Sharing Innovative Approaches to Implementing 16 – 19 Study Programmes

Bolton College
About the College

Bolton College is a medium sized general Further Education college. The college’s main campus is in the centre of Bolton and it operates from five other sites in community venues in and around the Bolton area.

The college offers has well developed provision in health, care and public services, engineering, construction and the built environment, hair and beauty, catering, arts and leisure, skills for life and work, business, IT and management, as well as HE programmes. It has significant work based provision for employers, and is growing its apprenticeship market.

Provision is made for over 2,200 16-18 year olds each year, and some 11,000 adult students. The college recruits more than half its students from areas of deprivation. A higher proportion of students come from minority ethnic backgrounds when compared with Bolton as a whole.

The proportion of young people aged 16 achieving five or more A* to C GCSE grades including English and Mathematics in Bolton is now above national average at 59.7% in 2012, (national average of 58.4%). The JSA claimant rate for Bolton is at 5%, which is slightly higher than the rate for Greater Manchester of 4.8% and nationally 3.8%.

During 2012/13 the college has been part of the DfE’s Work Experience Pilot and provided a new structure for this type of learning. Over 300 students have benefited from the new approach, with 150 employers offering placements. These include local nurseries, schools, care homes, restaurants, hotels and beauty salons and national supermarket and food outlet chains, as well as larger local businesses, such as Bolton at Home, Bolton Wanderers Football Club, Serco Leisure Centres and Bolton Council.

Study Programmes

The college has planned carefully for the implementation of Study Programmes in 2013, building on its experience in the DfE Work Experience Pilot\(^1\). It has enabled the employment of two full time work placement officers and two study coaches. Their dedicated foundation learning team concentrates on students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, and those most disengaged from the employment market with the focus being to help them enter work.

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\(^1\) http://education.gov.uk/schools/teachingandlearning/qualifications/b00223495/post-16-work-enterprise-educ/work-experience-pilot
There is also full-time level 1 provision delivered in the vocational areas. Work placements are available for all levels, but for those not ready for the employment, this element of the Study Programme is being met by employability-focused activities in the college’s industry-standard facilities, whilst some level 1 and level 2 and level 3 learners undertake a period of work placement. Students are encouraged to progress on to full time level 2 or level 3 Study Programmes as their next step. Level 3 learners’ intended destinations (be that HE or employment) are met through their individual Study Programme. Where the intention is employment a high quality, sector specific work placement is available. Where it is HE, the placement is more focused on job ready skills and preparation for university.

In its timetabling, the college has addressed the issue that some full time courses in 2012/13 had in excess of 700 guided learning hours, to meet students’ entitlements. An efficient as well as effective model has been constructed for the year ahead.

The timetable target for Study Programmes to achieve in 2013/14 is around 560 hours of actual delivery. In order to accommodate the larger level 3 programmes, in addition to their core studies, students will have planned and guided private study time; use of the flipped classroom approach; on-line resources via the college’s Moodle; and homework/group sessions.

English and maths is a priority for 2013/14, as the college wishes to raise achievement and address some attendance concerns in the current year. Every young person yet to achieve English and GCSE maths at A* -C, will have the achievement of these “gold star” qualification(s) within their learning plans. Staff awareness raising and development has been needed to support this goal. The model planned for 2013/14 is as follows:

- Those with a (high) D grade leaving school will be entered for GCSE in their first year. This is also intended for those progressing within the college who have achieved Level 2 Functional Skills (FS) and have been assessed as “GCSE ready”.
- Those with (low) D grade leaving school, or who have achieved Level 2 FS as a progressing student, but not been assessed as “GCSE ready” possibly due to lack of attendance, attitude, maturity or just being in need more time: these will spend a year on pre-GCSE as well as embedded English and maths within their substantial programme, moving onto GCSE in following year.
- Those with GCSE grades E-G will be entered for Entry 3-Level 1 functional skills in first year at college, followed by year 2 Pre-GCSE, then GCSE in 3rd year if appropriate.
Those progressing at college who have still yet to achieve Level 2, will either be entered for FS Level 2 in 2013/14 only, or be assessed for Pre-GCSE then GCSE in 3rd year.

Those coming to college with C grade leaving school who wish to improve their grade will be able to do so.

Those coming with a C grade or above will be expected to continue with English/maths in some form as part of their Study Programme linked to their intended destination (see Level 3 below). The college expects to offer AS maths by 2014/15.

All Functional Skills students will receive 4 hours a week (2 per subject); with those taking GCSE receiving 6 hours (3 per subject). Some curriculum areas will contextualise functional skills utilizing their vocational staff. For instance, Construction staff will teach “Estimating” instead of a 1 hour maths class.

Level 3 programmes

One of the major issues the college has had with designing Study Programmes at Level 3 is the size of the vocational qualifications and fitting them into a 600 hours programme. One solution has been to use other, non-contact teaching methods – such as directed private study and the development of on-line resources accessed through Moodle, using the flipped classroom approach.

In the main, level 3 vocational learners have progressed from lower levels at college and are already on their journey to achieve English and maths at the next level, suited to their main qualifications. However, there are those who come straight from school into Level 3 programmes, and so the same entry requirements apply as shown above. Some curriculum areas are therefore asking for GCSE English and/or maths as an entry requirement onto their level 3 programmes, whilst others are accepting Level 2 functional skills.

This inconsistency is due to there being a wide range of programmes offered at level 3 having differing progression entry requirements onto HE or employment. For instance, those wanting HE in teaching, nursing or engineering require B or above in English/maths GCSE, so these students need tailored programmes providing these qualifications. Other vocational students, such as those studying level 3 Catering, usually progress into employment, with no consistency from employers in expecting them to have achieved GCSE. The college recognises that career aspirations may alter, so it is encouraging all level 3 learners to achieve GCSE English/maths. To enable this there will be additional classes and supported study in 2013/14.

Using IT to enable students to take responsibility for their own learning: eg.
http://www.connecting-learning.co.uk/leadership-library-learning-case-studies/130-flipping-the-classroom-learning-beyond-classroom-walls.html
For those students at level 3 who have already achieved GCSE maths and English a consistent cross-college approach to embedding English and maths is difficult, as students’ needs vary; for 2013/14 the college will differentiate at sector level. This could mean the provision of non-accredited elements of AS level maths (e.g. for Business students); a major project (for Beauty and Care students); or a change to the optional units of substantial qualifications, such as a Hair/Beauty financially related unit or a “start your own business” element.

Level 3 Catering students are now studying a business unit alongside their level 3 qualification, and to embed Level 3 English, they will be providing their own departmental monthly blog, and upload weekly recipes and menus onto the college's website, in response to restaurant customer feedback as well as being part of their substantial programme.

**Tracking**

Bolton College has developed its own in-house tracking system (SiD- the Super Interactive Database) drawing on a series of databases available around the college, as well as MIU systems. This is being updated to enable students to be tracked across vocational areas and their common timetabled English and maths classes, for target setting and attendance. It is available for all students except for some in the community and those with sensory disabilities, who will be tracked in other ways. It is well used and well received by students and staff in its current version.

SiD also identifies intended destinations and, where a learner changes their mind mid-year, this change can be recorded and tracked enabling the study programme to be altered accordingly.

Target setting is a main priority for the college and this system enables a clear, simple process to be in place.