

Beyond the vision

Staff development in e-learning –
the FPP Exemplar Colleges' experience

In January 2004, five colleges in England were awarded funding of £35,000 each from the National Learning Network (NLN) to carry out a year-long project to develop implementation models for the Ferl Practitioners' Programme (FPP). This publication builds on the experiences of these colleges and highlights the key stages involved in implementing a major staff development initiative in e-learning for the further education sector.

The Ferl Practitioners' Programme

The Ferl Practitioners' Programme (FPP) is a flexible and comprehensive staff development programme designed to equip college practitioners, in a wide range of roles, with the skills they need to harness the potential that information and learning technologies (ILT) and e-learning offers. Launched in 2003, the FPP is now in 68 per cent of colleges across the UK and is used within a number of initial teacher training courses. During 2004, the FPP was made available to all adult and community learning (ACL) providers participating in the E-Guides project and to practitioners in specialist colleges. FPP-licensed colleges have been supported through the JISC Regional Support Centres (RSCs) as well as the FPP team at Becta.

What is e-learning?

There are many definitions of e-learning. The definition adopted for this publication is: "E-learning is learning supported or enhanced through the application of information and communications technology."

LSDA/LLUK 2004

The FPP Exemplar College Project

Success For All (2002) and *Harnessing Technology* (2005) highlighted skills development for the education workforce

as a key priority. The FPP Exemplar College Project was one of a number

of initiatives that set out to explore ways in which skills development could be addressed in the learning and skills sector. The funding was specifically to provide one full-time FPP Guide in each of the five colleges. Full details of the project and the college reports can be found online at <http://ferl.becta.org.uk/fppexemplar>. The broad aims of the project are listed below.

FPP Exemplar College impact targets

- Build on the impetus already demonstrated by the positive uptake of the FPP and other NLN initiatives.
- Develop an architecture for rolling out wider programmes of training.
- Illustrate alternative pathways for the embedding of ILT/e-learning in organisational culture.
- Identify levers to raise the standards of staff e-skills within the sector.
- Explore the management of change necessary to bring about effective integration of ILT/e-learning within an organisation.
- Evaluate the effectiveness of a dedicated, full-time e-learning staff developer.

Accreditation

The FPP is linked to accredited qualifications at Levels 3 and 4 through the Joint Examining Board (JEB). A certificate of unit credit towards the Level 4 Certificate in Transforming Learning with ILT can be awarded to those who successfully complete single units of the certificate. These qualifications are available to practitioners in FPP licence-holding institutions which are also registered JEB centres.

The college models

Each of the five selected colleges adopted different approaches to reflect their unique starting points, circumstances and aspirations. The models outlined here may not, therefore, transfer to other contexts without adaptation. However, they do provide insights into each approach and offer exemplars for the sector that are further illustrated by the online case studies available at <http://ferl.becta.org.uk/fppexemplar>.

Bedford College – Multiple approach model

Bedford College is a medium-to-large FE college offering provision from entry to university level across seven sites. Plans for staff development in ILT/e-learning were well developed prior to the project and, following significant investment in learning technologies, the initiative provided senior management with an opportunity to embed ILT/e-learning more deeply into the college's learning and teaching provision.

Bedford College used Advanced Practitioners, staff teaching in Centres of Vocational Excellence (CoVEs) and ILT enthusiasts as key target groups to spearhead the development of ILT/e-learning college-wide. Three models were piloted to meet the different needs of these key groups and to explore the potential of a range of modes of delivery:

- an accredited programme for Advanced Practitioners, using the Level 4 JEB Certificate in Transforming Learning with ILT

- an intensive, two-day, face-to-face programme for CoVE staff with post-training support
- a flexible, online-supported study model via the intranet and virtual learning environment (VLE).

Filton College – Target groups model

Filton College is a medium-sized FE college serving north Bristol and south Gloucestershire. The college took part in the FPP pilot in November 2002, although take-up at this stage was varied. The 2003 Ofsted report showed a need to improve the use of ILT in learning and teaching and involvement in the project has revitalised the college's ILT staff development agenda.

The model developed at Filton College concentrated resources on a relatively small number of learning area teams – science, maths, sport and health and beauty – to ensure that every team member moved visibly forward in their use of ILT/e-learning. Selected FPP modules and learning materials were combined with practical skills training (involving NLN ILT Subject Mentors) to ensure maximum impact. The FPP Guide worked with learning area managers, at curriculum level with staff in the designated teams, and at a cross-college level with the learning resources team.

Greenwich Community College – Specialist cross-college team model

Greenwich Community College is an FE college with a strong role in community education and a relatively high number of part-time and hourly-paid teaching staff. Sixty eight per cent of its learners are from 'widening participation' backgrounds. Senior management approved funding for a three-year Transforming Teaching and Learning project in 2003. The FPP formed part of this project, along with the introduction of a team of e-learning practitioners and the implementation of the college's combined VLE and management information system (MIS).

The Greenwich Community College model involved the use of e-learning practitioners to form a pilot cohort. The training was later extended to other teams including curriculum teams, learning resources staff and those involved in initial teacher training. Adaptations were made to contextualise the modules; delivery methods included workshops, twilight

training sessions and blended delivery using the VLE. Parallel to these initiatives, sessions based on Strand 6 of the FPP, *Demonstrating Transformation*, were delivered to senior and curriculum managers.

Mid-Kent College – Curriculum teams model

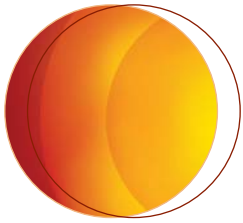
Mid-Kent College is a large FE college in Kent operating on three main sites. The college offers a diverse range of provision, from basic skills to foundation degrees. The college participated in the FPP pilot in 2002 as part of a major initiative to improve the quality of teaching and learning. The recently adopted VLE, Blackboard, provided a further incentive to widen the involvement of staff in ILT/e-learning.

The aim of the Mid-Kent College model was to widen the use of learning technologies so that ILT/e-learning could be used 'naturally and with confidence' by all staff and students. Departments were targeted as a result of the college's quality processes, either where ILT was underdeveloped or where teams themselves were known to be keen to increase their use of ILT. Key support services such as library, key skills and curriculum support staff also underwent training. In each case, the delivery methods were adapted to suit the needs of the different groups.

Sir John Deane's College – Whole-college approach

Sir John Deane's College is a medium-sized sixth form college in Cheshire based on one site. It primarily offers A-level courses for full-time students aged 16 to 19. The potential of ILT/e-learning to enrich the learning experience of students had previously been recognised at the college. However, the challenge for Sir John Deane's College was to find a structured training programme that would develop staff skills in using ILT/e-learning imaginatively and confidently, and to roll this out to all 120 staff across the college.

The model adopted by Sir John Deane's College included delivery of modified modules from Strand 1 of the FPP, *Using ILT with Learners*, and Strand 2, *Assisting and Supporting Staff to Use ILT with Learners*. A new module was created for the administration team and an introduction to the materials and their effect in college was also given to support staff. This model was designed to have a high level of impact across the whole college.



Essential ingredients for e-learning staff development

For some practitioners, e-learning represents a significant culture change. Staff development projects are a necessary agent to change the culture of learning and teaching. The complex and multifaceted nature of these projects means that they require both thorough initial scoping and careful management once underway if they are to succeed. The models developed by the five colleges in the FPP Exemplar College Project revealed five essential ingredients for the successful implementation of culture change. These five ingredients fall into three stages: design, construction and maintenance.

Stage 1: Design

The design stage is the most vital part of the process and sets the scene for everything that follows. Time spent developing, planning, organising and communicating the reasons behind the training initiative is essential – it is these aspects that will ultimately determine success or failure.

Vision and leadership

Strong vision and leadership enhances focus and maximises effect

“[FPP] reminded managers of the vital necessity of sticking to basic tenets of change management: senior management support, meticulous planning and consultation, full commitment to adequate resourcing, emphasis on a ‘can do’ approach, and stressing the benefits of the new approach to the basic business needs of the establishment.”

Sir John Deane's College

Culture change needs to be ‘driven from the top’. In terms of e-learning staff development, vision requires an awareness of the potential e-learning can bring to enhance learning and an idea of the route that needs to be taken to realise the vision. Leadership requires the ability to translate this into a clear action plan, along with the ability to motivate others to work as a team and the tenacity to execute the action plan. The objectives of any e-learning staff development initiative must be:

- clear to all those participating
- beneficial to learners and to the organisation as a whole
- aligned to the organisation's strategic goals for consistency of purpose
- supported by the quality assurance process

- measurable, realistic and achievable within the allocated time frame.

The leadership role requires action and commitment to drive the initiative forward. Activities may include:

- setting and monitoring objectives and targets
- bringing together teams with overlapping objectives
- providing the necessary resources
- anticipating and removing barriers
- providing the impetus and motivation for others to participate.

Building the quality assurance process into the project signalled the importance of the training to practitioners in one of the exemplar colleges and later provided valuable data on the degree of success of the training.

“The project was championed at a senior management level by the college's director of ILT and director of curriculum innovation, both members of the college's executive management team.” Bedford College

Stage 2: Construction

Once the vision has been designed, the next stage is to construct a framework to support that vision. This involves bringing together the resources and the right people, and then turning the vision into a practical implementation plan capable of meeting the targets identified.

Assemble the taskforce

Teamwork enhances cross-organisational credibility and take-up

Assembling the right team to carry the vision forward is essential. Every organisation licensed to use the FPP materials has to nominate one person, the FPP Guide, to be the main contact between external organisations such as Becta and the JISC RSCs. This role spans strategy and implementation; in each of the five exemplar colleges, the role of the FPP Guide

“Crucial to the success of the project was having a full-time post assigned to support the implementation of the FPP and to act as a known point of contact for assistance with the development of ILT... In particular, the Guide’s role as a champion of ILT was important in raising enthusiasm for new approaches to teaching and learning. The role has become essential to the future development of ILT across the college.” Mid-Kent College

was central to the successes achieved. The FPP Guide should have specialist knowledge in using technology combined with excellent teaching and motivation skills.

In many cases, the FPP Guide acts as a liaison between the various stakeholders, co-ordinating resources, dovetailing initiatives and breaking down barriers. In some organisations, the FPP Guide is also the FPP Trainer; others have more than one trainer within their delivery team. Other stakeholders who can assist the FPP Guide to achieve the set objectives include:

- senior managers to provide the strategic steer, authority and resources
- curriculum or programme managers to maintain the focus on the quality of provision at team level
- technical teams for their vital specialist skills
- learning resource centre (LRC) or library staff for their extensive resource knowledge and strong customer service focus
- Advanced Practitioners and e-learning practitioners to model and promote exemplary practice
- teacher trainers and continuing professional development (CPD) teams to ensure any IT, ILT or e-learning training is integrated with other staff development initiatives for maximum cohesion and effect
- enthusiasts or people with specialist skills to lead or support specific initiatives.

“The involvement of the learning resource team was considered an essential element in supporting the development of ILT in the curriculum. The learning resources manager holds the remit for provision of ILT staff and content development, including the development of the VLE and staff and student intranets.” Filton College

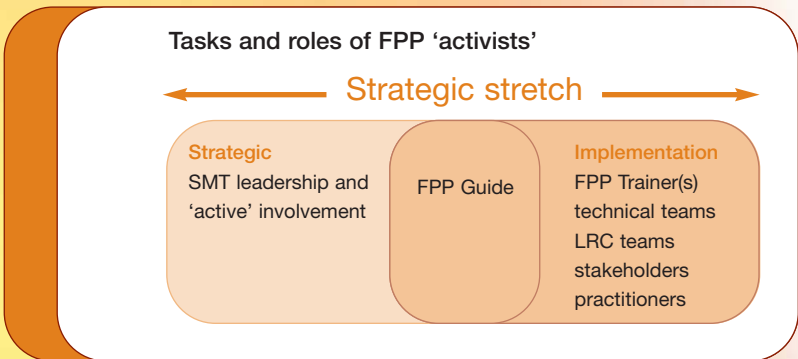
Engineering the right environment

Address environmental aspects before they impede progress

If the staff development initiative is to succeed, the appropriate supporting resources must be identified and put in place before they are needed. Any necessary infrastructure improvements should at least run in tandem to ensure that the technology can keep pace as expectations and aspirations rise. More than one college reported an increased demand for equipment and training as a result of the initiative. This is an issue that should be addressed as part of the overall college development plan. The most requested resource was that of time for staff to conduct the training and embed their skills. Time can be funded through accredited programmes or made available through in-service training days or programmes tailored to individual needs. Other aspects that should be addressed here include:

- how associated services will be affected and how they can be used to support the initiative (for example, technical and LRC/library support services)
- the importance of gathering baseline data and establishing a means by which to measure progress from the outset
- identification of ‘quick wins’ and how these can be resolved and harnessed to provide momentum
- availability of equipment for staff to utilise their new skills and see immediate benefit.

“It was noticeable that staff were far more enthusiastic in attending training once access to resources had improved and once barriers, real and perceived, had been lowered or eliminated.” Mid-Kent College



“In line with the new installations of classroom technologies, the portable ILT loan equipment, managed by the learning technologies team, has been increased to enable ILT to be used in standard classrooms. A direct result of providing more access to these technologies is a high demand for the support and training services offered to all staff by the learning technology advisers. The team have added more sessions to their staff development services, in terms of content and availability, and are running regular learning lunches for ILT skills development areas.” Bedford College

Building skills and confidence

Skills training must be aligned with vision to advance the strategic aims and elevate outcomes beyond localised pockets of achievement

Practitioner skills and confidence in IT, ILT and e-learning vary widely; those leading staff development projects need to be sensitive to this fact and tailor programmes accordingly. Conducting a skills audit is one way to clarify needs and ensure the training being provided meets these needs. It cannot be assumed that the basic skills are in place – some practitioners will require initial IT skills, while others may have high IT capabilities but need training to apply this to support learning. Providing a range of delivery models to satisfy diverse needs proved beneficial to larger colleges in the project. Conversely, smaller colleges found that a whole-college or curriculum team approach maximised impact by removing the option to remain uncommitted. It is also essential that practitioners are allowed sufficient time to explore, develop and practise their new-found skills in a supportive environment. Further aspects to consider include:

“Individual or small groups of lecturers worked on projects to develop their own use of ILT in practice. The key characteristics of these projects were that they should be small-scale, realistic and achievable, and based on individual levels of skills and confidence.”

Filton College

- other priorities that may influence the amount of time an individual has for training
- the delivery options available and ways of individualising programmes in a cost-effective way

- ways of motivating staff to undertake training, for example, links to pay initiatives and appraisal systems or provision of equipment such as USB storage devices
- ensuring that training is provided at a time when practitioners can attend
- recognising small-scale as well as major achievements – a ‘building block’ approach where practitioners work towards certificates of unit credit(s) may be more appropriate for some staff.

“Elements of FPP were incorporated into curriculum ‘just-in-time’ twilight training to English as an Additional Language staff and supported by their learning area manager. For example, teaching staff received the training they had requested on interactive whiteboards, while at the same time receiving a skills and awareness audit and an explanation of interactive technology... mapped to FPP Strand 2, Module D.” Greenwich Community College

Stage 3: Maintenance

Staff development is a classic scaffolding process whereby each new layer is built on the foundations of earlier knowledge and experience. Very few construction projects end once the building is complete; when building for longevity, it is prudent to include a maintenance element. Ongoing support is often the hidden element in the staff development ‘iceberg’. The training is the tip – without support, it is likely that the initiative will sink.

Support and ongoing strategies for sustainable development

Ongoing support is essential for long-term improvement.

Support for practitioners to implement changes is the element most often valued by practitioners themselves. The impact of any training can be lost without ongoing and readily available support. Practitioners are learners in staff development terms and require the same level of support as any other learner. By making their experience a pleasurable one, it is much more likely that the practice being promoted will be adopted by others.

A range of support models needs to be considered, from the use of a discussion board within a VLE to building a community

of practice, regular drop-in workshops, 'learning lunches' and individual learning plans (ILPs) to assist practitioners in identifying the skills they can realistically develop. An extended role for the FPP Guide or a centrally-based support team needs to be considered from the outset, with the time to support practitioners when and where they use the technology with learners.

Other strategies for sustainable development include:

- Involve learning resources and learning support staff in FPP training to create a pool of knowledge and skills on which both students and other practitioners can draw
- Cascade models using key target groups such as Advanced Practitioners and E-learning Practitioners
- Peer support mechanisms through subject-specific or curriculum teams
- Cross-college steering or interest groups
- Use data gathered in the design stage and progress monitoring data to evaluate and fine-tune provision against identified success criteria
- Use of external speakers such as NLN ILT Subject Mentors to introduce fresh impetus and add value to college provision
- Assign individuals with specific expertise to mentor and support others.

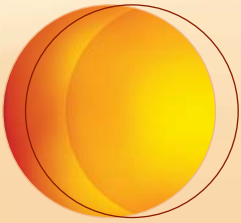
Strong senior management endorsement of any initiative is also invaluable.

"For 2004-05 the focus will be more on departments and their embedding of ILT into work schemes and individual lesson plans. This has involved the setting up of an advanced practitioners' committee (APC) as recommended by the ILT committee."

Sir John Deane's Sixth Form College

"The fact that staff skills audits were required in order to provide evidence for the project had another significant impact on the college... what the skills audits were intended to do was to identify ILT awareness and needs within the college. However, the audits also identified a more significant basic IT skills gap. This has resulted in an ongoing staff development programme which is being separately resourced." Greenwich Community College

"Staff development is a classic scaffolding process whereby each new layer is built on the foundations of earlier knowledge and experience."



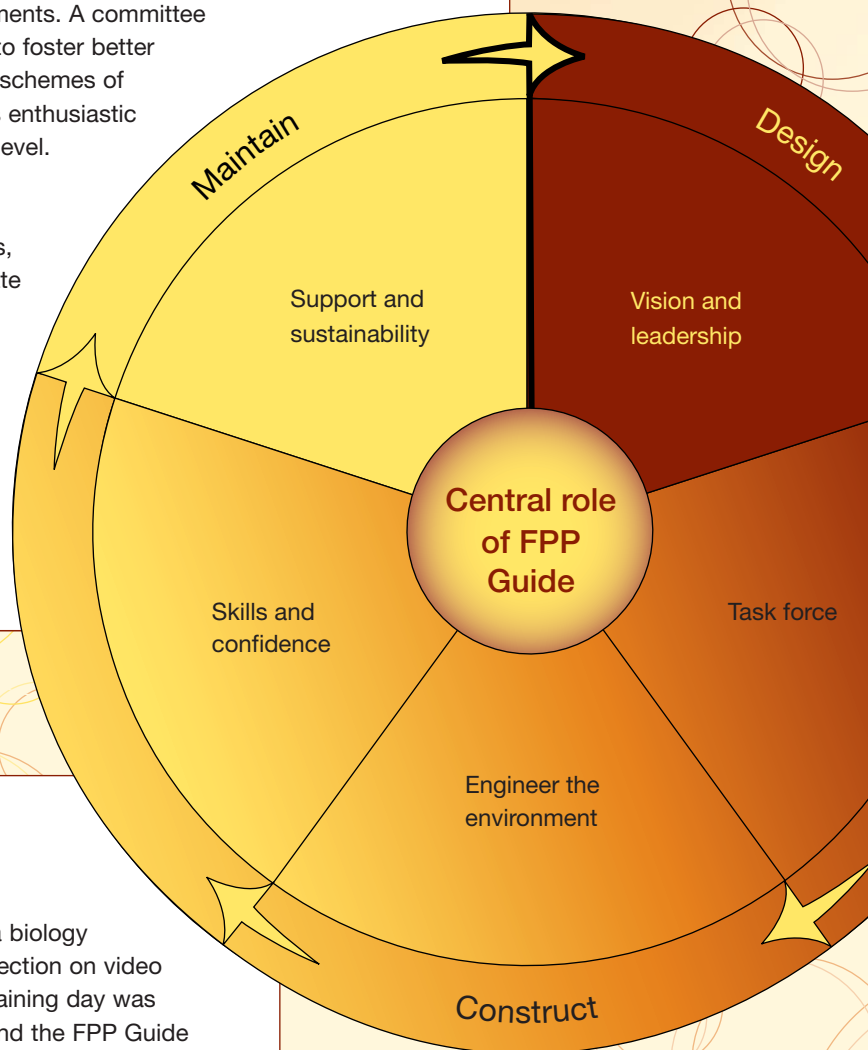
FPP in action

Support for sustainable development – Development of peer networks

At Sir John Deane's College, the FPP training has encouraged greater interaction and discussions between departments. A committee of Advanced Practitioners has been formed to foster better communication of ideas and embed ILT into schemes of work. The committee is made up of teachers enthusiastic about using ILT, irrespective of their IT skills level. The role of the committee is to co-ordinate communication between departments and support teams, address organisational issues, organise cross-college Inset training, celebrate successes and spread good practice. This will enable practitioners to produce detailed, individual departmental ILT audits and strategies that will inform the future planning and provision of resources. It will also significantly influence the planning for the proposed major new building work at the college to provide ILT suites accessible to all departments.

Building skills and confidence – Classroom support for video technology

Following a curriculum team training event, a biology lecturer at Mid-Kent College recorded a dissection on video and uploaded it onto the college VLE. The training day was followed up with some one-to-one training and the FPP Guide then joined the lecturer in the classroom to assist with the video recording while the lecturer performed the dissection. The lecturer would not have had the confidence to go ahead without the support of the FPP Guide but subsequently felt confident enough to support other colleagues within the team to experiment with the same technology. The learners enjoyed the activity and performed more skilful dissections as a result of being able to see the process clearly projected onto a large screen. A large number of the learners also accessed the materials again out of class.



Vision and leadership – Planning and awareness-raising sessions for senior and curriculum managers

At Greenwich Community College, materials from *Demonstrating Transformation* (Strand 6 of the FPP), combined with *Be Inspired* video clips also from the FPP, were delivered to senior and curriculum managers. This presentation was followed by group work which produced written strengths and weaknesses in the college's ILT provision. This has directly informed both the individual curriculum and the whole college's self-assessment report (SAR) and resulted in achievable targets for 2004-05 being set. The presentation captured the attention of the managers by showing real examples of ILT/e-learning in practice and secured the necessary support to implement the staff development plan. Before the training, only three out of 13 curriculum managers were aware of the resource; afterwards, 12 of the 13 felt it had been helpful in preparing for inspection and writing their SARs.

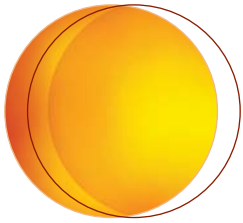
Assembling the team – Developing different delivery models to support varied staff needs

Bedford College was fortunate to have a learning technologies team before the project started and was able to capitalise on previous investment and explore three different delivery models. The team brought together managerial, teaching, resources, technical and multimedia skills and this, combined with their position within the college structure, meant that the team had an extensive reach and influence as well as the ability to plan resources centrally. As a consequence, the team was able to develop and support a wide range of staff development opportunities including an accredited training programme for advanced practitioners, two-day intensive training courses for CoVE teams, and the preparation of online materials for the newly purchased VLE to support individual staff members and those who found it difficult to access face-to-face training opportunities. All training opportunities benefited from post-training support from the learning technologies team.

**Full case studies
are available online at
[http://ferl.becta.org.uk/
fppexemplar](http://ferl.becta.org.uk/fppexemplar)**

Engineering the right environment – Use of wireless equipment to increase learner participation

At the start of the project, practitioners at Filton College identified access to hardware and software as a barrier to their ability to use and embed ILT/e-learning into their practice. A demonstration of the benefits of wireless keyboards and mice by an external presenter inspired practitioners and increased demand for equipment. Already confident with using the interactive whiteboard, a mathematics lecturer decided to experiment using a wireless keyboard and mouse to increase learner interactivity and participation. The FPP training has informed the purchasing policy and as a result the college is now equipping a permanent ILT staff development room to provide a safe environment in which to practise and develop newly acquired skills. Staff completing a defined number of training sessions or creating and uploading a specified amount of content onto the VLE are also benefiting from hardware incentives such as flash drives and wireless keyboards and mice.



From vision to achievement the key stages with FPP

Design

- Examine the key objectives in your college's strategic plans and consider where staff development in ILT/e-learning can support these wider objectives.
- Seek support from your senior management team (SMT) for your initiative with a presentation and a workshop based around *Demonstrating Transformation*.
- Use existing data to identify your college's starting point and then involve departmental managers in a 'barriers and benefits' exercise using the NLN Self-assessment Tool in *Demonstrating Transformation* to identify and agree targets.
- Ask departments or learning/curriculum areas to identify their vision for ILT/e-learning.
- Use the planning process to build in any 'change-reinforcement' mechanisms at the start.
- Establish quality assurance measures at the outset to help evaluate and record improvements.
- Map modules from the FPP to identified objectives.
- Remember that a college-wide vision needs full SMT support.

Construct

- Use the round table activity in Module Y of the FPP to bring together the key groups in your college to ensure ongoing leadership and support for practitioners.
- Address any environmental issues, ensuring that the necessary accommodation, hardware and software is in place before training begins, and that measures to remove barriers to participation are addressed.
- Identify the delivery options and support mechanisms that will enable your target groups to maximise their achievement.
- Build communication channels.
- Undertake a practitioner skills audit among target groups (see Module C of the FPP) to guide the training content.
- Customise the FPP modules and individual learning materials to fit your target groups (one of the strengths of the FPP is its flexibility).
- Integrate FPP modules into existing staff development activities to maximise its penetration into the college culture.
- Identify achievement targets for practitioners and disseminate all achievements widely.
- Look for incentives to encourage practitioners to participate.

Maintain

- Co-ordinate post-training support using a variety of methods to reach as wide an audience as possible.
- Use the quality assurance framework to monitor the increase in usage of ILT/e-learning.
- Use the NLN Self-assessment Tool to measure progress against targets.
- Identify positive achievements within self-assessment reports.
- Survey student perceptions of the increase in use of interactive resources.
- Link achievements to investment in infrastructure for the SMT.
- Use positive data to encourage others to take action.
- Embed the quality processes within individual teams.
- Celebrate achievements.

Impact and culture change

Ultimately, proof of success for any initiative comes from the impact the training has had on practitioners and learners. Here are a few comments from practitioners and learners as a result of their experiences on the FPP Exemplar College Project.

“The project has given us a real opportunity to make a step-change in this area and hopefully will enable others to do the same. I looked in on a training session... and was delighted to see such enthusiasm and innovation happening.”

Geoff Pine, Principal of Greenwich Community College

“[The course] was very useful as it gave me some excellent ideas on how to integrate IT with psychology. It also provided me with a basis for further contacts in my field.”

Lecturer, Sir John Deane's College

“Responses from students such as: ‘It was easy to use, good, and different’ and ‘it got the whole class involved’ has encouraged the tutor to investigate more possibilities for integrating ILT into her teaching.” Lecturer, Filton College

“Eighty three per cent of students noted that technology had increased during the term. Of students asked, 76 per cent said that the use of technology made learning more enjoyable.” Practitioner, Mid-Kent College

Visit the FPP Exemplar College Project Website to find out more

<http://ferl.becta.org.uk/fppexemplar>

To aid colleges planning to deliver the FPP, the FPP Exemplar College Project website contains further information including:

- case studies and resources from practitioners engaged in delivery and learning using the FPP
- detailed reports from each of the five Exemplar Colleges
- example lesson plans and schemes of work developed by the colleges for delivering the FPP
- modified FPP activities and exercises
- further resources created as a result of the project, including staff ILT induction material and online guides.

The site also contains further information on models employed by the colleges, as well as recommendations for good practice.

“no other training gave me the feeling ‘hang on, this is good for teaching’”.

Practitioner at Bedford College

“The clear message from FPP training was that the application of ILT techniques constituted a very valuable addition to the existing resources at the disposal of teaching and learning support teams, shining a new spotlight on tried and trusted teaching methods.”

Sir John Deane's College

Sources of further information

The Exemplar Colleges

Bedford College

<http://www.bedford.ac.uk>

Filton College

<http://www.filton.ac.uk>

Greenwich Community College

<http://www.gcc.ac.uk>

Mid-Kent College

<http://www.midkent.ac.uk>

Sir John Deane's College

<http://www.sjd.ac.uk>

The Ferl Practitioners' Programme

<http://ferl.becta.org.uk/fpp>

The Joint Examining Board

<http://www.jeb.co.uk>

This publication draws on the final reports submitted by the FPP Exemplar Colleges. Executive summaries of the reports are available from the FPP Exemplar College section of the FPP website at <http://ferl.becta.org.uk/fppexemplar>

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