; maths and English (GCSE/Functional Skills); Work Experience / Work related learning; and Tutorial.

In 2012/13 annual guided learning hours have been around 700, meeting student entitlements as well as core subject requirements. The delivery model has changed for Study Programmes, partly reflecting changes to funding. Annualised hours will vary from programme to programme depending on the size (hours) of the substantial qualification and work experience elements, but all meet the full time banding of 540 hours and none is planned to exceed 600 hours. The academic year will run over 36 weeks and the average delivery hours on a substantial qualification will be 360. Functional skills hours are set at 36 hours delivery, with 3 to 36 hours of personal coaching depending on individual need (more detail in section 3 below).

Work experience / work related learning hours vary from 36 to 216 hours depending on the type of work experience required and the level of programme, with levels 1 and 2 having higher hours planned compared to level 3. Tutorials are delivered by a team of specialist Learning and Development Mentors for 1 hour per week over 36 weeks. Their taught sessions will include:

- Study skills and revision skills
- Progression guidance and career development / Career and work related learning / work
- Placement preparation / UCAS preparation
- Equality and Diversity awareness
- Personal Health and Wellbeing
- Enterprise and entrepreneurial skills
- Digital Literacy
- Citizenship
- Managing personal finance / Financial literacy.

Since their introduction in 2009, these Mentors have been effective in improving attendance and retention on programmes.

English and maths within study programmes

The college has introduced a new delivery model for English and maths within Study Programmes. This followed feedback from current students on the value of coaching, which has been developed well at the college. All learners yet to achieve
GCSE A*-C will study for either Functional Skills or GCSE qualifications, developing their skills across four strands:

- one hour a week group delivery per subject, taught by English and maths specialists
- personal coaching from English and maths specialists, with individual annual entitlement varying from 3-36 hours based on need
- online learning through in-house materials and use of bksb\(^1\) live (for initial and diagnostic assessments as well as learning resources, skill checks and Functional Skills scenarios) and Spellzone\(^2\), with engagement monitored and supported by learning and development Mentors
- through their main programme, with all vocational tutors committed to embedding English and maths so learners can see their relevance to their chosen career

Entry, level 1 and level 2 learners will undertake Functional Skills qualifications and level 3 learners will undertake GCSE qualifications. Learners who already have GCSE A*-C will continue to develop their skills through online and embedded learning.

This delivery model has been introduced through an intensive staff development programme, English and maths at the heart of all we do. This involved:

- raising awareness of the centrality of English and maths within the Study Programmes, with the key benefits to learners and the college identified and communicated
- staff undertaking Functional Skills qualifications as appropriate to up-skill and become familiar with the specifications and new online learning materials
- setting up an online professional discussion forum using “Edmodo,” the educational social networking site\(^3\)
- producing posters for each vocational area promoting the benefits of English and maths
- sessions on successful embedding, with an emphasis on simple strategies, e.g. the creation of online spelling games using vocationally-specific terminology for use as a starter activity; the use of occupationally-specific BBC Skillswise Job Skills videos at induction

The initiative has also been underpinned by effective timetabling, with all English and maths group sessions scheduled between 10.00 and 2.00, and a new emphasis on embedding within the observation of teaching and learning.

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\(^1\) [http://www.bksb.co.uk/](http://www.bksb.co.uk/)

\(^2\) [http://www.spellzone.com/](http://www.spellzone.com/)

\(^3\) A collaborative network for education. [https://www.edmodo.com/](https://www.edmodo.com/)
Observers give feedback on the extent to which English and maths have been effectively embedded within the session. This experience in 2012/13 will be applied to Study Programmes for the new academic year.