Hull College: Film-maker for staff and student confidence

Summary

Following a merger, Hull College supported staff in using more video resources to avoid inconsistencies in teaching methods. Staff confidence in technology has increased through creating resources themselves and supporting students filming what they are learning. Learner confidence and self-evaluation has improved. The College shares best practice during cross college training.

About Hull College

Hull College’s mission is to inspire and enable outstanding, life-changing education and training to learners, employers and diverse communities. Students at the College study on a wide variety of further and higher education courses, from A Levels to NVQs, Foundation Degrees and Degrees, full-time or part-time, in subjects ranging from Business, Engineering, and Performing Arts to Health and Social Care. Hull College was awarded ‘Grade 1 – Outstanding’ in every area by Ofsted. The inspection result recognised the College’s position as one of the most successful further education colleges in the country.

The challenge

Hull College had undergone changes in staffing and departmental structure following a merger with Harrogate College in 2008. Students noticed inconsistencies in teaching methods, which the college wanted to improve. In addition, the Construction department, specifically, faced issues of out-dated resources, challenging teaching spaces and a group of students with a predominately visual learning preference.
The activity

A key enabler for transformation was the change in e-learning management from a separate team to one that is directly linked with teaching and learning improvement.

Mike Abel and Rick Gilroy, Construction Tutors, and Valerie Maybury, Teaching, Learning Improvement Manager, wanted to find ways to increase the use of technology in the classroom to make sure that students didn’t feel that construction theory is dull and boring.

The first step involved staff creating video resources with existing kit to understand both the technology and process. Learners then began creating resources, before progressing to uploading videos onto the college’s virtual learning environment (VLE) so that they could be viewed whenever required, including via mobile devices.

The aim was to continuously question how to improve the learners’ experience. A couple of different gadgets, including a Kodak PlaySport video camera and an iPad, were bought initially (including protective cases for tablets because of the environment they were to be used in) to establish the best solution before committing budgets.

The Construction department used the technology to bring in evidence from the workplace, capturing pictures and videos of building sites and using them in class (displayed on the iPad) to highlight certain techniques. This put methods into context without the health and safety implications of visiting a building site. Students are able to quickly relate what they are learning to different situations – bringing in theory and linking practical workshops with real examples.

The College has also taken advantage of many free and low cost apps available on Apple and Android platforms to enhance learning. This includes the ‘finger cut’ app on the iPad, which makes health and safety fun by showing, in a safe way, how dangerous a circular saw can be even after the off button has been pressed.

While the departments encouraged students to get involved with the filming by making it fun and using technology they are familiar with, they accommodated individuals that did not want to take part and be ‘on film’. Crucially, the department worked with the IT team to ensure a process was developed to enable the college to support Apple software.
The outcomes

Following initial success, similar projects have started across different curriculum areas (including Electrical Engineering and Hair and Beauty). They follow a similar path of introducing video resources and video capture by both staff and students.

Through developing resources and supporting students in the use of the technology, lecturers are continually developing new skills and working closely with colleagues. Teachers have worked with the Library Manager, E-learning team and Teacher Education Team. A new Teaching and Learning Strategy has been developed with an increased focus on digital literacy; replicated in the Higher Education strategy for Learning and Teaching.

An added benefit of the project has been the opportunity to film female students making good progress in traditionally male vocational areas. The films provide positive role models in Joinery and Electrical Engineering and are now being used to promote courses to young women at open events.

The films have encouraged a more sustainable approach to resources in joinery in particular. As students feel more confident in their practical tasks, they are making fewer errors and less wood has been wasted.

Learners are allowed to use their own phone or mobile device to capture photos and use calculators, due to the improved understanding of the power of technology to enhance learning.

Additional advantages to utilising this type of technology is that it provides opportunities for:

- Stretching and challenging
- Getting learners up and running quicker
- Differentiation
- Bringing fun into learning
- Bringing the outside world / real life work environments in

The impact

Some tutors have witnessed more difficult tasks being completed more easily by students. This has resulted from individuals watching the relevant video clips on their own phone, often in their own time or in situ, especially when working in isolation booths in the engineering workshop or in dangerous environments.
The impact of this project has been evidenced in student evaluation forms with 100% enjoying the activities and 100% recording that the activity suited the way they liked to learn. Teachers have also reflected on the positive way the project has impacted on their personal skills, confidence and motivation.

While it is difficult to prove a direct correlation, there is additional evidence of good practice among the participants in the project. Of those teachers who have been observed, none has been awarded less than Good with most being awarded Outstanding. 66% have been awarded Grade 1; 33% have been awarded Grade 2. This means that 100% have achieved good or better against a College average of 87%.

Staff comments about the project, including being involved in sharing best practice training sessions, includes:

- “Getting staff out of their silos, working with each other, across departments.”
- “Good session this will give me another teaching tool.”
  “Opens up an extra way of teaching and embedding.”
- “I am using this technology within my own teacher training to record certain lessons to help me reflect on the session and see the learner viewpoint.”

Student thoughts relating to the increase in the use of mobile technology includes:

- “I learnt how to do the job an easy way and found it easier to do the job watching someone else do the task”
- “I have gained by looking back at what I did and I could see where I went wrong so that I could change it next time I completed the task.”
- “I found that when I came to do the tasks I watched the video and understood it better watching someone else do the task, because for me I found it easier to watch rather than listen to them.”
- “I would like to watch more videos of different tasks.”
- “If the tutor is busy with others and I need to start a task I would use this to help me until the tutor is available.”

Val Maybury added, “an interesting impact of the project is the increased interest of individuals to share the best practice and be involved in training others, both within their own department and with other curriculum areas.”

**The lessons learned**

The experiences of individuals involved in the project suggest the importance of management support and effective communication at all levels for successful implementation. There is now a clearer plan to use Small change, Big Difference and Digital Learning Coaches to tackle under confidence in staff ability to make effective use of new and emerging technologies.
Messages for other organisations:

- Be clear with project participants about expectations
- Keep projects manageable and easily measured. Don’t try to change the world!
- Keep an eye on the rhythm of the academic year. It becomes increasingly difficult to gather impact evidence as the year progresses
- Believe in it – it works!

Even though the initial resources were bought with a small amount of funding, additional technology has been purchased using College budgets and the best practice has already transferred to other departments.

Future Plans:

- Continual development of the VLE for teaching staff with ideas for best practice including a “tried and tested” area with reliable ideas for using technology and websites.
- Evaluate further this project’s impact on observation profile and through SPOC feedback and Staff CPD evaluations.

Useful links

Hull College website

Some iPad Apps for construction:

- iPad App (Finger Cut)
- iPad App (Cad Viewer)
- iPad App (Spirit Level)

Some Android Apps for construction:

- Carpenter
- Flooring Calculator
- Carbon Monoxide Awareness
- Construction Master Pro Calculator

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