

Community of Practice Development Form

Credit Accumulation and Transfer Scheme (CATS) Pilot Projects

a. 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.

b. 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.
- vii. [Colleges completed a 'College Partner Interim Report', the feedback from which was incorporated into the Project interim report.](#)

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.

- iv. The December Steering Group meeting included a development session on the repurposed 'Building on Competence' award (1c) This will be followed up by a half day work-shop for college staff once a pilot group of learners has been recruited.

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.
- iv. A 'Dropbox' folder has been set up to support evidence sharing and monitoring of progress.
- v. Face to face meetings between the two project teams have taken place in September and January to update and question each other on progress; agree strengths and weaknesses; share knowledge and best practice; discuss issues and propose solutions.
- vi. A short paper outlining the peer evaluation process was agreed and appended to the interim report

d. Regional Higher Vocational Education Prospectus

- i. An initial draft of the on-line prospectus has been drawn up to include: a joint CAT scheme protocol to promote progression between part-time Level 3 and on-prescribed HE and the APS and HA programmes; clear information about fees and loans and the financial implications of different learning pathways and a tariff of work-based qualifications currently offered by the partner colleges, including non-prescribed and prescribed higher vocational education and their credit values. The prospectus will be located on the University's partner college website and will be linked to all the college websites. A flyer giving details of the website and the prospectus is being developed.

e. Problems/Challenges of developing CATS

- i. The main challenge for the project at this stage is recruiting a cohort of learners with whom to trial the 'Building on Competence' course
- ii. 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.
- iii. It was subsequently agreed at the December meeting of the Steering Group that a pilot of up to 20 free places be offered across the 5 colleges in order to trial the 'Building on Competence' course. (4e)

f. Working across the FE/HE interface

- i. The Project is building on previous development work between the University of Greenwich and its well-established Partner College Network.
- ii. 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.

- iii. 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.
- iv. An initial draft of the Higher Vocational Education Regional Prospectus (1c) was presented and discussed at the December Steering Group meeting.
- v. Up to 20 funded places on the 'Building on Competence' course are being offered to college administrative and support staff whose highest level of qualification is Level 3. To date 11 learners have been recruited from 3 colleges. The course will start on 25 February with a workshop for learners and the college lecturers who will be delivering the APS and HA programmes, led by staff from the UoG Centre for Work Based Learning.

g. Working with other agencies

- i. 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.
- ii. An offer has been made to TUC union learning reps to undertake the 'Building on Competence' 15 credit course as a cohort within this project.
- iii. The Memorandum of Understanding with TUC Unionlearn was signed on 13 November 2012.

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

- i. 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.
- ii. In their interim reports, colleges identified the following as key learning outcomes for them:
 - A clearer understanding of CATS amongst all members
 - Being able to identify issues that have historically affected progression from NVQ/Apprenticeships into HE
 - The draft prospectus featuring each institution's programmes
 - Being able to work collaboratively to widen participation for those in employment.

i. Emerging themes?

- i. 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.
- ii. 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.
- iii. An initial draft tariff was discussed at the December Steering Group meeting and subsequently checked and updated by Colleges.
- iv. College partners have welcomed the development of a team culture which underpins the project and supplements the already good partnership working. Such collaboration results in more productive and creative working as opposed to the competitive environment which often prevails.