

Building in Core Skills



At Banff and Buchan College, Core Skills delivery has taken a new direction. A pilot project of team teaching has been used for the first time by Shona Pickering and Ian Bain within the vocational area of **Construction**

It has been such a huge success it will be rolled out across engineering, motor vehicle and catering. This area has traditionally attracted young people more keen on the practical nature of carpentry/joinery, painting/decorating and brickwork trades — much more than theory based and even further away from discreet classes in literacies or working with others.

Why?

What had prompted Banff and Buchan to take this approach?

A clear focus on the learner and a commitment to supporting all learners in being successful.

It was obvious to Ian, lecturer in Construction, that not all students were completing the coursework and that some, although interested in the subject, could be achieving more. He is well aware of the stigma felt by learners who are referred for support with their literacy skills and, along with Shona, agreed that the better way was to bring support to the whole of the vocational area.

How ?

Using the CAVSS model of support, Shona joined the group for a session a week usually three hours in theory session and followed up in their workshop practical sessions where appropriate — about an hour per week.

The teaching makes explicit the communication and numeracy skills needed for the work of the week, uses time and expertise to go over any common areas of difficulty with the whole group.

[Click here to see what the team have to say about how it works](#)

http://www.understandingstandards.org.uk/makers_ccc/files/CoreSkillsVidPart1.wmv



Benefits for all – especially learners

This may seem a huge investment of time — it actually works out to be more economical at first cut and when considered along with other benefits, is highly effective use of resources. Previously, support had been organised on a one to one with six or seven from this area being

seen individually every week for a 30 minute session. This way, not only is the stigma removed, the whole group benefits from increased concentration on areas that they are concerned about.

Shona is skilled in developing rapport with the students and can gauge, along with Ian, where to offer a bit more on communication and numeracy.

Integrated delivery = meaningful context

ICT is used to support throughout delivery in the form of web guests to source information with many sites carefully selected for their explicit graphics rather than obtuse text. Ian finds that this use of ICT helps confidence with language generally and vocationally specific terminology.

Ian points out that there are loads of opportunities within the course to develop Core Skills and makes full use of practical examples. These can include measuring up for a job and adding 10% for waste — a prime example of going over percentages for those who are puzzled and for working with those that are more confident in this area.



Working with others and negotiating space in the workshop is an essential skill — again this is directly related to the chosen area.

Engineering more of it

Banff and Buchan College have recently appointed a Core Skills manager, Peter Merry. He sees the benefits of this model for students in construction and has already identified areas in Engineering which could take this further.

Reading specifications, details plans in a mixture of metric/imperial, negotiating with customers, organisation skills needed to see a project through are just some that will be highlighted in the Engineering department next with support from Shona and her team.



Working together

Nobody claims this is rocket science, nor that it is new. It does take the sector away from discreet delivery to a more flexible, student centered model.



Tutors working together in the group changes the dynamic of the class with students adopting a more cooperative approach with their fellow students.

Shona has found that students are more likely to come looking for her to ask confidentially for help with a particular aspect — something the whole team is pleased with.

This power transfer from role of teacher who pulls out of class for special tutoring to role of resource that is sought by learners and directed by the learner when required is more the norm in construction — a welcome change.

Ian has seen the benefits for Construction students. Peter and Shona have similar expectations for next years groups and have already prepared staff through a training day, observing them in action.

Training and support

Val, a tutor in Learner Development, is going to work with Motor Vehicle colleagues next year and, while she describes herself as ‘pretty calm and can handle anything really’, she was reassured seeing Ian and Shona in action.

What do they think tutors need?

- Flexible approach
- That they are adaptable
- Being Student friendly
- Awareness of individual student’s abilities leading to
- An inclusive approach in the classroom

Three main things came from the training day

- ◆ allow time to prepare jointly
 - the same sort of things come up in every course
- ◆ start small, at NQ level
- ◆ vocational lecturer has overall responsibility
 - Learner Development tutor is not a substitute for them (even if they are off ill!)

Success

All were very clear that the pilot felt so successful that it is being extended and repeated. Peter and Shona intend to collect evidence of impact in the coming year and have support of the management team in this.

[Click here to see what they say about measuring success](http://www.understandingstandards.org.uk/markers_ccc/files/CoreSkillsVidPart2.wmv)

http://www.understandingstandards.org.uk/markers_ccc/files/CoreSkillsVidPart2.wmv

Students said

- "Easier to ask for help"
- "More difficult to hide that I couldn't measure, then when I was spotted they were both really good!"
- "I understand stuff in the workshop more quickly"
- "They encourage us to work together, and I like that."



Shona, Peter and Ian's advice to those thinking about using this model embedded in theory sessions is — just do it! More have been engaged and motivated by the course, Ian has used some of the techniques in other classes, achievement has increased and more have entered employment directly from the programme than previously.

Banff and Buchan have shown the added value of Core Skills development using this delivery for all — are you thinking of building it in too?

Just do it!