

# Technology for employability: FE and skills case studies

Study into the role of technology in developing  
student employability

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# Case studies



## A. City of Glasgow College

### Title

Enhancing employability with e-portfolios.

### Summary

City of Glasgow College has developed its own e-portfolio format to help stonemasonry apprentices present their skills for external verifiers and employers.

Prior to the e-portfolio initiative, apprentices could not capture or store evidence of their accomplishments in an electronic record of achievement despite the hands-on nature of their work. As a result, there was little opportunity for apprentices to appreciate the continuous nature of their learning or to show their achievements to others. Now apprentices can track their personal learning over time and move forward in a continuous and seamless drive for improvement. In addition, the new system has brought about significant improvements in the department's assessment processes and given a boost to student employability.

The number of students involved in the initiative is growing. Up to September 2015, 50 stonemason apprentices used the new portfolio system. Another 84 will take part by the end of 2015, with 50 more to follow in spring 2016.

### Organisation

City of Glasgow College is home to almost 30,000 students from 135 different countries. Among courses in the faculty of building, engineering and energy, the college offers stonemasonry at professional development award (PDA) levels 6 and 7 for students already at work who wish to develop new skills or an aspect of their existing skills. Stonemasonry apprentices typically undertake 85% of their learning outside college in a stonemason's yard.

### Challenge

The stonemasonry department identified a number of issues following a review of its assessment processes.

Primarily, teachers were conscious that assessment processes were weighted more towards administrative aspects than improving the quality of learning. The

apprentices were not encouraged under the existing system to record lessons learned, celebrate progress or reflect on their feedback. External verifiers only saw a brief paragraph about the feedback given to students; in contrast, teachers would prefer the verification process to delve more deeply, asking questions such as:

- » How was student activity recorded?
- » Did teacher feedback offer students guidance on how to improve?
- » Did teachers assess whether the guidance and feedback they had given to students was valid and reliable?

For their part, apprentices tended not to revisit their assessments and were only interested in the grades awarded. Anecdotal evidence also suggested that paper-based evidence, such as photographs, lacked a professional finish, were rarely shown to employers or used in interviews, and only provided evidence of work completed in college.

The department recognised that what was needed was a means of recording formative work, undertaken in the workplace as well as in college, combined with a way of effectively demonstrating any additional work students had been doing. In essence, a system for capturing and storing all the information relevant to an apprentice's progress, feedback and achievements. The e-portfolio with its embedded digital photographs and video recordings has proved very successful in meeting these requirements.

Using digital media has proved to have a number of advantages in itself. Firstly, employers concerned about images taken in the workplace for health and safety reasons, now approve any images included in students' portfolios, prompting employers to take a more active interest in their apprentices' course work. Secondly, digital video recordings act as a reflective tool, encouraging students to revisit their past assignments and learn from their mistakes and achievements. At the same time, teachers who were filmed giving feedback to their students have been able to

demonstrate to verifiers that their feedback has been helpful and rigorous. A further benefit is that teachers have been able to assess their own feedback, and adjust where necessary. Finally, the outcomes can be shared with prospective employers as a reflective and pictorial record of the interviewee's learning journey and accomplishments.

### Making it happen

The department decided the e-portfolio should consist of two elements:

- » Written documentation which meets the mandatory requirements of the course
- » Rich media resources to add value to the written evidence

The plan was to create two types of portfolio that would work together. One would be student led, completed by the student then viewed and marked by the teacher; the other would be teacher produced. Ultimately the two elements would be assembled into one at the end of the course and would incorporate videos of assessments to provide a visual record of both the original work and the feedback given, as evidence for staff and external verifiers as well as students.

The written (and student-led) element of this process was developed using standard Microsoft packages so that it could easily be enhanced with students' images to provide a step-by-step account of their progress. The student would then complete a proforma supplying information on areas such as:

- » Practical activities undertaken
- » Quality and accuracy of their work (tolerances achieved)
- » Risk assessments carried out
- » Method statements including all formative work carried out up to the point of assessment

- » Responses to reflective questions such as "Have you been a successful learner / successful citizen / good team member?"

Once work has been completed and has met the required standard, the portfolio is hosted on the college's cloud storage service in PDF format while the teacher retains a copy on a master hard drive as evidence.

A salient feature of this approach is the chance to involve students actively in their own assessment. Students filming tutors as they undertake assessments have been able to focus more closely on the purpose and approach taken in each case. Another discovery has been iBooks Author, a free software programme from Apple, which enables students with iPads, Macs or iPhones to create a page for each of their units and embed links to their videos and image galleries. The software has proved straightforward to use; students have easily populated their pages with images and videos by dragging and dropping in files.

At the end of the process, apprentices can take the resource with them, incorporating it into their iTunes account to be viewed on iOS mobile devices or accessing it as a structured electronic PDF via the college's Microsoft OneDrive cloud account or as a printed PDF. Whatever the format chosen, each apprentice has a final product that is both professional in appearance and an excellent source of evidence for job applications and interviews. Since there are many opportunities for stonemasons to work abroad, e-portfolios in this format can also be shared electronically with prospective employers overseas.

### Technology

The department has used widely available software to create its e-portfolio. Students build their evidence using Microsoft Word and Publisher files which can then be saved as Adobe PDF files and hosted on the cloud via Microsoft OneDrive. Students have also used Apple iBooks Author to provide a professional finish to their e-portfolios.

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## Impact

- » Staff report that students have acquired a greater sense of involvement, control and understanding of their learning as a result of using e-portfolios. They are able to track their own progress, revisit their work and acquire greater insight into the process of learning. Use of digital media has also encouraged a learning community; apprentices now voluntarily share ideas and photos via social networks such as Twitter and Facebook
- » The ability to choose their preferred format has enabled dyslexic students to record their work in either standard or dyslexia-friendly format. Dyslexic students have reported that for the first time they have been able to receive feedback with confidence. In addition, the department aims to record some information in MP3 format to provide an alternative approach
- » A significant reduction in the use of paper and printing has also helped minimise the department's carbon footprint while at the same time enabling students to progress into employment with greater confidence

Other departments in the faculty of building, engineering and energy are now interested in the e-portfolio system the stonemasons have pioneered. The potential is there to extend the initiative to other vocational areas.

## More information

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- » Case study written up by Geoff Rebbeck  
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## B. South West College, Northern Ireland

### Title

Forging links between education and industry.

### Summary

The InnoTech Centre was set up by South West College in Northern Ireland to nurture the growth of technology and innovation in local companies. The centre has since become a nexus between industry and education, using the skills of its staff to match companies with students with specialist expertise in science, engineering or technology.

### Organisation

With some 14,000 enrolments, South West College makes a major contribution to the local and regional economy by supporting a wide range of higher education, vocational and training courses on campuses in Cookstown, Dungannon, Enniskillen and Omagh.

The InnoTech Centre is based at the Cookstown campus and provides opportunities for training, technical mentoring and project management for local businesses aiming to adopt new technologies and embed innovative approaches. The centre has also worked on partnership projects with colleges, businesses and organisations outside Northern Ireland.

The centre is supported through input from the sector skills councils, local councils, regional enterprise development bodies and universities and is financed by the Department for Employment and Learning (DEL) through its Innovation Fund Employer Support programme. Stakeholders in the InnoTech steering group include representatives from industry who facilitate project development by providing consultation on aspects such as sustainable development.

### Context and challenge

The UK economy depends on the success of its small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), and nowhere is this truer than in Northern Ireland. The college wanted to make a significant contribution to the government's agenda for growth through SMEs by becoming a key driver of local, sub-regional and regional economic development. To

achieve this, it first needed to promote stronger ties with local firms through involving students in their work. The aim was two-fold: students would gain first-hand experience of problem-solving in authentic work situations, and businesses would benefit from the fresh thinking and ideas of students. Bringing the two together in a collaborative partnership, however, required new ways of working.

### Making it happen

The centre invites local SMEs to flag up business problems or product ideas so that they can be partnered with students with the right knowledge and expertise. Centre staff identify suitable projects, which typically last 10-15 days, and involve appropriate students in scoping, designing and testing prototypes in partnership with the company. Work completed on a project counts towards the students' final qualification so subject staff are also involved as a routine part of the assessment process.

This collaborative approach has the added advantage of drawing students directly into the research and development (R&D) arm of companies rather than relying solely on skills gained in college as a route to employment. Students involved in these partnerships are able to work on real business issues and can draw confidence from the exercise, many going on to find employment in the SMEs they are partnered with. In some cases, students have even taken inspiration from the relationship to form their own businesses. If nothing else, students acquire work experience and gain an appreciation of the world of work beyond college. To sustain the flow of projects, InnoTech holds regular roadshows to attract new business partners and problem-solving opportunities for students.

### Technology

Technology provides the platform for collaboration and communication between the student and the SME. What form the technology takes varies according to the nature of the problem and the ideas being worked on. The centre aims to be as open as possible to industry-specific technology in order to familiarise students with software and tools they will use in employment. Students in their turn can



support companies in using technologies that are new to that company but may be vital to its ongoing success.

### Impact

The initiative has had the important effect of creating relationships between businesses and students that can translate into real jobs. To date, InnoTech has successfully generated over 200 real-world scenarios for students to work on in partnership with SMEs as a means of preparing them to enter the world of work. It has also generated in excess of £11 million for the regional economy.

The centre has partnered five colleges in the Gazelle group of colleges, delivering R&D projects on their behalf in the areas of design, electronics, software development, ICT or renewable technologies. The work of the InnoTech Centre has also received widespread acclaim from local businesses and praise from the Northern Ireland Inspectorate:

*“The support provided by the College both on-site and in-house is of exceptional quality; the businesses involved report considerable added value, including sector-leading solutions in the areas of product design, waste management and energy, e-commerce and computer-modelling technologies.”*

**Education and Training Inspectorate, Northern Ireland,  
June 2014**

Following the success of the InnoTech project, the college has gone on to explore new ways of supporting small businesses. This is in areas such as engineering and manufacturing, renewable energy and sustainable technologies, and creative and digital media. The college employer support programme ‘InnovateUs’ is designed to provide mentoring and practical support for the small and micro-businesses served by the college. Like the InnoTech Centre, the programme aims to develop a modern economic development infrastructure. It does this by bringing together industry and academia into a structured environment to improve the capacity and technical expertise of small or fledgling companies.

InnoTech was awarded an AoC Beacon Award in 2013.

### Find out more

- » Dr. Jill Cush - InnoTech Project Manager Southwest College, Northern Ireland.  
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- » Case study written up by Geoff Rebbeck  
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## C. Loughborough College

### Title

Using technology to connect employers and students.

### Summary

Understanding what employers are looking for is a vital component of employability. Through the Bridge to Work initiative, Loughborough College has set out to help young people aged 14-18 gain an insight into employers' expectations before they apply for jobs or apprenticeships. In part, this is achieved through collaborative conferencing and social software. These enable students to take part in real-time presentations and discussions with local and national employers as well as communicating at any time with their tutors and with one another. The scheme has the added benefit of bringing together employers and potential employees.

### Organisation

Established in 1909 with a current student population of 11,000, Loughborough College provides some higher education courses as well as further education and training in Leicestershire. Courses offered range from A-Levels to vocational programmes, apprenticeships and degrees.

### Challenge

The Bridge to Work team started from the premise that one-way communication in training sessions does not enable students to explore in any depth what is required of them in the workplace. 'Telling and informing' is more likely to limit than promote understanding. On the other hand, taking part in questioning and discussion sessions with employers helps students buy into preparation for work, increases their sense of responsibility and provides authentic experience of workplace communication. Yet, while face-to-face discussion between employers and students would clearly be ideal, restrictions of distance, travel and time make this impossible to achieve on any scale.

### Making it happen

To overcome such barriers, the college's Bridge to Work team set up a series of webinars using Adobe Connect conferencing software to bring together students and

employers in local and national firms. Through the webinars, students have gained first-hand knowledge of what employability entails as well as developing confidence and skills in talking to employers. Apprentices currently on placement have also provided their personal insights to bring to life the culture of the workplace for students still at college.

### Webinar examples

- » Two apprentices at Caterpillar have shared their experiences with prospective apprentices via Adobe Connect identifying in particular the skills that helped them the most when they arrived in the workplace. Being able to question apprentices in work has not only helped the college students see the importance of their studies but also developed their understanding of how best to make use of the available time and facilities to prepare for the world of work
- » A senior manager from Barratt Homes has used the conferencing software to outline expectations of students applying for apprenticeships. The formal presentation style adopted by the speaker demonstrated the different styles of communication used in business. A 30-minute question and answer session which followed the presentation gave students the opportunity to obtain insights previously unobtainable on such a scale and with such immediacy

### Developing interview skills

What also became clear was that students needed more effective self-presentation skills so that they could develop further the nascent relationships formed with employers during the webinar sessions.

The Student Engagement team came up with a new initiative to achieve this goal, again using technology to extend the students' skillset. Three students were chosen to be interviewed in front of their peers by a local business at a college-wide employability fair, with the aim of hiring one for a fictional post. Each student was given the job

specification and a specific set of characteristics (e.g. over-confident, nervous or 'just right'). They then worked closely with the college's student engagement team and local business connector while they prepared for their roles. Some of these preparations took place face-to-face but the majority were supported online using Adobe Connect as the conferencing platform, backed up by Twitter and a subsequent Moodle forum.

The students first took part in an online interview workshop with local employers then used a video blog to record how they felt as they prepared for the interview. The reflective nature of this part of the exercise was designed to increase students' ownership of their role as interviewees and to demonstrate the unfolding process to others. In addition, social software enabled the three students to gain support at any time, sharing thoughts with peers and receiving guidance from tutors even though they were on different courses with different timetables.

On the day of the interview, the interviewees took the stage in front of a large student panel and were interviewed by the local business connector. The student panel used interactive voting pads after each question to identify who they thought had best answered the questions. This process encouraged engagement from students who would not normally have had the courage to speak.

## Technology

Remote conferencing software has made communication with a national company both accessible and achievable with large groups of students, and has produced promising outcomes in terms of employability skills. These examples not only opened students' eyes to the soft skills they needed to enter the workplace, but also encouraged them to assess how far they had acquired those aptitudes. The authenticity of the experience was critical in prompting students to identify their own skills deficit, and to proactively seek help from tutors and each other.

## Impact

The Bridge to Work initiative has helped many students gain a better understanding of their own employability, and has led to a number of further achievements:

- » The webinar conducted by Caterpillar created a sense of connection with the world of work that produced immediate results:

*"Many students applied to the company the moment we had finished. There was a lot of interest with many encouraged to hear the company employs more than 140 apprentices each year – with at least 20% expected to be female."*

**Emma Pattison, lead job coach, Loughborough College**

- » Both students and companies have benefitted from having direct access to one another, a process that has opened up new opportunities:

*"Thanks to Bridge to Work and my course tutor, Paul Scott, I have been given the chance to meet and coordinate with big companies and businesses for apprenticeships that otherwise would have been difficult to reach individually opening even more doors and opportunities for myself and others."*

**Vijay Parmar, student, Loughborough College**

- » Using what was learnt from the webinars, the Bridge to Work team subsequently held an interviewing skills event. This was so well received that students were entered into and reached the final of the Barclays Bank Champion of Champions competition. The contest is part of the Prepare for Work employability programme supported by Quizdom software:

*“The judges were very impressed with the Loughborough College team’s performance and the personal journey that each of the team members made during the competition. They did not know one another at the outset, but by working together as a team they were able to produce an event that was relevant for their peers and build upon the strengths of each team member.”*

**Sylvia Perrins, CEO of The National Skills Academy for Financial Services and a member of the judging panel**

Technology has been key to the success of the initiative. The conferencing software may have brought students and employers together but technology used during and after the interview competition also played an important part. For example, it helped in breaking down barriers between students who had not previously met and allowing groups of students take responsibility for their own learning. In addition, by using technology, students acquired digital literacy skills that would benefit them once in employment.

### Find out more

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- » Case study written up by Geoff Rebbeck  
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## D. Portland College

### Title

Wi-fi and wellies: mobile learning aids student progression in a specialist college.

### Summary

Portland College has found real value in using mobile and video technologies to boost the confidence and employability of students with disability. In order to reflect the changes in students' needs and aspirations, the college has established a new learning centre with a focus on mobile learning. This is enabling more students to use mobile devices in the curriculum. As a result, students are gaining confidence in using tablets in their learning, and are increasingly able to exploit digital media to demonstrate their skills and achievements to employers.

### Organisation

Portland College is an independent specialist college of further education, providing educational opportunities and independent living skills for students with physical or learning disabilities between the ages of 16 and 25. Unemployed adults with disabilities also benefit from the range of residential and day programmes, which include courses designed to facilitate progression to work.

### Challenge

A particular challenge for students was the interview process which for many can represent a real barrier to obtaining work. Students with a disability often find it difficult to show their capabilities to best effect, and their self-esteem and confidence can be damaged by negative experiences. Recent trials of mobile and video technologies had suggested this need not be the case. However, using mobile devices was still a fundamental change in practice and could prove an extra hurdle in an already challenging situation.

Nonetheless, college staff believed that mobile technologies would bring a range of educational benefits. Once equipped, students would become independent learners, finding out and memorising information, and putting into practice new or rediscovered skills with far less reliance on their teachers. Increasing student independence would in turn

improve their confidence and self-esteem and enable them to view their teachers more as guides and confidence builders than instructors. Portability was the next clear advantage. Many learning activities at Portland are practical and work-oriented, often occurring on the college farm far from the familiar aids of the classroom. Mobile devices such as tablets would enable classroom support to follow students into more remote parts of the campus. In addition, support could be personalised to meet the different needs and preferences of individual students.

### Making it happen

Realising that confidence in using mobile devices only comes with repeated exposure, Portland College set up the Quick Campus project to enable mobile devices to be more readily used in learning activities. Developments the project has funded include:

- » Wi-fi coverage across the college farm
- » Purchase of 28 iPad Minis
- » A 'sync and charge' solution for mobile devices
- » Additional specialised assistive technologies to support individual students and staff

The farm became the focal point for the project. Learning activities on the farm, by their very nature, lend themselves to the use of mobile devices such as tablets. A student needing prompt advice on how to fix a lawnmower, for example, could access the manual or a maintenance video online via his or her tablet. The tablet could also record photographic evidence of the student's competences to upload to an e-portfolio.

Alternatively, QR codes could be scanned to find guidance on how to use an item of machinery. In the lawn mowing scenario, codes imprinted on the mower could enable the student to access information on how to empty it, refuel and check the oil levels or investigate health and safety regulations.

In creative studies, students are also using tablets to record videos which explain the thinking and purpose behind their artwork. The activity encourages students to think about their work and decide how best to present it, in some cases even justifying the approach taken. This is a valuable way of developing the skills of reflection and presentation that are so important in the world of work.

College staff are increasingly finding more avenues opening up as a result of the mobile learning project. Students are now participating in ICT sessions that prior to the project were not seen as appropriate or of interest. Sessions have been run on digital editing to make the content of students' videos more concise and audience-aware, enabling them to share their e-portfolio content with more confidence. Producing on-the-fly guidance videos is also planned to aid students use tools on the farm or in the motor mechanics workshop, and to capture information on plants and animals.

## Impact

Portland College report their biggest success story so far is the use of the iPad Minis in the curriculum. These devices are now regularly used for:

- » Stills, audio and video recordings to document students' progress
- » Screening assessments and recording achievements for e-portfolios. For many students, providing oral or visual alternatives to the written essay is an important aid to communication and a vital means of making progress on an assessed course
- » Voting in group discussions to express views and opinions which can then be shared and defended
- » Developing relationships with classmates and teachers when communication by any other means is challenging
- » Increasing students' engagement with their individual learning plans

- » Aiding reflection and sharing achievements with external audiences

The impact on student employability is still being assessed. However, enabling students to capture and record their achievements has clearly increased their potential to succeed, both as learners and as prospective employees.

## Find out more

- » Web: [portland.ac.uk](http://portland.ac.uk)
- » Case study written up by Geoff Rebbeck  
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## E. Reading College

### Title

Aligning technology with the world of work.

### Summary

Over the last three years, Reading College has moved away from hosting content on a virtual learning environment (VLE) towards browser-based technologies like Google Apps to extend and enliven students' learning. This decision reflects the improved capability of cloud-based technologies and the wider opportunities now on offer to personalise learning technologies. Switching to Google Apps also meant that the college operated in ways that better reflect the modern world and prepared students more effectively for the workplace.

### Organisation

Reading College is a further and higher education provider to over 6,000 students over 900 courses. The college is part of the Activate Group which comprises a range of learning organisations with the common aim of improving learning opportunities and skills training across Oxfordshire and Berkshire.

### Challenge

Reading College, along with other providers in the Activate Group, felt that their use of technology was creating a credibility gap. Their Moodle-based learning environment did not align with the way students used technology in their personal lives nor was it providing adequate preparation for the way technology was used in the workplace. The challenge was to maintain sound pedagogical practice while at the same time ensuring that students acquired experience of contemporary technology practice.

### Making it happen

The step change the college took was to give students ownership of the technology used in their learning by moving learning activities and outcomes to their own space on the cloud. From the students' perspective, this meant they could more easily share ideas and resources with one another. From the teachers' perspective, this meant establishing a more collaborative, seamless way of

working which recognises that students need to learn anytime, anywhere, with any device.

To help students and staff make this cultural shift successfully, the college identified four maxims to guide use of cloud-based technologies. These were:

- » Create
- » Curate
- » Communicate
- » Contribute

The whole process was teacher-led and took two years to develop from a pilot scheme involving a small group of teachers to eventual transition. In this way, the concerns some staff had about abandoning Moodle and adopting Chrome as the default browser could be more effectively answered.

The roll-out involved two lines of activity:

1. Developing the confidence and skills of teachers via a comprehensive programme of continuing professional development (CPD) delivered online, face to face, peer to peer and through mentoring. To achieve this, the college ensured alignment between the CPD programme and staff appraisals
2. Engaging students in adopting new ways of working through changes to curriculum design with greater emphasis on collaborative learning and learning outside the classroom

The outcomes have been rapid change engineered in a more sustainable way. This shows the benefit of teachers supporting and helping each other when adopting new practice rather than relying on the guidance of external experts:

*“CPD that is aligned with the needs of students and ensuring their progress in the future can be transformative especially if it is accessible, built on sharing expertise and working collaboratively... It is essential that staff remain up-to-date with the latest technology so that they can make an informed decision about how it might support learning. Modelling of technology, bite size sessions, on-line CPD, open classrooms and technology mentoring are all offered to staff so that the experience for them is just as personalised as it should be for their students. We teach our students to take risks and we must therefore be brave enough to take them too: that’s how learning happens.”*

**Hannah Tyreman, Learning and Development Manager, Reading College.**

The college also set up a student Go Team to help teachers harness the benefits of the new technology. Taking up the role can count towards the students’ final assessment; students on IT courses, for example, are able to count teacher mentorship as part of their coursework.

## Technology

Staff and students now use Gmail, Google Classrooms, Google Hangouts, Google Plus communities, and Google Docs to communicate, share information and resources, set and submit assignments and provide summative feedback to students. Online Google accounts are used to host learning activities and resources as well as final assignments and evidence of student achievement. Apprentices are continuing to use mapping portfolios to capture and log evidence of their competences. All students use ProPortal individual learning plans to keep the administration of learning separate from their cloud-based learning activity.

Google Glass has proved especially valuable for demonstrating the achievements of students in vocational areas such as plumbing and catering. Students upload footage to their learning space for reflection and assessment, and as a record of what they have achieved. They can then complete a commentary which is shared with other students via Google Docs. Evidence gained in this way contributes to students’ mapping portfolios and is shared with future employers.

The college provides students and staff with unlimited cloud storage space through Google Drive and has embedded the use of Google Apps in all teaching programmes. Keeping data concerning the administration of student learning centralised enables students to keep their private data protected.

A key benefit is the opportunity to bring your own device (BYOD) so that learning can be seamless. There is no requirement that staff and students should use their own devices, but it is encouraged as part of modern learning and the college takes care to ensure no student is disadvantaged.

*“In Google Classroom, staff have found a platform that allows them to share resources with students, manage assessment hand-ins and provide formative feedback to students in timely manner. The automatic email notifications ensure that students are kept up to date with what is being posted and the app that is available for both Android and Apple means it is easy to access it on a range of devices.”*

**James Kieft, Learning Technologies Manager, Reading College**

In addition, the college has created a number of independent learning spaces populated with Chromebook notebook computers to support students who do not own or who choose not to bring their own devices. A total of 100 Chromebooks and class sets of iPad Minis are available to borrow. The college has also made a significant investment in its wi-fi to support the use of browser-based technologies on all courses, made possible by savings from a reduction in printed resources.



## Impact

Reading College believes that the move to cloud-based learning has delivered transformational change by:

- » Harnessing the learning preferences of a born-digital generation
- » Empowering students to take greater ownership of their learning
- » Changing the way students share and interact with each other, their teachers and employers
- » Enabling students to access work beyond the classroom via any device
- » Facilitating collaborative peer-to-peer learning and assessment
- » Improving student retention and achievement through more rapid feedback and support

Teachers record far more evidence of collaborative learning behaviour, an increase in student engagement and improvements in the quality of work. Students are even able to share their work beyond college thanks to the collaborative and social nature of the cloud-based platforms they are using. Improvements in students' literacy and digital literacy skills are also visible thanks to the increased responsibility students now have for their learning.

All of these improvements, if sustained over time, will help to improve employability. Because students can now access their own personal space, they are able to produce synoptic writing in blogs and via Google sites to build a proto-e-portfolio. This is still work in progress.

*"Equipping our students with 21st century digital skills is as important as literacy and numeracy in securing successful employment. Never forget that learning technologies should always underpin highly effective teaching, learning and assessment. Technology is not used for the sake of it, but rather to engage students at a deeper level in their learning and skills development".*

**Cheryl Pennington, Assistant Principal, Reading College**

## Find out more

- » Cheryl Pennington [talks](#) about the use of learning technologies at Reading College
- » James Kieft, Learning Technologies Manager  
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# F. S&B Autos Automotive Academy Bristol

## Title

Blended learning at distance.

## Summary

S&B Automotive Academy, a Bristol-based provider of specialist courses for the automotive industry, has adopted a range of technologies to make its training programmes more effective and efficient. To keep in touch with apprentices in dispersed workshop locations, the academy uses video streaming to conduct meetings, tutorials and assessments. For their part, the apprentices use video to capture evidence for their e-portfolios, and video streaming to provide taster experiences for the next generation of apprentices. Apprentices also have access to online learning materials on Moodle so that no one misses out on the theoretical elements of their course while on placement in the industry. In a significant new development, the academy has also developed cost-effective ways of training apprentices in paint spraying techniques via simulation technologies.

## Organisation

S&B Automotive Academy is a medium-sized, work-based learning provider which has recently celebrated its 40th anniversary. The academy provides training in a range of skills relating to the motor trade from maintenance, auto-electrical repair and paint spraying to business administration and parts distribution.

## Challenge

A well-known problem in work-based learning is that as much as 85% of an apprentice's time can be spent on the job, leaving only a limited amount of time for studying background theory and upgrading functional skills. This problem is exacerbated by the difficulty inherent in supporting and motivating students on placement in remote locations. The academy felt that improving learning support for apprentices under these challenging circumstances was essential, as high drop-out rates are lost opportunities both for training providers and students.

Learning in dispersed locations also means time-consuming assessments. Because employers do not want to release apprentices and trainees from their workplace duties, tutors have to travel to individual workshops to complete paper-based assessments. As a result, the academy was also looking for ways of recording and assessing apprentices' progress that would be both more efficient and more illustrative of student competences.

## Making it happen

S&B Automotive Academy turned to some of the most up-to-date technologies to address these issues.

The first step was to harness technology to improve the academy's recruitment processes. As companies in the automotive industry place a high value on finding applicants who can thrive in the workplace, a key goal was to attract the right young people. Video streaming has proved to be the solution. The academy uses live video links to enable apprentices to present to pupils in school interested in apprenticeships in the automotive industry. The immediacy of the presentations has given potential applicants a better chance to understand the standards the industry sets, and what work-readiness means. Having it explained by an apprentice only a few years older than themselves adds power and authenticity to the message. In addition, discussions between pupils and apprentices following the presentations have helped the academy identify recruits with the right attitude:

*"Good timekeeping and presentability are important attitude skills. Apprentices are left in absolutely no doubt about the nature of the work environment and the expectations placed on them. The fact that the apprentices who talk to schoolchildren online are [only] a few years older has an effect in helping students acquire an understanding of the attitude and maturity needed to be work ready. So far 1,250 students have attended an apprenticeship talk."*

**Jon Winter, CEO, S&B Automotive Academy**

Video streaming has also enabled apprentices to interact in real time with their teachers in Bristol to provide more support with the theoretical elements. Although apprentices can attend some classes at the academy, Moodle, the academy's virtual learning environment (VLE), is available to support their studies at all other times. Learning materials are available for some 1500 online modules on different sections of the motor trade. Through the VLE, tutors and administrators also keep an accurate audit of apprentices' attendance, contribution to learning activities and completed assignments.

Alongside the VLE, web cameras and video links have proved some of the most effective ways of improving learning in the workshop environment. Apprentices make frequent use of video capture in the workshop to demonstrate their competences for assessment. Digital video captured on a mobile phone enables this to occur on the fly, and recording a voiceover can demonstrate still more detailed knowledge and understanding. These short videos bring an extra dimension to apprentices' e-portfolios; it is easier to capture evidence of soft skills such as teamwork and attributes such as willingness to take instruction. Being able to demonstrate these additional qualities can be critical for apprentices making the transition into full-time employment.

## Technology

Building on its use of VLE and video streaming technology, the academy has now introduced augmented and virtual reality software to help apprentices gain basic skills and practise safety protocols in paint spraying before attempting to do so for real. Each episode of this immersive workshop experience provides data on students' abilities. That information can be shared with students, and skills such as muscle memory, accuracy and dexterity can be developed and assessed much more quickly.

## Impact

Use of technology has made a substantial difference to the cost effectiveness of the academy's work. This has been achieved in a number of ways:

- » By using virtual and augmented reality, the academy has reduced the time allocated to training apprentices in paint spraying techniques from two days to ten minutes. This represents cost savings of at least £13,000 per annum in terms of teacher time and consumables such as paint
- » Video streaming directly to students in school has enabled potential apprentices to be better informed about their choice of career, improving recruitment and reducing drop-out rates. Because of the academy's focus on attracting the right candidates, 99% of apprentices now progress to the advanced programme
- » During an apprenticeship, video capture on a mobile combined with learning materials on a VLE keeps motivation high by providing immediate, rewarding opportunities for learning and assessment
- » Demonstrating skills via video, including soft skills, adds richness to the apprentices' e-portfolios and facilitates transition into sought-after employment with companies at the forefront of the motor trade

## Find out more

- » Jon Winter, CEO, S&B Automotive Academy  
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- » Case study written up by Geoff Rebbeck  
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# G. South Devon College

## Title

Using Moodle to foster employability.

## Summary

South Devon College has made work experience and preparation for the world of work possible for all students, with a new programme of study in addition to their chosen course. The college is using its virtual learning environment (VLE), Moodle, to support the initiative. By joining a dedicated whole-college area on the VLE, students can check their progress towards work readiness against a set of standards agreed with local employers. The online Moodle community also provides ideas and information that the college and employers wish to share with students to help them prepare for the workplace, including guidance on finding part-time work. Also under development is an addition to the college's electronic individual learning plan (eLLP). This will enable students to reflect on their work experience, record employers' feedback and provide evidence of their learning for their tutors and parents as well as for themselves.

## Organisation

South Devon College, which is affiliated to the University of Plymouth, offers higher and further education courses from A-levels and apprenticeships to university courses. The college supports a population of 11,000 students across the county, including 14-16 year-olds opting for its high-school provision. This enables school leavers to study GCSEs in core subject areas such as English, maths and science alongside specialist technical qualifications.

## Challenge

The college wanted to use its well-established learning technologies to embed employability skills into its programmes, so that all students could develop and demonstrate the required skills and attitudes for employment. Local employers were already using other college channels to clarify the skills they wished students to have, so a centralised approach based on the VLE was a natural choice. The college was also keen to put at the heart of the initiative a set of standards employers had identified as benchmark skills for employability. Reviewed each

year by the board of governors and an employer focus group, the current set of standards is:

1. Demonstrating a positive attitude
2. Career planning
3. Effective communication
4. Problem solving skills
5. Working with others
6. Engagement with work

While many of the attributes and skills on the list may be considered 'soft' ones, they fit with a national drive amongst employer organisations to foster the right attitudes among students applying to join the workforce.

## Making it happen

The college opted to use Moodle as the central point for its initiative, backed up by discipline-specific activities such as work experience in vocational areas.

As a college-wide, collaborative platform, Moodle has given students the opportunity to harvest evidence of their employability skills wherever they occur. It enables them to highlight the additional skills gained as part of a qualification which often go unrecorded as evidence of employability. Through working on Moodle, students have also acquired a better understanding of the gaps in their skillset, had time and support to rectify them and captured evidence of their progress and achievements. All of this can be recorded in their eLLP.

The college awards employability certificates to students who have gathered sufficient evidence of their work readiness skills, again via Moodle. The initiative, which provides additional evidence of competence alongside a student's CV, was developed in tandem with the employer focus group. Students can show they have responded to employers' requirements, and that the skills they demonstrate are those sought by local employers. The college is now awarding badges via Moodle as evidence of achievement of employability skills; badges can be shared with others in an electronic CV via Mozilla Backpack.

At the same time, the college is helping students gain practical workplace experience through part-time work. An online Job Shop integrated into the Moodle employability area has proved to be one of the most successful elements of the initiative so far. The Job Shop showcases any jobs available locally; support staff then help students with writing applications and preparing for interviews.

### Technology

The most important aspect of the project has been to keep technology as unobtrusive as possible, making it easy for staff and students to use. As college students regularly use Moodle for their courses, the employability initiative has been a natural extension of what they already do.

### Impact

There is clear evidence of impact in terms of student engagement with the Job Shop; the most popular element on the Moodle site. This averages 206 student hits a week but has peaks on some occasions of over 500 hits a week. In particular, students make regular visits to the list of part-time job vacancies.

Students are gaining certificates at bronze, silver and gold level in local award ceremonies in conjunction with local employers. This is an aspect of the initiative that has been rolled out across the college with a few amendments such as the ability to achieve open badges as well as the standard Moodle certificate. Employability skills often form an integral part of courses on offer at the college so the Moodle employability area may provide additional support to these rather than acting as the main focus for activity on employability.

Future plans include capturing the learning stories of students plus evidence of their achievements in the eLLP. In turn this will become the single source of information on the employability skills of students.

### Find out more

- » Alex Howarth, ILT Development Co-ordinator, South Devon College  
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- » Case study written up by Geoff Rebbeck  
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## H. The Mindset

### Title

Developing a mindset for employability.

### Summary

The MindSet is a non-trading body of like-minded further education (FE) colleges formed in 2013 in partnership with the REED Northern Council for Further Education (NCFE) Partnership. The group shares the belief that students can acquire the right mindset and behaviours for employability through their college courses before they enter the workforce. To help colleges check how far this is happening and rectify deficiencies, the group has developed an employability toolkit with supporting case studies. This offers colleges the means to assess the effectiveness of their employability processes and to learn from others.

### Challenge

Students often find it difficult to make the transition from attitudes formed at school to an adult understanding of the world, even though the consequences of being ill-prepared to thrive in the workplace are considerable. In addition, although FE and skills providers have a responsibility for enabling students to make this transition successfully, rarely do they pool their experience and expertise. Many colleges have no formal mechanism at all for auditing their effectiveness in this critical area of provision.

### Making it happen

Launched in 2014, a toolkit was developed by four member colleges – Bournemouth and Poole, Derby, Highbury and Milton Keynes. This was to provide colleges and training providers with:

- » the means of auditing how they currently help students develop the right mindsets
- » an understanding of the improvements they need to make
- » a supporting pool of ideas and recommendations from other providers and The MindSet's training Employability Practitioners

The toolkit can be used in a variety of ways depending on the degree of involvement and the level of support required, but typically involves a two-day review of all employability provision at the college or organisation. To draw out the key strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats, this review looks into each of eight key areas and involves staff at all levels. The results are recorded in an online report, after which the college is provided with case studies and an action plan to assist in implementing appropriate changes.

A key aspect of The MindSet approach is that sharing ideas and outcomes is the way forward for the sector. For this reason, all colleges using the toolkit are asked to share elements of their report freely and anonymously with other users to provide benchmarks of good practice. These case studies are collated online and made available to all those using the toolkit.

### Technology

The toolkit has been developed using bespoke software managed by Mesma. The Mindset toolkit is a fee-based service that varies according to the level of involvement the college chooses.

### Impact

Since the launch in 2014, around 10% of FE colleges in England have registered to use the toolkit. 100% of those completing the audit to date either agree or strongly agree that the process has helped them improve student employability and that they would recommend it to other providers. The auditing process has led to a number of improvements in these colleges, which range from developing an entirely new employability strategy to increasing the focus on employability. This might be through student voice campaigns or including employability provision in course and college-level self-assessment reports.

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*“We started to use the feedback the day after the assessment took place. Right from the start we realised how much work we needed to do to transform our study programmes so we were giving young people the employability skills they need.”*

**Carol Anson-Higgs, Vice Principal Business Development,  
South Essex College**

Following the success of the toolkit in its first year, The MindSet group has adapted it and has now made it available to independent training providers from September 2015.

### Find out more

- » Alice Grey Partnership Manager, The MindSet.  
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Web: Mesma [mesma.co.uk](http://mesma.co.uk)
  
- » Case study written up by Geoff Rebbeck  
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# I. The Welsh Baccalaureate

## Title

Embedding digital literacy skills in the Welsh Baccalaureate.

## Summary

The Baccalaureate aims to provide students with a more rounded educational experience, preparing them more effectively for higher education and employment by learning through challenges and completing an individual project.

In response to the findings of its 2011-2012 review of 14-19 qualifications, the Welsh government revised the Welsh Baccalaureate to include the Welsh Essential Skills from September 2015. Essential Skills are known as Functional Skills in England and Core Skills in Scotland.

As a result, students working towards the new 'Welsh Bac' can now develop an understanding of and proficiency in skills essential to employability as a core part of the curriculum. One of the skills students must demonstrate is digital literacy, which has now replaced ICT as the third Essential Skill in Wales.

By introducing this shift towards skills in the Baccalaureate curriculum, the Welsh Government aims to give students richer opportunities to acquire the capabilities and attributes they need to succeed as citizens and members of the workforce. Thus the revised Welsh Bac has a focus on:

- » Literacy
- » Numeracy
- » Digital literacy
- » Critical thinking and problem solving
- » Planning and organisation
- » Creativity and innovation
- » Personal effectiveness

## Challenge

The new curriculum is not without challenges; teachers have had to acquire new skills themselves to be able to deliver and assess a course with a stronger emphasis on employability.

Although these are often termed 'soft skills', the changes introduced to the curriculum mean that the Welsh Bac is unlikely to become embedded overnight. Skills such as these have not been widely demonstrated or even acknowledged in the past, leaving students ill-equipped in the workplace. Although recognising their value, teachers can still be challenged by the demands they face as teachers, trainers and assessors of these skills. Nonetheless, the revised Bac is seen in Wales as the best preparation students can have for successful entry into adult life.

*"The Welsh Baccalaureate is central to the future of education in Wales and will offer a unique and valuable experience for learners."*

**Caroline Morgan, Welsh Baccalaureate framework manager, WJEC**

## Making it happen

The Baccalaureate is not a new qualification and is widely perceived as an effective model of 14-19 education. It is well placed to become the flagship course for delivering a curriculum in which employability skills are acquired alongside academic knowledge.

By replacing the stand-alone model of Essential Skills (see more on this in the Vignette Section) with a more integrated, holistic and purposeful approach, the Welsh government has also raised students' awareness of the value of Essential Skills. To complete each of the four elements of the Welsh Bac (the individual project plus the global citizenship, enterprise and employability and community challenges), students have to seek out real-world opportunities in which to make decisions and solve problems. In doing so, they must demonstrate the most appropriate skills for the task. Through this open-ended model of learning, students have a better opportunity to discover the full value of Essential Skills and to appreciate how these skills will improve their life chances.

Embedding skills such as digital literacy into a qualification is a considerable step forward; it is now widely accepted



that digital literacy needs to go hand in hand with ICT skills to ensure that everyone can use technology effectively, safely and appropriately. It is no surprise therefore that digital literacy is a key aspect of the revised Welsh Bac. The course uses an e-portfolio tool provided by the awarding body, WJEC, as the vehicle for capturing and presenting students' evidence. Located on Moodle, the tool provides an online personal learning space in which students capture and present their learning journey in a variety of words, sounds, images and video footage. Digital literacy skills have to be an integral part of the qualification as the new curriculum requires students to be creative and innovative in how they manage and showcase their learning through technology.

To assist teachers in rising to the challenge of working with the new curriculum, the awarding body has developed a level 3 qualification for digital literacy practitioners. The development of the qualification has been supported by the Welsh government and project managed by Colegau Cymru, the Welsh equivalent of the Association of Colleges. The learning outcomes for digital literacy in the new Baccalaureate model recognise student approaches to their learning and their evidential experiences as well as competences (the focus of the previous qualification), in recognition of the fact that universal adoption of the revised Welsh Bac will take time. Not all teachers can become teachers of literacy, numeracy and digital literacy overnight, regardless of aspiration.

## Technology

Following detailed consideration of the most suitable platform on which to deliver and capture the outcomes of the Welsh Bac, Moodle was chosen as the preferred choice. Providers, however, can develop their own platform; it is in the spirit of the Baccalaureate to encourage choice in technology. Nonetheless, Moodle was likely to be familiar to most teachers and therefore helpful to those who have yet to gain confidence and experience in teaching digital literacy skills.

City and Guilds also offers a Technical Baccalaureate qualification (the TechBac), which provides similar opportunities to evidence a combination of vocational competence, problem-solving skills and personal attributes. The qualification, like the Welsh Bac, seeks to go beyond simple assessment of competences to embed essential skills for living, working and learning in a digital society.

## Find out more

- » Esther Barrett's blog on digital literacy: the third essential skill in Wales  
<http://digitalcapability.jiscinvolve.org/wp/2015/02/17/digital-literacy-the-third-essential-skill-in-wales/>
- » Hazel Israel, Welsh Baccalaureate, Welsh Government / Llywodraeth Cymru  
Email / Epost: [Hazel.Israel@wales.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:Hazel.Israel@wales.gsi.gov.uk)
- » Case study written up by Geoff Rebbeck  
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# J. St Helens College

## Title

Self-advocacy at St Helens.

## Summary

Before they enter the world of work, many students need to understand how to present a balanced, rounded picture of themselves and their capabilities. To this end, St Helens College on Merseyside provided foundation degree students with LinkedIn accounts so they could showcase their achievements and form relationships with potential employers before they left college.

Authenticity is important in a project of this kind. The college opted for LinkedIn rather than its own internal applications to get students networking with employers and other professionals on the most commonly used platform for business and professional people. The aim was to enable students to establish a profile and develop their self-presentation skills while still on the course, so they would leave well prepared for the next stage of their careers.

## Challenge

The first challenge for the foundation degree students was to understand that successful entry to employment, or the next stage of their studies, requires more than evidence of qualifications. Of increasing importance in the modern world is demonstrating your ability to learn, communicate and work with others in a professional manner. Students who can present their own unique learning journey effectively are more likely to be distinguished from their peers during the job application and interview process. However, to ensure the initiative was successful, the college not only needed to upskill its students. Course tutors themselves were not always familiar with social media or prepared for the growing emphasis on employability skills in the curriculum.

## Making it happen

The project demonstrates how input from alumni and employers can lend all-important credibility to an employability initiative; convincing students of the value of learning new networking and self-presentation skills was essential.

Students now in employment or at university have much to pass on to those currently still studying in further education. For example, they can share the value of LinkedIn as a tool for professional networking, how to build a professional profile, how to identify and remedy gaps in a profile, what to gather and how best to present your learning experiences. These were a few of the skills the students at St Helens picked up from the mentorship of former students. The alumni group also helped create a destination follow-up survey and gave students the motivation to their example.

Next a group of employers joined forces with second-year students to act as the panel for mock interviews – a further stage in the learning process in which first-year students drew on their LinkedIn profiles to present their strengths and address areas for development in the context of a formal interview. The interviews were recorded to make clear to students the importance of maintaining professional credibility. In this way, students learnt about the importance of aligning information on their profiles with what is said during the interview process. They could also spot gaps in their profiles and take steps to improve their employability during their time at college. Involving employers had the added advantage of opening up employment opportunities in the local area and brought into focus what employers expect of applicants. As a result, students were more aware of what they needed to do to enter the world of work even before the end of their first year of study.

Interviews continued throughout the course, often recorded as audio files to capture progress made since the last attempt. Students also took part in peer-to-peer evaluations and online interviews so they could continually test and improve their self-presentation. Exposed to live situations such as these in which they had to project and defend their capabilities, students were able to quickly catch and acquire a culture of work readiness. The results have proved promising:

*“LinkedIn has had a positive impact on the quality of students’ development of CV content and has given students an understanding of how important networking and collaboration is in gaining employment.”*

**Paul Styles, Learning Technologist, St Helens College**

The project also introduced changes in the way teachers planned, delivered and assessed the course, even requiring improvements in the digital literacy skills of teachers. The college responded by allowing staff time for learning new approaches and skills within the weekly allowance for continuing professional development. In return, managers looked for proof of relevant course development.

Teachers were also encouraged to set up their own LinkedIn accounts so that, in addition to the CPD provided by the college, they could obtain the support and mentorship of colleagues on the LinkedIn community and discover for themselves the value of this contemporary professional network. Moving forward, the project has been expanded on a teacher-by-teacher basis, with ongoing support from the college’s professional support services staff and the e-learning manager who took the lead on the initiative.

## Impact

Although this is still an ongoing study, the success of the self-advocacy project can be demonstrated by the large number of students who have either found employment or been offered a place at Chester University as a result of their LinkedIn profiles. Students also have a wider understanding of how to use social media for professional networking purposes, and have found work placements by doing so:

*“A LinkedIn profile will be the only documentation needed when looking for future employment as it allows employers to search for people who meet the criteria they are looking for, rather than having to advertise a job and discover whether the applicants meet the employer’s needs.”*

**James Proctor, student, St Helens College**

*“The most productive outcome from this module would be my LinkedIn application. Not only has the LinkedIn account found my work placement for the year, but it also gave me a chance of other job opportunities which professionals have asked me to apply for.”*

**Christie Hendrick, student, St Helens College**

The success of the initiative may not yet be fully realised. The project’s incremental style means it can be rolled out across all of higher education programmes to help improve the employability and networking skills of both students and staff across the institution. Other tangible benefits from the initiative include:

- » Students have become more vigilant about spelling and grammar. Exposure to a more demanding audience has demonstrated to some students how poor their spelling is, and that this may have had a bearing on past failures in job applications
- » Students now understand better how to use social media in general. The impact of unguarded postings on Facebook is taught as part of the preparation for using LinkedIn. To discover the need for careful image management, students are also asked to reflect on the results of a self-search on Google
- » As a result of the personal nature of social media over 25% of the Level 5 foundation degree model of learning now involves reflection
- » Communication and digital literacy skills are also improving. Students are now re-organising their social and business web presences so that friends and employers can be addressed separately and in more appropriate ways

- » LinkedIn has sparked innovative ideas in curriculum design. The department of creative media and arts, for example, has introduced project work in which tutors acting as prospective employers seek information about the applicants from their e-portfolios accessed via their LinkedIn accounts. In this way, LinkedIn can be used to provide dynamic, updatable evidence of achievement. Tutors can also recommend students via the platform

Such has been the success of the project that use of LinkedIn has been being rolled out college-wide during 2015, and the profile of technology in general in enhancing student employability is going from strength to strength. Students now use Padlet to research and share information about companies. No two entries can be the same to provide a richer pool of information about potential employers.

### Find out more

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- » Case study written up by Geoff Rebbeck  
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# FE case study vignettes



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<b>Institution</b>	<b>Birmingham Metropolitan College</b>
<b>Title</b>	Auto Share and Learn - a collaborative initiative between industry and education
<b>Technologies</b>	Specialist online application developed using the open source content management system, Drupal.
<b>Description</b>	In a collaborative approach to skills development, Birmingham Metropolitan College is working with Jaguar Land Rover on a Jisc-funded project to create an online portal for supply chain companies, known as Auto Share and Learn. The project's steering group is made up of representatives from both industry and education to ensure that collaboration continues between the two sectors. Their shared initiatives include creating sharable learning resources, skills-swapping and engaging further and higher education students in partnership projects with employers.
<b>Contact</b>	Peter Chatterton, Consultant to the project ( <a href="mailto:peter.chatterton@daedalus-e-world.com">peter.chatterton@daedalus-e-world.com</a> )

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<b>Institution</b>	<b>Welsh Government</b>
<b>Title</b>	Digital literacy - the new Essential Skill for Wales
<b>Technologies</b>	Moodle, Cynnal e-portfolio, a range of technologies as chosen by students
<b>Description</b>	<p>As a result of its review of Key and Essential Skills, the Welsh government concluded that ICT skills alone are no longer enough for contemporary learners, who are often tech savvy but lacking in the knowledge and experience needed to manage technology successfully, safely and with pleasure. As a result, from 2015 the Essential Skills Wales qualification includes digital literacy instead of ICT as a core skill requirement for adults and young people in further education, work-based and adult community learning. The report drew from various models to recommend a number of skills strands which were further refined by Cardiff Metropolitan University and Jisc. These are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>» Digital responsibility</li> <li>» Digital information literacy</li> <li>» Digital productivity</li> <li>» Digital collaboration</li> <li>» Digital creativity</li> <li>» Digital learning</li> </ul>
<b>Contact</b>	<p>Hazel Israel, Welsh Baccalaureate (<a href="mailto:Hazel.Israel@wales.gsi.gov.uk">Hazel.Israel@wales.gsi.gov.uk</a>)</p> <p>Welsh Government / Llywodraeth Cymru</p> <p>Department for Education and Skills (DfES) / yr Adran Dysgu a Sgiliau (AdAS)</p>

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**Institution** Mid Kent College

**Title** Virtual welding - when simulation technology is better than 'authentic' learning

**Technologies** Simulation software

**Description** Mid Kent College in Gillingham, Kent, is using simulation software to develop students' welding skills in a cost-effective way. Around 150 students use the virtual welding facility each year, often many times over, both in their own time and as part of a college course. This has enabled them to spend more time practising their skills without incurring the cost of scrap metal. In addition, tutors are only required to monitor activities. As there is no risk of injury, students aged 14-17 can also take part.

Authentic learning rather than simulation is usually preferable, but there are benefits to simulation in some circumstances, for example:

- » Students can hone their welding skills, gain feedback on attempts, and are passing tests quicker as a result
- » Real-world welding is expensive and limits the amount of welding students could do on the course in real time
- » Other students can experience welding freely including the Arts and Design students
- » Where health and safety issues are unusual, the capacity to do damage in inexperienced hands is high. Simulation of previously barred or limited activity allows open and frequent practice opportunities is a course strength
- » It is used in taster sessions for prospective students and to engage 14-17 engineering students who would otherwise be excluded from using a real welding course on Health and Safety grounds
- » Costs decrease the more learners able to use it
- » Simulation allows repetition of activity as a means of mastering a skill without reliance on others or resources
- » It has marketing appeal beyond the course

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**Institution** Perins School Hampshire

**Title** Using personal learning spaces in a school

**Technologies** Mahara e-portfolio

**Description** Perins School, the oldest continuous education establishment in Hampshire, is currently a community sports college for 11 to 16 year olds. The school uses Mahara to provide pupils with personal learning spaces and to build their learning skills. In a Year 7 cross-curricular class, for example, pupils use their personal learning spaces to showcase their work in a 'project collection', and reflect on their skills and achievements in their 'assessment collection'. Pages are usually shared with the whole group so that pupils can feed back on each other's work.

This initiative demonstrates that school pupils as well as college students can develop the ability to reflect and manage their own learning. Reflective learning does not have to start at the door of the local college or university. There are also plans in the coming academic year for students to develop personal profile portfolios consisting of records of achievement that are updated periodically. These development records will eventually be used to support pupils' applications to become prefects.

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**Institution** MyWorkSearch Ltd

**Title** Using technology to support and prepare students for employability

**Technologies** MyWorkSearch

**Description** MyWorkSearch is an online service that helps you affordably assist large numbers of people, providing employability skills, work placements and job search support in an electronic workbook presented in the form of an e-portfolio for use by subscribing colleges, training providers and other agencies. Using cloud-based technology, this commercially developed system offers a range of case management tools accessible via a single log in to help tutors, advisers and students manage progress towards employment. The facilities on offer include an audit, the ability to set and track targets and the system also helps identify students who are failing to progress. MyWorkSearch has the added advantage of scalability; the same functionality that works for one student can be scaled up to thousands in an organisation.

Feedback from the employability team at one college was:

*"We use MyWorkSearch in a wide variety of ways and this is still growing and diversifying. Our students use it to access advice and conduct research, to construct CVs and also to look for work. We use it to track and contact students, to measure and record progress, to plan and support tutorial sessions and also for the delivery of training. We will also be using it to support the new Traineeship initiative as it allows for work experience to be detailed and comprehensively monitored".*

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