



Department
for Education

FE remote and blended learning case studies

**Good practice developed during the
coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic**

March 2021

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Summary

This publication provides non-statutory guidance from the Department for Education. It has been produced to document aspects of remote and blended good practice developed during the coronavirus (COVID-19 pandemic).

Expiry or review date

This guidance will be reviewed before March 2022.

Who is this publication for?

This guidance is for FE providers.

Main points

To help surface and share good practice across the FE sector, the Department for Education invited seven FE colleges to document aspects of their remote and blended learning practice that may be of interest and benefit to other FE providers.

Each case study sets out detail of practice relating to an aspect of remote and blended delivery and signposts to associated tools and resources.

Case study 1: Supporting staff to teach online

Abingdon & Witney College developed a Framework for Online Learning for staff and Digital Induction programme for students.

Context

In response to the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic, in March 2020 all FE providers moved their learning online. To support staff with varying degrees of confidence and expertise in using digital learning tools, Abingdon and Witney College put in place a 'Framework for Online Learning'. For students, a comprehensive 'digital induction' programme was implemented.

Solution

Prior to the pandemic the College had established Microsoft Office 365 as its virtual learning environment and many teachers were familiar with using Microsoft Teams to share resources, collaborate and upload assignments.

In the weeks leading up to the national lockdown in March 2020, to ensure all staff were familiar with Teams, the College ran 'how 2' lunch time training sessions, with 400 staff attending.

A digital induction programme was developed for new and returning students which included videos and guidance on logging into, and participating with online learning. It also set out other expectations of students with regard to attendance, safeguarding, and other issues of etiquette for participating in online sessions.

Throughout the initial lockdown the key message to teachers was to 'keep learning moving'. This included pre-teaching some of the following year's curriculum and thinking creatively about how best to deliver key topic areas online. To ensure effective curriculum sequencing and lesson planning, the College developed a 'Framework for Online Learning' to guide teachers through all stages of teaching, learning and assessment online.

The Framework posed questions around planning, engagement, follow up and assessment techniques. It recognised that teachers needed to think differently about establishing a productive learning culture, sequencing, retrieval practice and assessment when delivering 100% remotely or through a mix of online and on-site lessons.

The College also expanded its already established programme focused on sharing innovative teaching strategies that 'inspire, challenge and engage' (Ice) students in online delivery. A specific 'Ice Team' was set up and available to all teachers to share online video clips, digital resources, tips, tricks and strategies with a focus on online learning.

This helped help staff continue to feel connected throughout lockdown and focused on excellent teaching, learning and assessment regardless of the mode of delivery.

A Framework for Online Learning

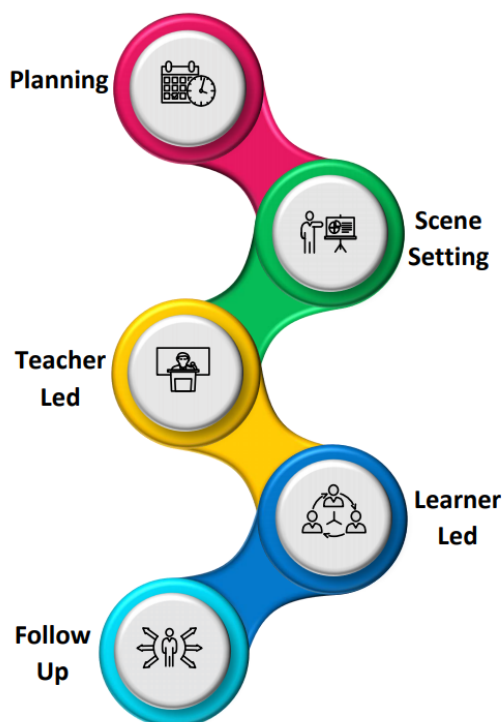


Figure 1- Diagram setting out the five components of the College’s Framework for Online Learning

Supporting students to engage and learn online

The College found that it was sometimes challenging to encourage students to keep their cameras on during live online teaching sessions and teachers found innovative ways to give students confidence, e.g. asking students to hold up different coloured objects for answers to multiple choice questions, holding competitions for most interesting Teams background and students demonstrating practical work, e.g. makeup artistry techniques and modelling.

To ensure students were clear on when and how they were expected to engage and demonstrate their learning, weekly timetables were kept consistent. From September 2020, every 16-18 full time student had sessions timetabled on-site and online. In anticipation of further lockdowns, the development of practical skills was prioritised. The differing levels of student need was also recognised in delivery methods, taking into account abilities and preferences. For example, while most level 3 students may be confident with independent learning, the same may not be the case for students studying at level 2 and below.

The use of Teams for online contact gave opportunity for teaching and support staff to ensure that students with particular needs were not disadvantaged. Channels for break-out rooms and individual chat groups meant staff could work with individuals or small groups of students to address misconceptions and knowledge gaps, providing students with additional, tailored instruction in a small setting during and outside of lessons.

The College also sought out digital solutions to - as far as possible- support students to develop specialist technical skills to continue their study online. For example, the College used the Electude e-learning platform to enable Motor Vehicle students to complete tasks as part of their online learning, including simulations. For engineering students, the College posted out microcontrollers to enable them to develop practical skills. In other subjects, coursework was adapted, such as business students organising and managing a live online event rather than a traditional face to face event.

Results

As a result of the above strategies, attendance in online lessons remained consistently high. Two different student surveys highlighted some interesting feedback. Students missed the routine of being in college and being in a physical space with their peers, and motivation to learn at home was also a big barrier. However, the vast majority of students liked the mix of independent and online learning; over 92% said their online lessons were interactive with lots of opportunities to get involved; 97% said they benefitted as their online lessons were well planned; 95% said they were helped by staff, regularly checking their learning and understanding.

The future

The College concluded that online learning can add a meaningful and holistic contribution to learning, and at its best can provide as good an opportunity for successful learning, feedback and assessment as on-site provision. It can also offer efficiencies with timetabling, sharing of resources and communication. The College therefore plans to retain some elements of online learning for most courses and will continue to invest in online provision and targeted training and support for both staff and students to enable a coordinated and consistent learning experience in college and at home.

Resources

[Digital induction programme for students](#)

[A framework for online learning](#)

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Case study 2: Redesigning the curriculum for remote delivery

Burnley College adapted their art and design courses to ensure students remained engaged and able to make progress.

Context

During national lockdowns throughout the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic, FE providers shut to all students other than those identified as vulnerable and dependents of critical workers.

At Burnley College, their art and design department identified three barriers to overcome in order to move their provision online:

- i) Student use of sketch books and paper-based portfolios
- ii) Access to specific supplies including paint, chalk, brushes and equipment such as cameras and laptops
- iii) Space needed to undertake practical work

Adaptions made and support provided

Teachers developed a list of essential resources and supplies needed to enable students to continue their education, with technicians creating individual work packs and resource packs for students. These included oil paints, brushes, coal pieces and chalk. Oasis blocks and carving tools were also provided at a cost of around £35.00 per student. Students were also assessed on an individual basis via a survey to ascertain any IT equipment and support they needed.

Supplies and equipment were made available to students via a COVID-19 secure collection service or delivery ahead of lessons being delivered through Google Classroom. This was supplemented by training and support sessions in the use of online platforms for all staff and students.

Art and design teachers, working alongside the College's IT department, ensured all students had access to specialist software they needed to undertake their courses remotely such as Photoshop, InDesign, Lightroom and Illustrator (as well as the general teaching platforms used by the College).

Tasks and assessments were redesigned to include use of materials such as oasis for carving and sculpture and use of cardboard and 'junk modelling' through materials students typically have access to at home. Online sculpture tutorials took place through Google Meet utilising the oasis blocks and carving tools provided.

All students were encouraged and supported to digitalise their sketchbooks/portfolio work. This was achieved by work being photographed and added to slides that built the pages of a portfolio. Reflections, collaborations, hyperlinks to other work and feedback were embedded into the students' digital portfolios to indicate progress over time.

Google Meet was used to ensure that students engaged in sessions by providing visual collaborative support akin to in-person delivery. Break out rooms meant students could work in groups, collaborate and provide peer feedback. Google Forms ensured that students could highlight their needs and impact could be measured instantly by reviewing answers provided.

Staff were supported and trained in using new digital platforms and tools through the College's 'Bright Spots' model. This provides the space for teachers to support each other, share good practice and access remote live and pre-recorded training on a variety of topics from teaching, learning and assessment strategies to digital tools.

Results

Tutors and students alike found Google Classroom an efficient and user-friendly platform for posting classwork, links to online tutorials and communicating en masse. Google Meet allowed students to present and discuss their work effectively and presents the opportunity for peer feedback which is an integral part of the creative process. The use of these digital platforms - and access to Adobe Photoshop and Lightroom via remote desktop - sustained students' learning and enhanced their skillset and, most importantly, enabled them to complete their courses and enjoy a positive student experience.

The switch to digital portfolios has provided a number of benefits over paper-based sketchbooks. They provide teachers instant access to students' work for monitoring, review and assessment purposes, making it easier to track student progress. It also enabled teachers to provide feedback in a more timely manner and with greater frequency - students cannot forget to bring their digital portfolio to class, unlike a sketchbook. Digital portfolios have also proved helpful for students applying for university places given they are unable to share their work in person.

The challenges for students with studio-based photography were overcome by loaning background equipment and tripods, this enhanced their ability to recreate their preferred photographic setup within a home environment. The ability to then access remote desktop and edit photographs using Photoshop and Lightroom meant they could continue to challenge themselves creatively. In effect, the provision of hardware, software and tutor support enabled students to establish mini studios and work areas from their own home.

Mainstreaming digital practice

The College reopened to all students in September. Following the successful implementation of digital portfolios, digitisation of student work and assessment pieces have been mandated across all art and design courses. This has assisted in subsequent lockdowns and when students have had to isolate, ensuring their progress has not been hindered.

Online exhibitions for students to showcase their work will also continue. The College has had a nine screen video wall installed in the art and design curriculum area to present student's digitised work to inspire students and visitors.

For further information on the practice set out in this case study please contact:

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Case study 3: Supporting transition to A level study

Burnley College Sixth Form Centre developed a transition programme to support young people making the step from GCSE to A level study during the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic.

Context

Burnley College Sixth Form Centre decided to provide additional support to local year 11 pupils planning to progress to study A levels at the College in September 2020. To inspire and raise their confidence, and to address lost GCSE learning due to the pandemic, the College developed a transition programme.

Development of transition packs

Tutors within all A Level subject areas developed a set of transition activities for each A Level course which prospective students were expected to work through over the summer.

Transition activities were published on the College website in June 2020. For each subject an introductory video was provided and a pdf setting out a range of reading, creative tasks and careers information. Applicants were advised of the packs via e-mail, the website and social media. School Liaison teams also shared this information with local schools.

Activities aimed to build upon GCSE content and provided a bridge to A Level content and gave prospective students a sense of purpose and confidence, particularly in the context of their GCSE examinations being cancelled and disruption to their education due to the coronavirus pandemic.

The College also launched a Facebook page for prospective students to interact with A Level Tutors and fellow applicants, with the aim of creating a bonded community before starting College. The Facebook page had a social aspect but was also used to make prospective students aware of live sessions held over the summer, giving students the opportunity to explore their subject and ask questions.

The College also posted a range of support and advice concerning health and wellbeing, information on travelling to the college and inspirational posts from former students about their time at college and their subsequent careers.

Results

The programme enabled prospective students to take a positive step forward in their education and feel confident and prepared for A level study and make new friends prior to starting college.

Parents and students welcomed the packs and support provided. Prospective students commented that the activities gave them the sense they were making immediate progress towards their A level studies and that they felt welcomed and comfortable ahead of formally starting at the College.

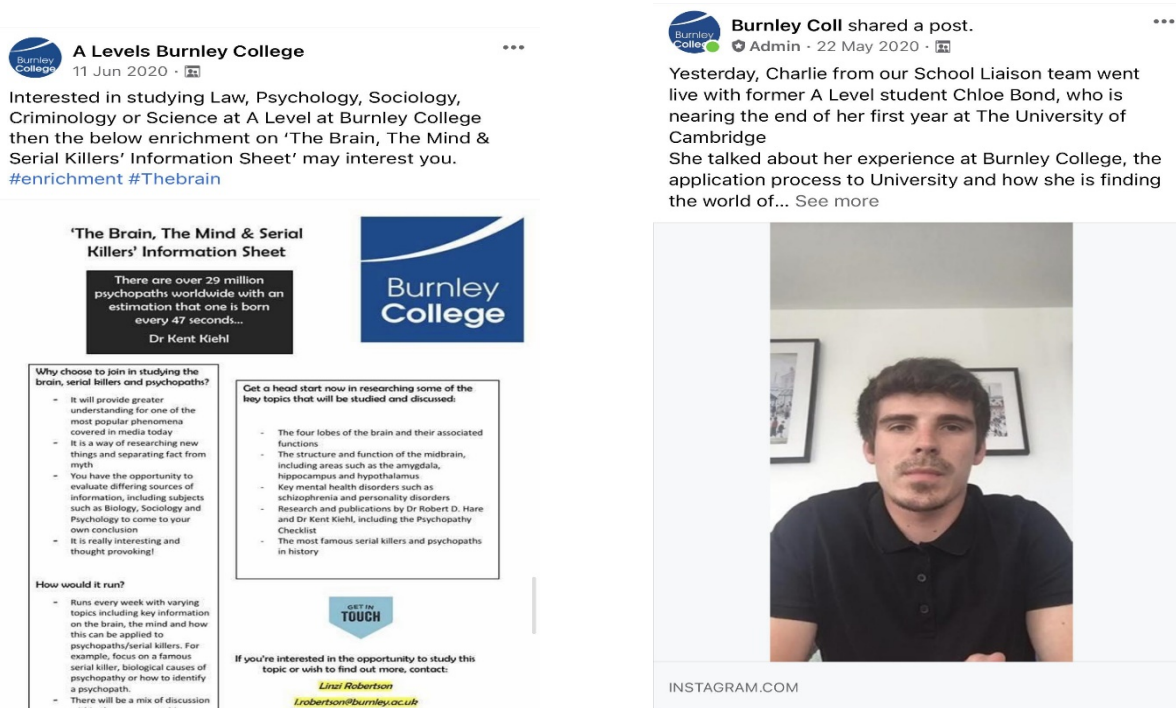


Figure 2- Example of facebook posts by the College to prospective students promoting activities aiming to prepare them for transition to A level study

Future plans

Due to the positive reception and outcomes of the programme, the College has decided to offer a similar programme to year 11 students in 2021 and to expand it to feature GCSE 'masterclasses'. This programme will be made open to any potential applicant via the website and will also be advertised by local schools and through social media.

Resources

[A Level Transition Programme resources](#)

[Transition Task website](#)

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Case study 4: Strategies for simultaneous delivery of on-site and remote provision

Huddersfield New College set out their approach to delivering blended provision.

Context

In response to the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic, Huddersfield New College decided to:

- Adopt a model of simultaneous on-site and remote delivery to ensure they could rapidly adjust delivery to changing circumstances with the minimum of disruption to teachers' planned delivery and students' learning
- maintain the existing timetable and replicate, as fully as possible, the in-class experience when delivering remote lessons
- create an intranet site for staff to access 'how to' videos to assist with effective deployment of online tools when teaching.

Benefits of the new delivery model

This model allowed the College to switch from fully on-site provision through to fully remote, or a blend, depending on local and national restrictions. It also allowed any students who were unable to attend on-site to continue to access their lessons remotely.

This flexibility was deployed throughout the first half of the 2020/21 academic year. In the autumn term the College initially adopted a blended delivery model for all students- with two thirds of curriculum being delivered on-site and one third delivered remotely- to ensure that staff and students could socially distance and ensure Covid-19 compliance on-site. As the country entered the third National Lockdown in January 2021, the College moved to 100% remote delivery.

To ensure consistent standards of remote and blended delivery, the College developed guidance on the effective delivery of simultaneous and live online lessons. The guidance incorporated eight key strategies (figure 3) and was shared with all staff in training sessions. The College also posted a range of support and advice concerning health and wellbeing, information on travelling to the college and inspirational posts from former students about their time at college and their subsequent careers.

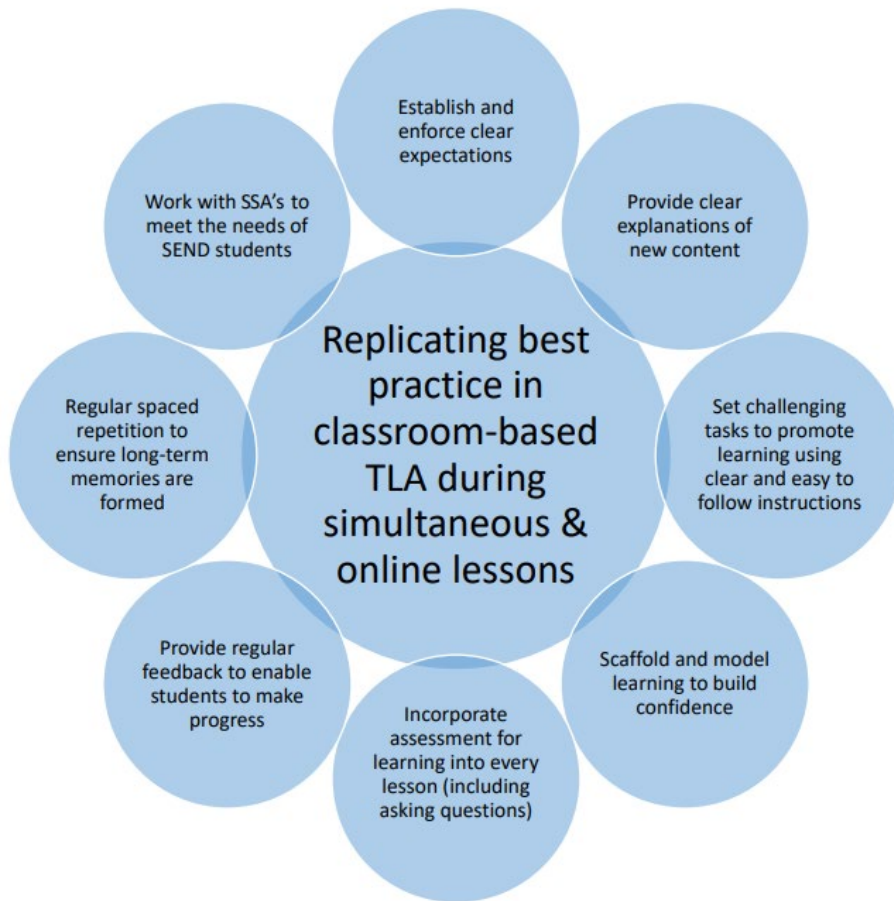


Figure 3- Diagram setting out eight suggestions for replicating best practice in classroom based teaching, learning and assessment in online delivery

Results

Delivering simultaneous face-to-face and online lessons allowed the College to rapidly respond to changing national and regional restrictions. Also, as a result of recording all lessons, the College was able to support students who had been unable to attend lessons and mitigate the risk of falling behind for those at the greatest risk of lost learning.

Resources

[Best practice guide on simultaneous and online lessons](#)

[Simultaneous lessons using a word document](#)

[Using Microsoft Forms during lessons](#)

[Uploading work into posts to make a quick assessment of student engagement](#)

For further information on the practice set out in this case study please contact:

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Case study 5: Delivering excellent onsite and remote learning to SEND students

How London South East Colleges (LSEC) adapted their provision for SEND students during the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic.

Context

During the national lockdown, LSEC planned to continue to provide all their SEND students with safe and Covid-secure face-to-face learning. However, many students and parents requested that they would prefer to continue their education remotely. So LSEC set out to:

- quickly design new forms of remote delivery for SEND students that maintained LSEC's commitment to provide highly personalised learning
- introduce personalised timetables, wraparound support for online live lessons, regular personalised feedback and new approaches to delivering work experience
- reassure students and parents that it was safe to attend lessons on-site.

Personalised timetables

Every student was provided a personalised timetable, based on their preferred mode of learning. In addition they received, either face-to-face, online or paper-based programmes of work. This allowed LSEC to keep track of students' levels of engagement and ensure that teaching was as close to their pre-lockdown curriculum as possible. It has also helped maintain a level of routine and normality for students.

Online live lessons

Online live lessons were timetabled for two groups, with one group having a greater level of student support. Teaching and support staff were assigned to the different groups depending on their skill sets and experience in supporting various student needs.

Students who were unable to access online education or travel to LSEC were provided with paper-based lessons, incorporating content of the timetabled online lessons. Teachers continued to reach out to students following paper-based work, ensuring regular contact and to check they remain engaged.

Providing regular timetabled online lessons helped ensure engagement and provided a set routine for students and their families. Each lesson lasted for two hours, with one hour minimum of teaching. Learning support staff stayed on the call over the full two hour period to support students to complete activities set during the lesson, with any resources sent beforehand.

Ensuring students had time to complete their tasks, with support on hand, enabled them to build greater independence. Learning support staff also helped to ensure that all students' concerns were heard and supported them while teachers were delivering online lessons – and unable to offer individual tailored support at that particular time.

Regular feedback

LSEC provided students and their parents regular reports on their progress. These reports flagged any concerns around anxiety and stress and monitored the extent to which students were able to actively participate and engage with remote learning.

LSEC also asked SEND students and their parents to complete a feedback form on how they found online delivery. This enabled the college to identify where additional support could be provided or if the mode of delivery needed to be changed. LSEC concluded that remote learning is not ideal for students with more complex needs, particularly if parents are unable to provide the support their children need to participate with online learning.



SEND Online learning Feedback Form.

Parents and learners, please complete this feedback form on how the online delivery is going during lockdown. We would like to hear your comments and suggestions.

Part A:

Learner Name	
Parent Name Supporting completion of the form	
Course Name	

Part B:

1. How many of your online lessons do you attend per week?	
2. If you are not attending all the planned lessons, why is this?	
3. Do you receive work via email and/or post to complete and return?	
4. What have you enjoyed about the online lessons? (the good)	
5. What have you not enjoyed about the online lessons? (the bad)	
6. How could the lessons be improved?	

Figure 4- Form issued by LSEC to SEND students to gain feedback on remote delivery

LSEC also engaged in regular communication with students and parents to update them on the establishment of the SEND 'Hub'. This information explained the strict social distancing measures and COVID-19 protocols in place, which gave students and parents greater confidence to attend on-site.

An alternative approach to providing work experience

LSEC temporarily suspended some of their supported internship programmes as large numbers of employers closed their sites. However, students on work experience at LSEC were still able to attend on-site once a week.

In cases where students were not able to participate in work experience, Bromley Mencap delivered online workshops to help keep students' employability skills fresh, so they will be ready to take up placements once lockdown restrictions are lifted.

LSEC also appointed a 'Year Here' social innovation fellow to work with the College to develop a variety of new work experiences through online innovation. LSEC plan to establish an online shop for SEND students to gain valuable retail and digital experience, using virtual reality to simulate real working environments.

Testing

To reassure students and their parents it was safe to attend lessons on-site, LSEC worked with their local authority to ensure a safe environment for SEND students during the pandemic. Since 11 January 2021, LSEC operated a lateral flow testing centre to provide further protective measures and to ensure greater confidence among parents and students about attending face-to-face lessons.

Resources

[Special Educational Needs at LSEC](#)

For further information on the practice set out in this case study please contact:

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Case study 6: Ensuring high quality blended delivery

How Manchester College introduced blended delivery models across their curriculum using reflective practice and continuous improvement

Context

Lessons learnt from the first national lockdown in spring 2020 provided the starting point for Manchester College to develop an approach to curriculum planning that was agile and responsive to the specific skills and knowledge requirements of each curriculum area.

Blended delivery models for each curriculum area

Curriculum leaders, working with their teams, developed their initial curriculum models for blended learning from September 2020. These built on the foundation of safe working practices (including curriculum based risk assessments and social distancing) and on the potential for increased online and other remote learning practice.

In presenting their proposed new blended delivery model, senior leaders at the College asked staff from each department to consider the intent, implementation and impact of their delivery models. Focus was placed on timings of practical vs theoretical elements and how these could be best delivered to ensure a cohesive sequential learning pattern.

Creative arts

For example, in Creative Arts, realising the importance of skills acquisition, they sequenced learning to prioritise practice face-to-face early in the autumn term whilst ensuring that knowledge based aspects were delivered where possible online.

In visual arts learner resource packs were provided for home study and in performing arts they online live lessons ensured students continued to develop their dance and physical fitness at home and provided opportunities for students to develop their online performance skills in music and performing arts. Industry partners, such as Band on the Wall gave opportunities for students to live-stream performances early in the academic year, when they still had face-to-face support from their teachers in preparation for their performance.

Formal six weekly reviews with senior leadership of the new delivery models identified what worked well for students, what wasn't working, and emerging good practice was shared across the curriculum departments. The regular reviews enabled curriculum leaders, with support from senior leaders to reshape and restructure their curriculum in-year and were able to respond rapidly to changes and external challenges.

The reflective model has also supported in year adaptations where necessary to improve learner experience. Evidence used has been student attendance and punctuality, learner

progress with assessments and grades compared to target grade, 'stop and ask' activities with learners and focus groups with teachers.

"The formal six weekly reviews by senior leadership provided a clear focus for us and as a team we were reviewing our models almost on a weekly basis and making changes as we learned what worked best for our students" Stuart Steen Assistant Principal – Creative Arts

Results

The whole team approach to planning has created a reflective practice culture, where teachers are more willing to take risks and integrate digital technologies into their curriculum.

Attendance at face-to-face practical sessions was higher than before the pandemic with 100 % attendance on L1 and L2 courses. Completion of independent work has also increased. For example completion of homework for music technology has risen from 25% to 90%.

Students are valuing the opportunity to learn how to showcase and present their creative work to a wider audience online. For example, 750 people watched the Band on the Wall online event and a highly successful cross-curricular project provided a virtual Christmas performance for isolated care home residents across Manchester.

Mainstreaming practice

The sharing of good practice in curriculum design across the departments has been made permanent in a new 'Leadership of Learning' programme for curriculum leaders to share practice and shared across the Greater Manchester Colleges Group.

Resources

[Greater Manchester Digital and Blended Learning project presentation](#)

For further information on the practice set out in this case study please contact:

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Case study 7: Supporting students with learning difficulties and disabilities to participate in online learning

Walsall College adapted their online delivery to ensure inclusivity for students with learning difficulties and disabilities.

Context

During the pandemic on-site attendance was restricted at schools and colleges and education shifted online for all students other than students identified as vulnerable and dependents of critical workers.

For some teachers this required them to teach face to face and online simultaneously. This case study sets out how a teacher at Walsall College adapted her delivery to ensure that three students with learning difficulties and disabilities in her class of sixteen (two who were deaf and one who had learning difficulties), were supported to access their learning alongside their fellow students.

Solution

The teacher planned her combined face-to-face and online lessons, using:

- online real-time subtitles within online synchronous lessons
- making available lecture notes and subtitled videos
- using a Roger pen (that makes people's voices clearer over the background noise)
- using the interpreter effectively
- learning sign language

At the very start of the course the students were briefed on social distancing and Covid-19 adjustments at the College and then attended training at the College on how to use Microsoft Teams for learning and to practice their new skills. Training included expected behaviours and etiquette when online such as muting microphones, raising hands, using chat facilities and subtitles. By making clear these expectations, the students understood that attending online classes is like being in a classroom and therefore understood the importance of acting appropriately.

In order to comply with Covid-19 restrictions which required a significant reduction in the number of students attending on-site, the teacher split the group into two smaller groups where students attended on-site on alternate weeks. Both groups were timetabled into the same session with one group in the classroom and the other group attending online at the same time. Both groups interacted online with each other during the lesson using subtitles and captions within the shared learning environment.

Resulting benefits for students

The students who are deaf stated that the new technologies and the mixed face-to-face and online session has allowed them to feel more included and part of the group. Students have seen the benefit of working with different people, which has fostered team work in the completion of tasks and has led to stronger student relationships.

Some students have forged closer relationships by using Microsoft Teams to chat to each other at break-time, and this has helped the deaf students feel included without the need for the tutor or interpreter to assist them. This new level of independence for these students has helped them feel much more integrated into college life.

Lessons learnt

Before using real-time subtitles, teachers needed to practice and remember to speak clearly and slowly, otherwise the subtitles would appear inaccurate (see considerations when using subtitles video).

At times when waiting for student responses via the chat in Microsoft Teams there can be a delay, unlike when a student uses their microphone where they can be heard instantly. Some students can have younger siblings / other noises at home which prevent them from unmuting their microphone and so it is important to remember to give the students time to respond.

This practice for inclusive teaching and learning is being shared across the College and wider across the West Midlands Colleges through the DfE College Collaboration Fund (CCF) Online Synchronous Learning Project.

Resources

[Video training on using subtitles on Microsoft Teams and Powerpoint](#)

For further information on the practice set out in this case study please contact:

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Case study 8: Establishing quality standards for online teaching, learning and assessment

Walsall College established a vision for high quality online teaching, learning and assessment and supported staff to develop their skills and confidence through their Digital Educator Programme.

Context

Following the first lockdown in March 2020, there was a broad range of practice at Walsall College, with teachers using a variety of technologies including email, WhatsApp and social media to teach remotely, and with a minority delivering live online lessons. In a drive to ensure consistent, high standards across the curriculum, the College quickly established a strategy and vision for delivering quality online teaching, learning and assessment.

Solution

The College introduced a Digital Educator Programme (DEP) which provided professional development for staff and established standards for producing online materials and conducting online sessions. The Programme has three levels:

Bronze (Essential) – All staff including services – Mandatory

This programme develops staff awareness of the importance of producing accessible resources – it includes assistive technologies, using Microsoft learning assistance and gives an overview of the accessibility directive (2018). Staff receive a college certificate, a physical bronze badge on their lanyard and virtual badge on their email signature.

Silver (Skilled) – All staff including services staff

This programme covers the practical use of technology – e.g. how to record voice and video in PowerPoint, how to hold a Teams/Zoom Lesson, how to effectively support students using a Virtual Learning Environment. Part 2 of the silver level – requires an online assessment on pedagogy and online asynchronous, synchronous (real-time) and face-to-face on campus curricula. Staff receive a college certificate, physical silver badge on their lanyard and virtual badge on their email signature. Staff can also collect points towards becoming a Microsoft Innovator.

Gold (Innovator) – All Teaching Staff

This programme is based on the Microsoft Certified Educator (MCE) and International 21st Century Framework for teaching, learning and assessment using technology and focuses on applying technology through a set of pedagogic principals. Teachers can take the MCE exam and achieve the recognised global Microsoft standard. Staff receive an

MCE Certificate, physical gold badge on their lanyard and virtual MCE badge on their email signature.

Gold– Service Areas

This programme is based on the Microsoft Office Specialist (MOS) programmes for specific expert areas of technology e.g. Excel, Word, Outlook, 365, SharePoint, OneNote etc. Staff receive an MOS Certificate, physical gold badge on their lanyard and virtual MOS badge on their email signature.

In addition, the Workforce Development Team developed further training based on best practice from within the College and external resources available nationally, including Open Learn, Future Learn, LinkedIn Learning and the National Careers Service Online Skills Toolkit.



Figure 5- Digital Educator Programme Badges

Results

The DEP programme enabled the College to successfully introduce a blended online synchronous, asynchronous and face-to-face timetabled curriculum in all curriculum areas.

Resources

[Walsall College Education Technology Strategy and Vision Statement 2020-21](#)

For further information on the practice set out in this case study please contact:

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Case study 9: Using technology to support staff mental health and well-being

To support staff during the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic, Weston College developed 'Let's Chat', an online service focused on mental health and well-being.

Context

Mindful of the pressure on its workforce, Weston College developed a new online service to support the mental health, emotional well-being and resilience of staff so they could continue to deliver excellent teaching and support students through a highly challenging period.

Solution

In summer 2020, the College submitted a bid in partnership with the Gateshead College and the Somerset Counselling Centre to the Department for Education (DfE) for the College Collaboration Fund to build an online health and well-being service for initial piloting at the two colleges, ahead of sharing this for use across the FE sector.

The collaboration has resulted in 'Let's Chat', a branded and innovative package of well-being support that brings together the expertise of education practitioners, mental health practitioners and GPs to holistically support the well-being of staff and students during the Covid-19 pandemic. Let's Chat comprises of three workstreams:

i) **Specialist therapy for students and staff**

The provision of remote, specialist 1-2-1 support for students and staff, with differentiated support for SEND students.

ii) **FE Workforce Development**

The creation of four specific activities to equip staff with the skills and expertise to manage their own well-being and be able to adapt their teaching to enhance their students' well-being and outcomes. These four activities include:

- Emotional Literacy CPD. A two-hour workshop to support staff to improve their emotional literacy and their emotional vocabulary and develop appropriate strategies and tools to approach well-being.
- An opportunity for key staff to acquire an in-depth understanding of mental health and the factors that affect well-being by achieving the Mental Health First Aid certification.

- Wellbeing focus groups, where staff can explore mental health and well-being issues in a therapeutic environment over a period of 8 weeks led by specialist practitioners.
- Staff MOTs which provide staff with an opportunity to discuss any issues of concern in a confidential environment with a well-being specialist.

iii) **Creation of on-demand thematic resources**

A comprehensive series of engaging on-demand content was produced to feature on the new 'Let's Chat' website. This is augmented by tutorial materials to enable FE providers to embed this support within their own institutions and delivery.

Results

Since its launch mid-December 2020:

- the 'Let's Chat' website has received 2,000+ hits
- the webinar series has been viewed over 1,100 times
- over 500 staff and students to date have accessed 1:1 remote therapy through the specialist partner and specialist practitioners through Let's Chat
- Both colleges are also integrating the content into tutorials across 16-19 study programmes in the 20/21 spring term
- On average, participating staff now describe their knowledge of mental health and wellbeing as '8/10' compared to '5/10' at the start of the project

Resources

[Let's Chat website](#)

For further information on the practice set out in this case study please contact:

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Figure 6- Screenshot from Let's Chat website

Case study 10: Supporting students with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) to learn remotely

Weston College adapted their curriculum to reduce social isolation, invested in new technology to help students develop life skills from home and worked closely with parents to support their SEND students during the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic.

Context

National restrictions during the coronavirus pandemic resulted in many SEND students facing changes to their routines, structure and support networks. Parents and carers have also faced new challenges in how best to manage their child's care and educational needs at home and how to balance this with their wider home and work life.

Solution

Weston College made the following changes to their SEND delivery:

- i) **Prepared a personalised strategy for supporting each student available to everyone working with the young person**, informed by information from Education and Health Care Plans (EHCPs), initial assessments, transition meetings, Personal Education Plan (PEP) meetings and shared information from social workers, Youth Offending Teams and medical clinicians.
- ii) **Adapted the curriculum to reduce social isolation and maintain a clear line of sight to work**, by introducing team building and group-based activities that support social and communication skills. This also included delivering enterprise projects to ensure students gain skills for work whilst they are unable to access work experience; for example by putting together care packages for local nursery homes and an online Christmas Market.
- iii) **Using technology to enhance the curriculum**. The College invested in the specialist SEND digital platform 'AutonoMe' to support students to develop independent living skills in the home through tailored instructional content accessed via a digital app platform and one to one support.
- iv) **Partnered and collaborated with parents and carers to support students with SEND**. The College made greater use of parent's evenings and parental forums to create an informal and unpressurised environment for parents to access additional support in accessing the digital platform, creating routines, structures and activities within the home environment, and providing space for parents in similar situations to meet and share their experiences and challenges.

Results

Through the adaptations described, the College has achieved the following outcomes for SEND students during the pandemic:

- SEND student retention across the College at 96%
- SEND attendance exceeded 93%
- Current figures in 20/21 show that their Foundation Learning curriculum achieved retention outcomes of 100%
- SEND achievement on main programme in 19/20 was 91%

The college has identified six 'cornerstones' that underpin their successful approach in supporting SEND students to learn remotely:

- i) Stay connected and support students to establish and maintain their new routine
- ii) Be active – do not dismiss the link between physical activity and wellbeing
- iii) Adapt lessons to their new environment – support students to learn new skills at home
- iv) Focus on giving to others – creating positive feelings and a sense of reward
- v) Pay attention to the present – do not neglect thoughts on what is happening
- vi) Empower parents to play a key role in their child's learning

Resources

Weston College is one of three national Centres for Excellence for SEND run by the Education & Training Foundation. A variety of information, resources and contact details can be accessed on the [Excellence Gateway](#).

For further information on the practice set out in this case study please contact:

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