Summary

The path from school, through 6th form or college to university is well-known for students and parents. Aylesbury College are piloting a process to ensure the apprenticeship journey becomes equally well-known. They have made significant use of technology to drive their training and are already receiving excellent feedback. The link to a video study attached to this case study is clear evidence of how Aylesbury College are promoting this process.

About Aylesbury College

Aylesbury College is dedicated to preparing people for work – all the students learn real work skills from dedicated staff who are experts in their field. The College is situated in a state-of-the-art learning environment which is designed and run as a modern business. Many students have the opportunity to work in real commercial environments as part of their course including accounting, hairdressing, beauty, hospitality and catering.

Students are offered a wide range of full and part-time courses from entry to degree level, bespoke employer programmes. Aylesbury College is the largest trainer of apprentices in Buckinghamshire.

Aylesbury College has a strong reputation for preparing people for a career. If the student chooses a vocational path, they are supported through real work experiences in commercial outlets while they continue to study and train. Aylesbury College also works very closely with a variety of businesses across Buckinghamshire and surrounding Counties that provide the College with additional expertise as well as work placement opportunities.

If a Higher Education Degree is the students’ goal, Aylesbury College provides them with the opportunity to obtain a Foundation Degree or Higher Apprenticeships at level 4 & 5 in a safe environment with a strong support network in place to ensure success. Upon completion the student can progress to a full Honours Degree with one of Aylesbury’s partner Universities.
The challenge

In formulating this process Sandie Page Work Based Learning Manager said “Our objective is to deliver professional qualifications which were innovative, high quality, relevant and accessible, to train and develop a workforce with skills and performance that is aligned to business values and goals and with an excellent learning experience for the learner.”

ILT Manager Neil Prior commented
“We looked to embed the use of Information Learning Technology into the Work based Learning programmes in order to give our students a wider skill set, improve the learning experience and streamline the collation and assessing of portfolios.”

The activity

The college developed the concept of the learning escalator model for apprentice skills framework to:

- Provide and deliver the qualifications to benefit individuals in their chosen career path, which meet the national professional, occupational and quality standards within industry requirements.

- Work in partnership with other education establishments, large employers, local businesses and the community to ensure frameworks and qualifications map to the job roles and business needs.

Neil Prior commented “It is vital to know what the end employer wants, as there is no point training the students to sell apples if the employers want bananas.”

Neil advised “This escalator was built around a commercial e-portfolio system, ONE FILE which enabled us to develop student portfolios regardless of location, provided they had access to the internet.
The college purchased mobile technologies (Smartphones) that enabled staff to electronically assess student’s portfolios and record evidence during site visits. “

To promote the process to students, parents and employers, Aylesbury College have worked hard on their website, produced a number of videos and held open days and information sessions for all parties. Aylesbury College also build relationships with local employers by sharing resources. Most recently ‘The Hub’ has opened in the college in partnership with Federation of Small Businesses where employers use the space for business and offer their time and expertise to mentor our learners. Sandie commented “It is a vital part of the process that employers appreciate the support and training the students receive.”
The Learning skills escalator

The impact

Staff found it far easier to monitor student progress throughout their course and to have the ability to capture and submit evidence, quickly and easily by students and staff, with the use of smartphones. “I just find it so easy to capture the students’ evidence whilst I am on an observation visit, or when they come in to the College. It just makes the whole process of building their portfolios far easier”. “I no longer have to wait for the students to come in to assess their evidence; they upload it and I get a message to tell me something has been added, which I can then go and sign off or ask for further evidence if necessary”. Are just some of the comments from staff.

Students quickly found the technology easy to use:

“Once I had used the app a couple of times in class I was happy to use it back at work to record my evidence”.
“It’s a lot easier than typing things, I just take photos of what I’ve been doing and upload them”.
“I don’t have to wait until I see my tutor to work on my portfolio so I hope to be completed before the actual end of the course.”

These are just some of the many testaments from students
The process has also been recognised by the skills funding agency, with Aylesbury College being asked to take on the support of other students based as far away as Norwich and London.

But perhaps most importantly the relationships that Aylesbury College have been able to build with large local employers and smaller businesses are giving greater range and choice to students, which Aylesbury College are confident will mean far more employment successes for their students.

Aylesbury has also recorded a video case study of this process and some of the experiences of the students. Please see the links below.

**The lessons learned**

Sandie commented “Each learner has their own unique needs and it is important to confirm the correct pathway, ascertain the correct level and qualification and any skills gaps and provide the appropriate training plan, courses, resources, work books, e-books recommended reading lists – by working with ILT and keeping up with technology we can deliver the apprenticeship program across the UK consistently to a high standard”

To monitor the progress Sandie highlighted

“It is essential to have regular 1:1’s and good communication with the learner to meet their individual need and situation we used booked phone calls/Skype, email exchanges, and support this with ONE FILE correspondence, CLOUD or Moodle to set tasks and assignments and to keep track to show progress

The technology enables us to deliver on site – organise workshops to meet the needs of the learner and employer, including booked observations, feedback and review appointments with training and action plans agreed between employer, learner and college to identify the progress made and any skills gaps. For the students particularly it clarifies the progression routes, showing the employment opportunities and professional and higher education choices.” From an ILT prospective Neil commented

“Staff and students needed more, wider and on-going support in the use of specific learning technologies to ensure that the maximum benefit of the e-portfolio system was realised. We have built in more initial training in the equipment and the One File System for both staff and students.

Although the e-portfolio system was deemed to be very much appropriate to our needs, the mobile technology didn’t quite match-up to that. The College had an agreement for phones from Blackberry for educational purposes, but they would not use the One File App so after a review, other Android phones and Iphones have been used to improve the recording process.”...
Useful links

Aylesbury College

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