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CONTACTS:

Project Manager: Phil Robinson,
Gateshead College, Quarryfield Rd, Gateshead,
Tyne and Wear, NE8 3BE
Tel: 0191 490 2424 Fax: 0191 490 2313
phil.robinson@gateshead.ac.uk

Project Director: Andrew Robson (e-Learning Development Manager),
Gateshead College, Quarryfield Rd, Gateshead,
Tyne and Wear, NE8 3BE
Tel: 0191 490 2209 Fax: 0191 490 2313
andrew.robson@gateshead.ac.uk

Project Steering Group:

Andrew Robson (Gateshead College) andrew.robson@gateshead.ac.uk

Merv Stapleton (City of Sunderland College) merv.stapleton@citysun.ac.uk

Craig Scott (South Tyneside College) craig.scott@stc.ac.uk

Bob Bell (JISC RSC-Northern) bob.bell@sunderland.ac.uk

JISC

COMPORT:

A Comparative Study of e-Portfolio Implementation in Work-Based Learning

A collaborative project involving three FE Colleges in North-East England, concerned with piloting the introduction of different e-portfolio systems within HE in FE programmes with substantial work-based learning components.

Aim: to deploy contrasted e-portfolio/PDP systems in H.E. courses across four collaborating colleges and provide a comparative analysis of their effectiveness and efficiency in order to assist the HE in FE community with implementation choices in the future.



South Tyneside College



GATESHEAD COLLEGE



City of Sunderland College

Four Project Strands

City of Sunderland College:

Technology: Blackboard VLE, In-House PDP Templates + PDAs

Target Course: Foundation Degree in Service Management

- A programme in its second year, year 2 learners with focus on PDP modules

South Tyneside College :

Technology: Blackboard VLE /Campus LX Tools

Target Course: Foundation Degree in Marine Engineering

- A new programme with a small initial group of learners.

Gateshead College

Technology: ePET *Target Course:* Certificate in Education/PGCE

- First and second year trainee teachers. Course focus on reflective learning.

Web 2.0 in 'Music' Strand:

Technology: Social Networking Sites and iWeb *Target Courses:* FD Music students in each partner college

- A late addition, responding to growth in learner-driven Web 2.0 approaches
 - No intervention : collecting data to provide comparison for main project
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What Happened?

...at City of Sunderland College

Smooth implementation - Well integrated, widely used and appreciated by learners - High level of support from tutor and e-learning team - PDA's : less impact.

...at South Tyneside College

On-line access problematical during placement (Backpack) - Some learners were able to make substantial and valuable use of on-line journals - staff taking lessons forward to next cohort.

...at Gateshead College

Delayed implementation caused initial difficulties - Focused on reflective journals (blog) - Student engagement variable, but generally positive view of benefits for learning — some highly engaged.

... Music Strand

A series of interviews reveals different approaches and intentions rather than similarities: MySpace, Blackboard, iWEB. In each case the potential for web 2.0 technology to directly support learning can be further developed.

Key Stakeholder Issues

Engaging learners and supporting them in the work-place

- Timing of introduction
- Technical Issues: Access to systems - IT skills and confidence - Technical support requirements
- Academic Issues: (Problems aren't so much with technology as with Reflection itself?) - The concept is new to many students and the value not immediately apparent - some have limited academic experience & consequent lack of confidence - Importance of Feedback and support - Managing expectations: staff don't have time, but the feed back is vital for motivation and learning.
- Lack of confidence to engage in peer collaboration

Staff Buy in

- Time: too much reliance on goodwill - re-definition of contact time - need agreed ground rules for feedback, manage learner expectations
- May not be positive about the technology : lack of skills, knowledge - loss of ownership - lack of time to do it properly - requires a new way of thinking
- Need to be trained and on-board before implementation

Engaging employers and mentors

- Extending employer participation proved difficult in practice— raised lots of questions/issues about the process of engagement, hopefully proving a basis for progress.
 - Mentor Engagement also limited: not a paid job - preference for f2f meetings - have the potential to reduce load on tutors? - a skilled job & training required.
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Some Conclusions

- **No one size fits all: match the tool to the learning programme**
- **Staff "buy in" is crucial**
- **Timing of introduction is significant**
- **Success depends on the quality and suitability of support and feedback to learners**
- **Learner inhibitions regarding reflection can't be solved overnight - need support, feedback and time.**
- **Web 2.0 potential not yet tapped...**
- **Mentor and Employer Engagement remains Problematic**