Sharing Innovative Approaches to Implementing 16 – 19 Study Programmes

Leicester College
“Key to the success of our Study Programmes will be the college's ability to combine the varied elements of the programmes in order to meet the individual needs of learners.”

Keith Whittaker - Deputy Principal, Curriculum and Programmes

About the College

Leicester College is the only General Further Education College (GFE) in the City of Leicester and one of the largest GFEs nationally. It has approximately 26,000 students, with over 5000 16-18s.

The college delivers the broadest vocational provision in the County, with courses in all sector subject areas and a wide range of programmes from Entry Level to Level 4. The majority of enrolments are in vocational areas. It has significant vocational HE provision.

The college meets the needs of its diverse local population with 44% of its cohort coming from areas of deprivation, 42% from Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic groups and 3,488 learners with a learning difficulty and or disability. With 3,753 ESOL enrolments, it is the largest provider of ESOL within the East Midlands region. Leicester has an overall unemployment rate of 13.5%, compared to 8.2% nationally and 8.3% for the region.

There are excellent links between the college and local employers, many of whom provide essential support for education and training through donated materials, equipment and their expertise to enrich the learning experience. They also offer work experience, employment and training for learners.

Study Programmes

The college provides a rounded learning experience on its vocational courses through additional studies related to each student's wish to progress to a particular destination. Through its links with businesses, real life work experience challenges may be made available. The college is also active in competitions, including World Skills\(^1\). It intends that Study Programmes will retain and, where possible, extend the opportunities for young learners to develop their skills in this way.

\(^1\) [http://worldskillsuk.apprenticeships.org.uk](http://worldskillsuk.apprenticeships.org.uk)
The strategic vision for the college's Study Programmes is to maximise the potential of young people to progress onto higher education and/or skilled employment by ensuring that vocational routes to higher education and employment are seen as high quality and a genuine alternative to academic routes.

This will be achieved through the following three objectives:

- Improving the value of post-16 qualifications, enabling progression to higher levels of study and skilled employment;
- Raising standards in post-16 English and Mathematics, so that higher numbers of students study these subjects at level 2 to achieve GCSE A*-C if they are not already qualified at this level;
- Improving young people's employability skills, by increasing the number of students who experience the workplace and who participate in other activity of value to them in their chosen careers.

The needs and intended destination of each student will determine the balance of learning within the Study Programme and what type of additional learning is provided. While substantive qualifications will form the major part of Level 2 and 3 programmes, those students at Entry level may focus on core subjects such as English and maths.

Study Programmes have been planned to enable students to access provision at a level they may not have been able to do so before. In Construction for example, students with a good GCSE profile may not have previously been able to directly access a programme at level 2 or 3. The barrier to progression may have been the lack of practical skills. These students would have been required to build up their practical skills by undertaking a programme lower than their academic ability indicated, as the previous funding methodology did not provide sufficient hours to support the development of these skills. The college's Study Programme structure will provide more time to be dedicated to practical skill building activities, thus enabling the student to follow a level of study more appropriate for their needs and removing the typical 'churn' at level 1.

**Stepping stones to GCSE “Gold Standard” English and maths**

A cross campus GCSE programme has been timetabled for 2013/14 before any other planned activity. Curriculum areas have built their timetables around the English and maths provision. Similarly, streamed sessions for Functional Skills have also been timetabled before the main vocational provision.

Students progressing internally, who have previously had a Grade D GCSE in English or maths or a Functional Skill at level 2, are being targeted to undertake a
pre-GCSE assessment. Gaps in knowledge are supported with self-directed study packs over the summer, with the offer to re-sit the pre-GCSE assessment. If the students pass the assessment, they will embark on the GCSE re-sit programme as part of their Study Programme in the new academic year.

Similarly, any new entrants to the college with a Grade D or equivalent will be asked to undertake the pre-assessment screening test. If the student is not ready for the GCSE, they will be directed to the appropriate level of Functional Skill aligned to their individual needs.

**Personal Professional Development Programme**

Not all students will undertake formal work experience on an employer’s premises, but they will all follow a Personal Professional Development Programme (PPD). The PPD will encompass the development of employability skills, enterprise activities, staying safe and healthy, equality and diversity, and current affairs.

Specifications for the PPD have been developed centrally and include structured activities at level 1 and level 2. Themed weeks have been planned into Study Programmes; for example Enterprise Week, where activities will take place across the college on this theme. The Federation of Small Businesses will provide Key Note Speakers on aspects of Business start-up and the potential pitfalls to avoid. Leicestershire Cares\(^2\) will be providing learners with opportunities to undertake ‘mock interviews’ with volunteer employers from the local region.

Representative ‘PPD Leads’ from each Curriculum Area have attended training sessions on the structure and content of the programme. Curriculum Areas will be required to deliver a set number of sessions from each theme and will also be given the flexibility to deliver vocationally relevant activities outside of the PPD framework; for example, First Aid.

The PPD offer is being endorsed by the Federation of Small Businesses and the local Chamber of Commerce and will be accredited by the college on completion of the modules. This adds value to the programme from an employer and student perspective. The programme has been developed around an existing, successful Enrichment Programme, commended by Ofsted and valued by students.

Work Experience: the guiding principle of work experience out of college is that it should be of benefit to both the student and employer. It will be a minimum of 4 weeks, with a project set by the employer. This ensures both the employer and

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\(^2\) An organisation connecting employers with community groups for mutual benefit, by providing volunteers, for example http://www.leicestershirecares.co.uk
student achieve valuable outcomes. Live industry briefs, working in the college’s Realistic Working Environments (RWEs), and contributing to community projects are considered to be other valuable work experience opportunities. All WE is planned, recorded, monitored and assessed for its effectiveness.

Directed study: this must be planned in a Scheme of Work and tracked by the subject and personal tutor. Activities may include self-directed study packs on Moodle, such as Health and Safety, or directed researching and reading around a subject in readiness for the next lesson. It is not to be used in itself to consolidate learning.

Most areas have scheduled Directed Study into times before or after the main activities on the Study Programme, when the libraries and Learning Centres have more capacity early or late in the day.

By integrating these processes and with a culture of high expectations, Leicester College intends that Study Programmes will be highly effective in meeting the needs of individuals, with associated benefits for employers and the community.