Sharing Innovative Approaches to Delivering 16-19 Study Programmes
Plymouth College of Art
“As a specialist art college our provision to the community is unique. Our educational continuum, refined over decades, is a ladder of progression that raises aspiration and offers our students the vocational and academic skills required by the creative industries.”

Professor Andrew Brewerton, Principal and Chief Executive

About the college

As an independent art college since 1856, Plymouth College of Art (PCA) serves the 14th largest city in England, including some of the most deprived wards in the country. The college provides a learning continuum in contemporary art, craft, design and media practices, in high quality specialist studio and workshop learning environments, and with strong progression opportunities across a wide range of BA (Hons) and Foundation Degrees and Masters awards.

The college has approximately 600 further education students drawn from a large number of schools in the city and from the wider region. PCA has nurtured the creative and academic aspirations of many of these students over the last eight years at its Young Arts Club (YAC), which currently accommodates 170 artists from age 4 to 18 for 30 Saturdays each year. YAC enjoys national recognition and proved a direct inspiration for the Sorrell Foundation's National Art & Design Saturday Club (NADSC), to which the PCA Principal has been appointed as an advisor. The college has pioneered local and regional Creative Apprenticeships, impressive growth in higher education (with 30% growth in applications over two years; now 60% of our total provision) including 3-year BA (Hons) and Masters level programmes. The college offers a significant and growing range of part-time evening classes for local amateurs, practitioners, students and teachers.

Plymouth College of Art has made a £7.6m capital investment in new and innovative craft, design and manufacturing workshops and studios, in order to address the decline in further education and apprenticeship provision in specialist glass, ceramics, jewellery, textiles and print practices, underpinned by the provision of industry-standard technological development. In response to the challenges and opportunities of the shifting educational landscape, PCA opened a mainstream city-centre 4-16 all through school that places creativity and creative arts subjects at the heart of its curriculum. The Plymouth School of Creative Arts opened Key Stage 1 in September 2013, and will add Key Stage 3 in September 2014.

Study Programmes and Core Skills
The FE courses at PCA represent a wide range of industry specific specialisms. A Levels are currently offered in Fine Art, Photography, Graphics, Textiles, Contextual Studies and English Literature. Extended Diplomas (ED) are offered in Art & Design, Creative Media Production (TV & Film), Fashion & Textiles, Graphics, Interactive Media and Games Arts and Photography and Foundation Diplomas in Art and Design (FAD) offers a general Art & Design diagnostic and portfolio building experience.

From September 2013 PCA has increased its specialist maths staffing to equal that of its English provision to support the delivery of Study Programmes across the college's GCE A Levels, EDs and FADs. Through a combination of the principal qualification, maths and English GCSE or Functional Skills, work based activity and enrichment, all FE students are timetabled for a minimum of 600 hours.

Students are supported on Study Programmes through a combination of Specialist Practice staff on their principal qualification, a specialist maths and English lecturer, a Study Zone tutor (see below) and the cross-college Student Support Team for Wellbeing, Enrichment and Careers delivery. In response to the experience gained from delivering GCSE and Functional Skills maths and English pilot projects in the years preceding Study Programmes, the maths and English provisions have been prioritised in timetabling, which the principal qualification delivery is then timetabled around.

The principal course team supports general Study Skills development in its teaching within programmes. The Study Zone (SZ) operates as a team of tutors who provide Additional Learning Support for students with identified needs and for students at risk. Identified support needs can relate to mental health, medical issues or physical disability, requiring support and learning enrichment. Each course is allocated a SZ tutor who becomes part of the extended course team. Students developing fundamental skills, which may include English and maths, may be supported by SZ tutors. Maths and English lecturers work closely with the SZ team on Initial Assessment and Diagnostics. The SZ team also deploy assistive technologies.

The college utilises BKSB for Initial Assessment and BKSB Diagnostics on-programme. Each student group receives one hour per week of embedded Specialist maths and English input, merged with their principal specialism; where Functional Skills are applied in the studio practice these are planned, supported and monitored in conjunction with the Specialist maths or English lecturer. All students, irrespective of their qualifications on entry, are supported to continue to develop their maths and English skills in this way.

Those students who have not achieved GCSE A*-C maths and English receive an additional hour of level specific discrete maths and English delivery per week with a maths or English lecturer in preparation for GCSE or Functional Skills exams.
These students are offered an appropriate level based on their Initial Assessment/Enrolment profile and may take the other subject (maths or English) and/or progress through Functional Skills levels and to GCSE in their second year as appropriate.

PCA approaches the embedding of maths and English holistically. In preparation for the expansion of pilot projects to Study Programmes, maths and English staff, in conjunction with Academic and Study Zone staff, reviewed principal courses, Functional Skills and GCSE specifications and created a bespoke set of instruments to support maths and English delivery within the studio environment. Highly visual Assessment Grid ‘posters’ containing the criteria for maths and English across Entry Levels 1-3 and Levels 1 and 2 were developed to make maths and English skills practice accessible for staff and students. This practice was also supported by a document with suggested ‘Activities’ to practice the ‘Themes’ and criteria of maths and English identified in the Assessment Grids. The instruments were designed to support adoption and ownership by principal course staff of maths and English specifications in order for them to be fully combined with their specialist subject knowledge.

In response to student feedback – via the student representative forum that informs the enhancement of students’ experience – students have an active role in how maths and English delivery is developed. A working group of students now meets with the Blended Learning and Library Research teams to develop further bespoke instruments for specialist studio practice; this shadowing of professional teams also provides a further work based activity for these students.

Key feedback from this group has shaped the review of Level 3 maths and English specifications, to extend the embedded delivery further for students who have already attained GCSE A*-C. A review is underway of currently available maths and English resources, to enhance subject relevance further. This example of work-based activity forms part of the shadowing experience, live briefs and working with external bodies and projects offered throughout FE delivery.

**Dyslexia Support**

The Academic and Support teams at PCA have developed strategies for engaging with the higher than average levels of dyslexia that this creative community tends to present, through a combination of Initial Assessment and on-going diagnostic analysis, which is used to support study programme enrolment, lesson planning and teaching strategies. The college utilises LADS\(^1\) and Study Scan\(^2\) for dyslexia.

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1. Lucid Adult Dyslexia Screening (LADS) – Computerised Dyslexia Screening and Assessment http://www.lucid-research.com/  
2. Lucid Exact – Computerised assessment of
screening, Lucid Exact and WRAT4 are also used for profiling reading ages and spelling/grammar diagnostics. PCA also uses the Kirklees reading test and an in-house dyslexia questionnaire as precursors to Exact and Study Scan.

**Employability**

The Employability Audit undertaken in the development of Study Programmes identified the high percentage of lecturers that are also practitioners and defined the employment skill set and employer links this brings to the curriculum. In addition, the college has developed an Industry Project Review Group and employed an Employer Engagement Manager to facilitate and support courses to establish and build further links with industry.

The Employability Audit pro-forma used in planning for 2013-14 is attached as an annex to this case study.

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literacy http://www.lucid-research.com/

2 Study Scan - Dyslexia screening in two parts; Quick Scan and Study Scan. http://www.studyscan.com/index.html

3 Wide Ranging Achievement Test 4 (WRAT4) – Reading, spelling and mathematical computation
Annex: Plymouth College of Art Employability Audit

Course Leader review of work related activity undertaken in 2012/13

**Course Team**

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<th>Staff member</th>
<th>Industry activity / links</th>
<th>Skills set or input used</th>
<th>- Assignment the input is used in - Nature of the delivery - College week numbers</th>
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**Externals**

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<th>- Assignment the input is used in - Nature of the delivery - College week numbers</th>
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