

Community of Practice Development Form

Credit Accumulation and Transfer Scheme (CATS) Pilot Projects

1. Background to the Project

- a. The project is being delivered through a collaborative partnership of the University of Greenwich and five of its partner FE colleges: Bexley College, Bromley College, Greenwich Community College, Hadlow College and North West Kent College.
- b. The aim of the project is to maximise the recent validation of the colleges to deliver the Foundation Degree (FD) in Applied Professional Studies (APS) and Higher Apprenticeship in Business and Professional Administration.
- c. It is exploring across all the colleges a common set of CATS procedures, developing an integrated Higher Vocational Education Regional Prospectus and providing support to colleges in the delivery of an 'asset' model of bridging using the 'Building on Competence' course.

2. Achievements to date

a. Partnership dynamic

- i. A Steering Group comprising senior managers from the colleges, the project team, and an employer representing SME's and large companies in SE London, has been established and has met twice in June and September.
- ii. In addition to its monitoring and evaluation role, it is a forum for developing and gaining agreement for key project outcomes, raising matters of concern and proposing solutions.
- iii. College Steering Group representatives also act as ambassadors for the project by providing information and disseminating project information to relevant staff within their institutions.
- iv. They also identify other College staff for sub-groups to carry out focused work on the strands identified in the work plan.
- v. All partners have confirmed their commitment to the project with 100% representation at meetings.
- vi. The colleges take it in turns to host the meetings, enabling members to familiarise themselves with each other's campuses and facilities, strengthening working relationships and reinforcing the community of practice.

b. Active meetings

- i. The September Steering Group meeting included a development session on Credit, an opportunity for all partners to gain a shared understanding of credit, credit transfer and accreditation of prior learning (APL).
- ii. College and university representatives shared their past and current experience and practices regarding the recognition of learners' past achievements.
- iii. They were also able to examine the University of Greenwich's recently reviewed APL Policy and Procedures with which the shared protocol will need to comply.

c. Peer evaluation model

- i. An Impact Evaluation Model for the peer evaluation with Linking London CATS Pilot Project has been developed and agreed.
- ii. Both project teams will monitor the process and outcomes of the other's project through a 'virtual' portfolio of evidence held on the 'cloud' and produce an evaluative commentary to accompany the Project Interim and Final Reports.
- iii. In addition, Sussex Learning Network has been commissioned to undertake a summative external review of the monitoring and evaluation reports and the peer evaluation process.

3. Problems/Challenges of developing CATS

The main challenge for the project at this stage is ensuring recruitment of a cohort of learners with whom to trial the 'Building on Competence' course. The project team is providing support to the colleges with marketing the programmes to raise the awareness of learners and employers about work-based HE study opportunities and working with Unionlearn (see below).

4. Working across the FE/HE interface

- a. The Project is building on previous development work between the University of Greenwich and its well-established Partner College Network.
- b. The colleges involved in the project applied for validation to run the work-based APS and Higher Apprenticeship programmes in recognition of their need to establish their Higher Vocational Educational Education offer more clearly in their markets and develop progression pathways.
- c. Work-based learners successfully achieving the FD at the colleges will be able to progress into the University's top-up and BA programmes at Level 6.

5. Working with other agencies

- a. The University of Greenwich has developed a Memorandum of Understanding with the South East Region TUC Unionlearn. Union members will be informed of the programmes covered by this project through up-skilling Union Learning reps and Union Project Officers via two Unionlearn conferences and a bespoke leaflet aimed at union members
- b. An offer has been made to TUC union learning reps to undertake the 'Building on Competence' 15 credit level 4 course as a cohort within this project.

6. 'Eureka' moments/Key learning outcomes for the project

- a. An emerging learning outcome is around the clarity of the communication. In discussion about credit and APL it was agreed by partners that these were not easy terms to understand outside of the academy and we should try and find different and more accessible language

7. Emerging themes?

- a. It has been agreed that for the benefit of learners, as well as teaching and IAG staff, the Scheme and Prospectus should be presented in as simple and easy-to-understand a format as possible and should include flowcharts indicating entry points and progression routes.
- b. Initially a tariff of work-based qualifications currently offered by the Colleges and their credit values is being drawn up including non-prescribed and prescribed higher vocational education.