

Project Title

Enabling access to mentor training for all new mentors of ITT students using a virtual learning environment (supports Peninsula CETT objective 1)

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Organisation: City of Bristol College

Role in Organisation: Teaching and Learning Development Manager

Background

- **Description of organisation**

The College ranks in the top 10% of colleges in the UK with over 42,000 students; 7,000 of which are full-time. There are approximately 2,200 staff of whom 1,000 are teaching staff (~ in February 2008 identified as : 639 teaching more than 6hrs per week, 177 teaching less than 6hrs per week and 206 specialist modules / specific short courses).

Since 1996 the College has grown through mergers and now comprises eight main sites and several other community venues. The College also has Partner Providers including a major local training group. Staff and students are located not only in central Bristol but across the greater Bristol area including South Gloucestershire.

The College aims to provide for the diversity of Bristol's population and local industry. Curriculum ranges from pre- entry through to HE (Foundation Degrees and Post Graduate levels). There is also training and qualifications for major industries eg aeronautical and transport technology, which draws students from all over the UK.

The College is a member of the 157 group and has several COVES and Beacon awards.

- **Relevant organisational policies**

The College mentoring policy has been reviewed and restructured in May 2007 to reflect not only the requirements of 'Success for all' and the ITT reforms, but also the desire to support where necessary and appropriate, all staff, not just new teachers, through mentoring.

Training for 'Mentors for Teachers' has taken place over the last ten years as a short face to face, in-house course with college certification. This has focussed on roles, skills and qualities of a mentor and has been underpinned by: academic referencing to, and application of, relevant mentoring models; simulated skills

practice (including observation and feedback); and discussing the reality of the job with a practicing mentor.

The intention is that each Faculty should have at least one mentor, but ideally more, to accommodate the range of staff and complexity of communication given different sites and timetabling. Mentoring has proven to be successful but the drive now is to extend and consolidate provision to increase and maintain the mentoring capacity required by the complexity of the college structure.

The Human Resources and Workforce Development unit is responsible for ensuring new staff and those on ITT have mentors

Project Aims

- To enable all mentors of ITT students, particularly those that do not work in the City of Bristol College, to easily access flexible training that provides a customised and college certificated programme for mentors of student teachers.
- To provide ITT programme specific information, online and personal support to ITT mentors.
- To establish a database of ITT students mentors for use by ITT tutors, the College's Human Resources and to provide information to the University of Plymouth ITT (PCET) Programme Manager and Ofsted.

Description of Project as Undertaken

The project intended to:

- develop a Blackboard (Bb) course in the College's virtual learning environment (vle) so that ITT mentors external to the college could easily access, training and support, including simulated observation practice.
- provide a base line training for all ITT mentors so that the college could be assured that mentors were adequately trained and understood their role and responsibilities within the different ITT programmes they may be mentoring a student in.
- as the project developed it also became clear that it would be beneficial and essential to share the Bb course with the University of Plymouth and programme partners.

Outcomes/Findings

- The database is active and being used.
- The training element of the Bb course is in final stages of completion and intended to be used between April and July 2008.

- Discussions continue with the ICLT Unit as to the best way to share the Bb course externally to the College, across the UoP partnership. The issues are partly technical but also concern personal data security once such a system is live through the web, and some aspects of copyright of purchased resources. These will be resolved once the Bb course is finalised.

Developing the database

The ITT team discussed the structure and content required. The College's Information, Communication and Learning Technology (ICLT) Unit made and enabled the database. The database is simple to use and asks for the following essential information:

- Name
- Organisation
- subject specialism
- teaching qualification or experience
- training / experience in mentoring
- email contact
- name of trainee(s)

Over time it may be that additional information fields are required and these can easily be added.

Bb can be accessed through the College's website anytime from anywhere and mentors are given a user name and password. An introduction to the site is given through a letter from the ITT programme tutor. The mentor can telephone or email for help if they have any difficulties in accessing the site. In addition there is now face to face support available from 2 part time ITT mentor support staff (appointed as a job share post February 2008 for this year funded by the government funding for ITT reforms)

Developing the Bb course

We were able to draw on the content, materials and experience of the face to face course (described above) and participation in the Standards Unit, Phase 2 ITT reform research project in which we reported on ITT Reform Pilot: Workplace Observation (2005-06).

The transfer of a face to face course to a vle based context has taken much longer than expected to achieve. Readers will be aware of the nature of this discussion –for example some things like essential reading are easily transferred as 'Word'

documents, but other elements that benefit from being activity based and communicative are more complex to translate. Tasks relying on drawing, discussion, pair/triad/ whole group work need to be reconstructed so as to express the same underlying pedagogy and learner centeredness that enables participants to fully engage with the key learning required. Checking learning of such activities needs to be relevant and engaging, not mechanistic or over burdensome. Time has been used to develop visually stimulating and interactive elements of learning and these are being finalised now.

Recommendations for Peninsula CETT

1. continue to anticipate being able to use the Bb vle training across the partnership from July 2008
2. be aware of the developments within the national CETTs' Sub- group on Mentoring and the intention of QIA to provide a National CETT mentoring website. Many of the CETTs are producing online training but there is diversity in content, level and purpose.

References

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