



Department  
for Education

# College Collaboration Fund (CCF)

Insight Report:  
Digital Content Workstream

November 2021





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# Introduction

## The College Collaboration Fund (CCF)

The [College Collaboration Fund \(CCF\)](#) is a national programme of competitive grant funding that in its first year (2020-21), due to the COVID-19 pandemic, provided support to colleges during one of the most challenging times in modern history.

The first year's total £5.4 million grant funding has supported 20 projects involving 71 FE colleges across England to address shared quality improvement challenges. These colleges have developed new ways of working and produced a range of resources and learning that has been shared with the rest of the FE and wider education sector. The CCF builds on the learning from previous programmes, including the Strategic College Improvement Fund (SCIF).

The CCF focussed on delivering quality improvement against the three priority themes of:

- leadership and governance
- financial and resource management
- quality of education

## What does this report cover?

Throughout the first round of the CCF, the Department for Education provided programme coordination and project support across the CCF's three workstreams:

- Development of new digital content for vocational subject(s)
- Development of approaches and digital content for learner support
- Development of approaches to improve workforce and organisational capacity and capability for digital delivery

The purpose of this report is to share the insights, learning and good practice from those projects who have focused on developing digital curriculum content. Information on the other workstreams can be found [here](#).

## Who is this report for?

- College Principals, CEOs and Vice Principals
- FE senior leadership teams
- College practitioners
- FE and other education sector stakeholder organisations

# Development of digital curriculum content and resources to support remote and blended delivery

## CCF workstream objective

To support the FE sector, ensuring digital content was developed to compliment the education and engagement students would receive with face to face provision, was representative of a wide range of subject areas and open-source, and could be used by other FE providers to deliver remote and blended learning.

## Overview

Each of the CCF projects brought together a group of FE colleges with subject and remote and blended learning expertise to:

- Review existing digital content and resources from across the FE sector, industry and beyond
- Bring together subject experts to design and produce new digital content and resources

## Outputs

The CCF has published a list of the digital curriculum content produced which covers a range of subject areas and is free for use by all FE teaching staff and other education providers.

The digital content and other resources developed through the CCF can be found [here](#)



# Colleges Involved

The colleges that had a focus around the development of digital content included:

<u>Lead Colleges</u>	<u>Partner Colleges</u>
     	          



# Key Outcomes and Impacts

Over **300,000** learners engaged in the CCF have benefited from the new online materials

Almost **60,000\*** views, hits and downloads of digital curriculum content pages received through the DfE Remote Education Service and CCF gov.uk pages

Over **780** new items of digital curriculum content created and published on DfE Remote Education Service web page

***“The lessons that have been created have positively impacted revision due to increased availability of resources for students and teachers within the Colleges.”***

Laura Revill, Wilberforce College








***“How skilled the students have become and so quickly. It’s become very much part of our online package now for our apprenticeship programs and that will stay permanently.”*** Head of Apprenticeships, Berkshire College of Agriculture

***“The CCF funding created a significant opportunity for development of online resources for apprenticeships and progressed ambitions for ensuring all apprenticeship delivery can be flexibly delivered.”*** Juliet Holloway, Windsor Forest College

***“I was really delighted by the virtual work experience program, I think since we’re in a pandemic this was an amazing way to gain work experience and knowledge.”*** Learner, Ealing, Hammersmith and West London College

***“Providing staff with high quality online content has made a huge difference. It’s reduced an already overwhelming work load and we have seen proof that blended learning can make education more accessible to a wider range of learners.”*** Amy Hollier, Heart of Worcestershire College

# Key Insights and Top Tips

-  **1**  
Ensuring you have the right amount of **time, resources and budget** available is essential.
-  **2**  
Consider how you can **evaluate the impact** of your new digital content including gathering feedback through your hosting website.
-  **3**  
It is important to **identify staff strengths and development needs** at the start of the project and **seek any necessary support and advice**. This ensures staff can be adequately upskilled if needed.
-  **4**  
It helps to **engage software developers early** on in the development of digital content to avoid delays later.
-  **5**  
New digital content developed should be **accessible and adaptable**. Using white labelling (i.e. free of organisational branding or logos) allows your digital content to be re-purposed by others.
-  **6**  
**Piloting** the digital content and **early testing** is key in addressing any issues early on and gauging student engagement levels with the resources.
-  **7**  
Ensure new digital content is **quality assured and tested**.

# Case Study 1

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**Lead College:** Wilberforce College (Venn Group)

**Partner colleges:** Franklin College, John Leggott College, Wyke College, Scarborough Sixth Form College

**Total cost of project:** £181,000

**Written by:** Laura Revill, Projects and Operations Director, Venn Group





# Case Study 1 (Page 1 of 4)

## Preparation

### **What was the problem you were trying to address?**

Our aim was to improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment in the delivery of blended learning across several key subject areas.

### **Who was involved?**

63 subject experts from across all five colleges were involved in creating digital content to be shared via an online platform. Additionally, staff from eight secondary partner schools were involved in the creation of digital GCSE maths content for a new virtual maths hub.

### **What did you set out to achieve and why was it important?**

Our objective was to create digital learning content which would be accessible across the FE sector through a free to access online platform.

Our focus was on specific priority subjects including English, maths, health and social care, humanities, psychology and business. The learning materials would support student catch up as well as raising student achievement levels and address potential loss of learning due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The materials would also improve student engagement with digital learning.

### **How did you plan to measure success?**

Our measures of success were:

- Improved student engagement and outcomes
- Improved teacher confidence in delivering remote and blended learning

The expected outputs and outcomes were:

- Creation of 250 items of high-quality digital content in 16 key subject areas
- A new virtual maths hub for Humber and North Yorkshire to improve students achievement and help levelling-up of GCSE maths outcomes
- Strengthened partnership and collaborative working relationships that support sharing of good practice and improving student outcomes

## Implementation

### **How did you implement the project?**

The colleges collaborated on the design of new digital broadcast lessons for priority subjects and agreed on a format for their delivery. Different digital technologies were used to enable creation of digital content that would fully engage students and support independent and teacher led learning. The new online platform was developed alongside the new Virtual Maths Hub.

# Case Study 1 (Page 2 of 4)

## What challenges did you encounter?

We ran an initial pilot of the work to identify and resolve any issues before rolling out the approach. This proved very useful both in ensuring digital content was developed within timescales and in identifying existing staff strengths, development needs and support upskilling.

Other challenges we encountered were:

- **Effective communication:** due to COVID-19 all meetings took place remotely which made team working and collaboration a challenge. This was addressed by using online platforms to facilitate meetings and deliver staff training.
- **Staff capability:** the skills required to develop digital content were new to some staff however, this provided a fantastic opportunity for them to upskill.
- **Access to software:** as staff were having to work from home they didn't always have access to the relevant software to produce digital content. This meant that some materials had to be created in different versions of software and then amended later.
- **Quality assurance:** with a large volume of digital content being produced by different members of staff ensuring consistency of quality was an issue. This was addressed by providing quality assurance checklists to each content producer that specified the quality standards that needed to be met. New digital content which was then subject to a further two stage quality assurance process.
- **Ensuring accessibility:** ensuring resources were accessible was a challenge due to limitations of the software being used. To overcome this, staff were upskilled in the development of accessible documents and is now an expertise that they will take in to their future teaching.
- **Student engagement:** it was vital that students engaged with the digital content that was produced therefore, early testing was put in place to capture learner feedback and improve design.
- **Evidencing impact:** the intention was to use student achievement rates to evaluate the impact of new digital content however, as a result of COVID-19 the introduction of teacher assessed grades meant we needed to consider alternative data. To address this, supplementary qualitative evidence was gathered from students and teachers.

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## Review

### What was the impact of your work?

- Staff are feeling more confident in producing digital lessons with 94% of teachers reporting increased confidence in creating online lessons
- Students are engaging positively in remote learning with 98% of learners finding digital lessons were effective in delivering content
- We have established a college process for quality assurance of digital content production
- We have strengthened partnerships, commitment to collaboration, and increased sharing of good practice, with 69% of teachers reporting it has provided opportunity for sharing in the future

The digital content and new platform has positively impacted revision because of increased accessibility for students and with improved student engagement with the digital resources we expect this will also support catch up work.

Also, the new platform has provided a future proof solution to online learning and laid the foundations for a collaborative approach to continue developing digital learning in the future.

### The project delivered:

- [New digital resource bank](#) with 250 digital curriculum resources in 16 key subject areas
- [New regional Virtual Maths Hub](#), Level 2 & 3 maths resources and Year 12 and 13 maths transition toolkit
- A teaching and learning conference for teachers.
- New digital Year 11 and FE transition hub
- [A virtual careers and progression event](#) attended by 1,147 learners and 73 employers and HE providers

## Reflections and next steps

### What are your reflections on what did and didn't work, and the steps you are taking to spread the learning and impact of your work wider?

Overall the project provided a fantastic learning experience for all the colleges involved.

First off, it is important to do your research and forward planning at the start to understand and address any technical requirements and put in place quality assurance processes. We would also advise seeking support and advice from others in the sector.

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Some technical aspects of the project provided an initial challenge and highlighted staff skills gaps. In addressing these, our staff have developed expertise that will help them, their students and their institutions in the future.

Running pilot work and early stage testing digital content is key to ensure any issues are addressed as early as possible and also to understand how successful your resources are in engaging your students.

We found the 'lessons learnt exercise' we conducted really helped to identify the key learning points that we will use to both improve how we work and have been able to share with others.

For other colleges looking to develop digital content we would strongly recommend taking a collaborative approach. This provides a fantastic opportunity for your staff to learn from one another and share best practice, maximise the expertise available to you, and provide your students with a broad range of accessible materials to support their learning.

Finally, we will continue to build on the suite of digital lessons and learning materials so do keep an eye on our website for new digital content we add.

## **How are you planning on sustaining your work and the collaborative relationships?**

Through the working groups that developed the new digital content this work has built on our long-standing relationships. We will be continuing to collaborate further on other projects and future events, including a Virtual Skills Day. Also, we will be looking to scale up the reach of our work to include other local 11-16 providers.

# Case Study 2

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**Lead College:** Heart of Worcestershire College

**Partner college:** Grimsby Institute of Technology (TEC Partnership)

**Total cost of project:** £520,000

**Written by:** Amy Hollier, Director of Blended & Online Learning at Blended Learning Consortium, Heart of Worcestershire College



# Case Study 2 (Page 1 of 4)

## Preparation

### **What was the problem you were trying to address?**

Our aim was to address the gap in high quality, accessible and free to use interactive digital content that could support effective blended learning, with a particular focus in vocational subject areas.

### **Who was involved?**

Heart of Worcestershire College (HoW) worked on this project with Grimsby Institute (GIFHE). We have a history of collaboration over the last 6 years since the establishment of the Blended Learning Consortium (BLC) in 2014.

### **What did you set out to achieve and why was this important?**

This project stemmed from the regular conversations our two colleges have had as leaders of the BLC with other member institutions. Through these we identified the challenge for FE providers in being able to find high quality online learning resources for vocational study.

The CCF project was an ideal opportunity to create a free, open source library of high quality vocational online learning material that would provide accessible resources for institutions across England, regardless of their size or financial standing and which could be built on in years to come.

Overall, the funding would enable over 285 hours of resources to be created and, with the BLC currently reaching over 250,000 students, this had the capacity to extend the benefit far beyond our two colleges.

### **How did you plan to measure success?**

The hosting platform that has been created, and continues to be managed, maintained and updated by HoW, provides digital content for institutions to access independently and download when required.

We used download and user statistics to measure success and these are drawn from institutional Learning Management System (LMS) but initially we derived these from the main hosting platform at HoW. We also distributed learner surveys to gather user feedback and inform ongoing development of material.

## Implementation

### **How did you implement the project?**

We built on the lessons we have learnt at HoW college from years of online learning resource development. A project manager was put in place at each college along with a development team. This ensured each team had capacity to solely focus on the work of the CCF project and develop content at a fast pace.



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It was crucial to undertake robust needs analysis across the sector to determine which vocational subject areas should be prioritised. This was conducted using the BLC network and the wider DfE funded EdTech Demonstrator network, allowing us to reach over 75% of the FE sector.

Feedback from this work was that FE colleges needed digital curriculum content to be produced to SCORM (Shareable Content Object Reference Model) standards. This would enable colleges to easily place resources into their own virtual learning environment and provide the ability to track learner progress and engagement.

Many colleges responded that they were in desperate need of generic content including employability and mental health, as well as content to support more practical vocational areas such as health and social care and public services.

The team we put in place were highly experienced in the development of online learning resources. This positioned us well to ensure digital content was developed at pace and we were able to start sharing material within two months of starting the project.

## **What challenges did you encounter?**

There were only very minor challenges faced during the project including waiting for writers to return written content. This mainly

affected timescales and was easily managed through clear communication including regular development meetings.

Content was regularly quality assured and tested both internally and externally. This was carried out by member institutions of the BLC and other FE colleges involved in other CCF projects.

A Moodle virtual learning environment was developed by HoW to host the content. This enabled users to easily access content without having to set up an account or log into a system meaning there were no issues around GDPR as there is no collection of data.

## **Review**

### **What was the impact of your work?**

The production of over 300 individual interactive learning objects has enabled FE and other institutions to provide a good level of digital content for their learners without having to invest.

The statistics from Moodle usage and downloads is one indicator that has shown us the digital content was needed and is being used across all subject areas. In the first month (March 2021) there were 50,055 individual course views with over 4,000 downloads of different digital curriculum content.

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At the time of writing it is too early to provide evidence from learner outcomes however, some initial findings from our learner survey show:

- 83% of learners agreed the resources helped them to understand the topic
- 74% of learners felt the resources helped to improve their overall knowledge of the subject
- 82% of learners said the resources were an enjoyable way to learn.
- 82% of learners were confident they achieved the session objectives

Feedback from educators has been incredibly positive with many saying how useful they have found it to have easy access to the new bank of resources. Many institutions using the content do not have sufficient budgets to pay for access to resources and therefore gratefully acknowledged the open access to these.

## **The project delivered:**

- **New Moodle VLE to host content**
- **303 individual SCORM objects**, incorporating micro-assessments, and covering 12 subject areas
- Sharing of resources with all FE providers including 150 FE Colleges via the BLC regional network

## **Reflections and next steps**

### **What are your reflections on what did and didn't work, and the steps you are taking to spread the learning and impact of your work wider?**

First off, before starting the development stage make sure you set realistic targets for how long it will take to write your digital content. When working with multiple stakeholders this can often affect production timelines and delay development.

Ensuring learner accessibility for your digital content needs to be a top priority. Through our work we have seen further proof that blended learning can make education more accessible to a much wider range of learners including adults and those with caring responsibilities.

Alongside this, is the learning that digital curriculum content needs to be accessible for all FE providers regardless of financial standing.

It's important to get feedback from users of your digital content, we have seen what a difference it makes to provide teachers with high quality online content to help reduce an already overwhelming work load.

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Remember that there is real benefit in working with others and sharing the expertise, experiences and lessons you all hold and will gain from developing digital content. We have had the opportunity to work and share learning with GIFHE and a number of other CCF FE colleges who have also developed new digital content.

We will continue to develop digital resources and hope we can continue to share these with the wider sector. Since completing this project we have gone on to support FE colleges with their pedagogical practice to help them make full use of the digital content we have made available.

## **How are you planning on sustaining your work and the collaborative relationships?**

We are incredibly proud to have been part of this project and feel that we have been able to make a difference for the whole of the FE sector, at a time of real need with COVID-19.

All colleges involved through this project have learnt a lot about partnership work and we will definitely continue to work together. It has proven that we are better when we work together rather than competitively.

As part of our approach to continuing to work with other providers, sharing best practice and promoting the new digital content we are planning future webinars and CPD events, including the BLC summer conference.

Also, as HoW is an EdTech Demonstrator College, we will use the new resources to showcase effective blended learning and encourage a move towards enhanced digital literacy for all.

# Further Information

## **Additional information on the CCF**

Please visit our gov.uk page: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/college-collaboration-fund-ccf>

## **Contact us**

If you have any questions please contact us through our dedicated mailbox:  
[college.collaborationfund@education.gov.uk](mailto:college.collaborationfund@education.gov.uk)