

Further Education Professional Development Grants Pilot
The Lancashire Colleges, 2021/22
End of Project Evaluation

Background

The Further Education Professional Development grants (FEPDG) pilot was a national pilot of competitive grant funding operated by the Department for Education (DfE). In the [skills for jobs white paper](#), the government made a commitment to support the sector to strengthen the professional development and progression of the FE workforce. The FEPDG Pilot aimed to help deliver that commitment by funding collaborative sector-led initiatives to improve FE professional development and support for staff within priority areas of need.

DfE aimed for the Pilot to:

- support education recovery within the sector;
- fulfil the skills for jobs white paper commitment to strengthen the professional development of the FE workforce;
- drive improvements in FE professional development provision and support in three priority areas of need:
 - workforce capability and confidence to use technology effectively in education;
 - subject-specific professional development;
 - support for new and inexperienced teachers;
- stimulate improvements in workforce development and the standard of teaching in the sector by increasing opportunities for FE and providers and staff to collaborate and share effective practice;
- produce resources and approaches to workforce development that can be adopted by other FE providers;
- stimulate FE providers and the market to provide high-quality professional development and training for staff working in the sector.

To achieve these aims, DfE invited applications for funding to support projects under one of the three priority areas of need. The Lancashire Colleges (TLC) submitted a successful bid for a collaborative project under the second theme: subject specific professional development. The project was led by Burnley College, with the support of TLC, with Blackburn, Lancaster and Morecambe, Myerscough and Preston Colleges all key partners.

Project design

The project was designed to respond to the need to increase the availability of Level 4 and 5 skills and qualifications in the area. The colleges recognised that to make the step-change in the provision of higher technical and professional skills, there was a need to fast-track the professional development of teaching staff, creating dual-professionals and digital resources which can be used by colleges and other providers across Lancashire and beyond.

The colleges chose to focus on four sector areas that are critical to the Lancashire economy; construction (with a focus on digital tech), health, sustainable energy and engineering. However, very early in the delivery phase, they took the decision to switch the focus from engineering to land based/ecology as that better reflected the interests of the colleges involved.

Through the Pilot the colleges aimed to develop the Level 4/5 subject and pedagogic content knowledge of teaching staff to improve the quality of technical and professional curriculum design, teaching, learning and assessment. They planned to do this by:

- Establishing a peer-to-peer subject specialist professional development network (PDN) for each sector as a forum to steer the work of the project and for curriculum staff to share good practice and identify CPD needs related to Level 4/5 delivery. Each PDN would be led by a college with substantial experience and expertise in delivering Level 4/5 programmes within that sector and each would have membership drawn from a number of the partner colleges.
- Designing a tool through which the Level 4/5 curriculum and pedagogical content knowledge of staff could be measured, and gaps identified, to inform CPD and resource development.
- Engaging industry specialists as well as curriculum specialists to deliver workshops, industry insights, action learning sets and other ‘train the trainer’ opportunities, improving subject and pedagogic content knowledge.
- Engaging employers (including through existing networks) to understand Level 4/5 skills needs, informing curriculum design and identifying where additional specialist content would add value. Also to develop Employment Competency Taxonomy informing digital resources, teaching frameworks etc. providing a resource bank for use more widely beyond this project.
- Engaging industry experts and dual professionals to be guest lecturers, delivering specialist content to students from many colleges in ‘virtual’ seminars, which would also be trialled as ‘taster’ sessions for Level 3 students, supporting progression.

Project delivery

The project started in October 2021 and had to be concluded by the end of March 2022. The start-date was later than anticipated due to delays in the funding being awarded by DfE meaning the delivery timescales were challenging. The project was awarded £135,250 funding, with a detailed series of KPIs to be achieved. After a project inception meeting, the PDN arrangements were finalised with the following lead colleges:

- Construction PDN – Burnley College
- Ecology/Land Based PDN – Myerscough College

- Health PDN – Preston College
- Sustainable Energy PDN – Lancaster and Morecambe College

Each PDN Lead developed a schedule, summarising the key meeting dates, employer-engagement plans, and CPD events that their PDN would arrange. It became clear at this stage that each PDN would be different, some being more focused on the delivery of employer-led technical masterclasses and others on action learning sets and reflective learning.

Each college also had a Coordinator (in some cases the same person as the PDN lead), this person took responsibility for ensuring their colleagues actively participated in the relevant PDNs and different activities, CPD opportunities, etc.

Strategic management and direction was provided by Burnley College as lead for the project, working closely with the PDN Leads and College Coordinators. TLC led the administration and reporting, establishing the necessary systems and paperwork required to ensure that there was an audit trail to evidence expenditure and KPIs achieved and that DfE reporting requirements could be met. The project team met on a monthly basis to keep track of progress, share good practice and find solutions to challenges, mitigating risk.

As funding was primarily focused on the payment of remission fees for staff time, claims were finalised at the end of the project, once the final picture regarding the level of participation by each college was understood. Funding was also available to support event costs and to allow colleges to make payments to employers and other third parties involved in delivering masterclasses, etc. however very little of this funding was claimed.

Achievements

The four PDNs involved staff from a number of different colleges and each delivered different opportunities, experiences and resources including:

- designing a subject-specific Training Needs Analysis (TNA) which was then undertaken by staff - looking at confidence and competence for both Level 4/5 pedagogy and the technical curriculum;
- creating an Employer Skills Taxonomy (EST) for use by students/employees;
- delivering and recording Industry Masterclasses;
- designing and creating curriculum resources;
- undertaking Action Learning Sets (ALS) and Knowledge Exchanges;
- developing frameworks for implementing industry placements, professional development networks and action learning sets with partners.

The Landbased/Ecology PDN helped the colleges to better understand the subject and to identify where further CPD is needed. The project helped the colleges to make new links with industry and specialists and with peers in other colleges, with relationships that will continue into the future. It acted as a real springboard for future work.

The Sustainable Energy PDN introduced new low carbon topics to staff and learners to provide a knowledge platform to move on from in the future. Through the work of the PDN the colleges were able to identify and tap into a whole new menu of resources

for curriculum delivery. The project helped the colleges to make new links with industry and specialists.

The Construction (Digital) PDN provided additional collaboration opportunities for participants and developed new relationships with a good number of employers. Participants gained new skills in the use of technologies such as surveying equipment and drones.

Finally the Health PDN resulted in participants being more confident in all areas including assessing learners' starting-points, planning for teaching learning and assessment and supporting learners at Level 4/5. The project helped college staff to make new professional contacts and develop relationships with their peers across Lancashire.

The project concluded with a dissemination event, involving the PDN Leads, College Coordinators and participants. The PDN Leads summarised what their networks had achieved and learnt, including some of the challenges, and set-out their plans for future collaborative work with employers and with each other.

The resources created through the project, including Masterclass recordings, teaching resources, and recorded interviews are all published on [The Lancashire Colleges \(TLC\)](#) website meaning they are accessible to all.

DfE established a comprehensive series of KPIs for the FEPDG Pilots. A list of the KPIs achieved is provided in Annex A to this report. In summary, as at end March 2022, the project:

- provided 185 hours of training, support and professional development activities to college staff;
- supported the professional development of 132 college staff;
- directly benefitted 68 learners;
- developed new relationships with 13 employers;
- created 21 new teaching resources plus a series of recorded interviews which have all been published on the TLC website.

Feedback from participants

PDN participants were asked to complete a short survey to provide feedback on the project; a copy of the survey questions is provided in Annex B to this report. Unfortunately only 22 responses were received, despite multiple reminders being sent. While we did receive responses from all of the PDNs and all of the colleges, so they are at least representative of the pilot as a whole, the results of the survey must be viewed with the small sample size (17% of participants) in mind. There are, however, some key points of note:

- 95% of participants rated their experience of the pilot as 'good' or 'very good'.
- 100% said they would recommend it to a colleague.
- 73% of are currently teaching/planning/supporting teaching at Level 4 or 5 while 95% plan to do so in the future.
- 77% reported that they had already shared/cascaded information learnt through the pilot to their colleagues with nearly 200 colleagues benefitting to-date.

- 82% said their time on the pilot had already had an impact on their work with students with over 235 students benefitting to-date, comments included:
 - implemented some new ideas into my teaching on HE;
 - becoming more focused on employer engagement with students;
 - I feel more confident in my approaches to supporting HE students;
 - I can see the benefit of taking part in collaborative activities with other colleges;
 - I have changed the way I teach to better fit HE students rather than teaching the same as I do for FE;
 - I have a greater awareness of sector opportunities and pathways for students.
- Other comments regarding the pilot included:
 - more of this type of events are needed;
 - very helpful and a great experience to take part in;
 - the opportunity to share ideas, knowledge and facilities should be utilised in the future as we need to be working more for the students;
 - the pilot was really useful, the only difficult aspect was having to take full days out to attend meetings especially when it clashed with teaching sessions;
 - more notice of the project, I then could have planned for this when timetabling, as I am from a small team we just did not have the cover staff available which meant I could not attend all meetings;
 - recording of such talks are great to share and re-watch particularly on complex and technical concepts. Re-watching means I can pause and remind myself....to gain greater value;
 - I thoroughly enjoyed the process and feel those in our group were able to make real connections with peers delivering similar courses in other local colleges.

Lessons learned

The PDN model

Through this project we aimed to grow the Level 4 and 5 subject and pedagogic content knowledge of the FE workforce in Lancashire, in sector subject areas that are a priority for the growth of the local economy. As each PDN was led by a different college, the PDN lead and participants had autonomy to develop a plan that was individualised and responsive to their subject area to the individual participants' professional development needs. While this meant that we delivered a truly collaborative and developmental project, it meant that the overall objectives were achieved in different ways and each PDN experienced its own successes and challenges.

Combining expertise in sector areas with expertise in pedagogy via the PDNs, led to collaboration and development of staff across the different colleges. The PDNs included college staff from a variety of roles, from curriculum managers through to

technicians and support staff, and this proved to be of real value as each was able to bring something different to the discussion.

The development of subject specific TNAs to ascertain starting points of staff in terms of industry and pedagogy, informed specific industry and expert 'masterclasses', industry events, and other CPD opportunities ensuring that the project added value. Repeated completion of the TNA at the start and end of the project also allowed progress to be measured for those individuals that were able to participate in the majority of their PDN's activities.

Participants reported that the ability to spend time with their peers as one of the most valuable parts of the project as the PDNs offered a 'safe space' to share expertise and good practice and seek help to manage challenges and solve problems. Learning through ALS helped participants to build autonomy and allowed them valuable time for reflection that they did not have as part of their 'day job'. The PDN leads that used this model commented on its impact in the development of resources and on practice of the participants, many of whom report that they intend to adopt ALS within their teaching and CPD models in their own colleges.

Employer Engagement

Engaging employers and industry specialists in the project to deliver masterclasses, industry days and support the development of TNAs and ESTs added a lot of value, helping PDNs to identify skills gaps, informing the development of teaching and learning resources, frameworks and providing CPD to staff. In the majority of cases the relationships established with employers are set to continue, supporting further opportunities to collaborate. However, it must be noted that the health PDN in particular struggled to engage employers due to the unique pressures faced by that sector currently.

Those who did engage successfully with employers noted that it was important that those relationships continued, as the technology is changing so rapidly in some sectors and colleges cannot be experts in everything. However, they also reported that it was important for colleges to prioritise their requests as employers have limited capacity to support colleges; employers reported that being able to engage with a number of colleges at once, through the Pilot, was helpful. It was particularly pleasing to see colleges sharing key contacts with each other, demonstrating a willingness to work together to ensure that employers are not overloaded with different requests.

Staff engagement and KPIs

The original intention was that the PDNs would involve a small number of participants who would each receive a significant number of days/hours of support through regular and frequent involvement in PDN activities. The late start, and constricted delivery timescales, had some impact on these plans but so did the staffing pressures being felt by colleges due to the pandemic and recruitment challenges across the sector. The colleges found it very difficult to release staff as intended and only a limited number of individuals were able to commit as much time as was hoped to participate in the project. Instead, a greater number of individuals were involved in the project, and benefitted from professional development activities, but each took part in a more limited number of days/hours of activity.

The timing and mode of delivery appeared to have some impact; those sessions that were shorter, online and delivered during 'twilight' hours had seen good levels of attendance. However, some PDNs only delivered activities face-to-face and for full-

day sessions and they secured good levels of attendance too, so the relationship is not clear-cut. As TLC has 11 member colleges, we were able to open up the opportunity to take part in PDN activities to wider staff from the colleges not directly involved as project partners. This meant that a greater number of individuals were able to benefit from the professional development activities that originally planned.

The different levels of participation impacted on the KPIs, with many more individuals benefitting from professional development, but fewer hours being delivered/received by each participant and through the project overall. It also impacted on project spend as a less remission funding was required than planned in the budget; only £95K of the funding was claimed by the end of the project.

The late start of the project meant that it was not possible, with a few very small exceptions, for the participants to cascade the new skills and knowledge to their learners before the project end date. However, this is now happening and the benefit to learners will continue for the remainder of this academic year and in the longer-term.

DfE required monthly progress reports detailing the large number of different KPIs achieved by the project; the KPIs had to be broken-down by college, with some KPIs being cumulative and others not. This requirement proved particularly onerous as it necessitated each PDN lead providing detailed reports to TLC each month and TLC then analysing and sorting those KPIs by college, separating cumulative and individual counts, as per the guidance. This added to the workload of everyone involved in the project.

Conclusions

The project was designed to give college staff the confidence to develop pedagogical approaches and innovative teaching resources with their peers as they prepare to deliver Level 4/5 curricula. Through the establishment of new relationships with each other, and with employers and industry specialists, the colleges involved have begun to develop tools and resources and to enhance and update the specialist subject knowledge of tutors. This will mean they are better equipped and have the confidence to teach and assess students in the skills that industry needs.

However, we recognise that this is only the start; relationships have been established that will support further professional development and ultimately lead to an improvement in the quality and range of Level 4/5 programmes available in the area. The lessons learned from this project will inform future work through TLC and within individual colleges, particularly the need to be flexible in the design and delivery of professional development opportunities so that staff can take part and the importance of creating resources that can help to cascade and sustain the benefits of joint work.

Annex A – KPIs achieved through the project

KPIs	Target	Achieved
1.1 Estimated cost per participant of accessing training, support or professional development <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 27 participants x £3600 4 PDN leads x £4800 	27 participants x £3600 4 PDN leads x £4800	£718 per participant accessing support
1.2 Number of parties actively engaging in the project: <p>a) providers</p> <p>b) third party organisations</p>	5 1	5 19
1.3 Increased hours of training, support or professional development provided by the funding: a) delivered	315	185
1.4 Increased hours of training, support or professional development provided by the funding: b) accessed	1890	987
1.5 Increased number of staff: a) accessing training	30	132
1.6 Increased number of staff: b) completing training, support or professional development directly provided by the funding	30	132
1.7 Number of learners reached through project	150	68
2.1 Number of employers involved in the development of training, support or professional development	8	13
2.2 Number of resources (training courses/guidance etc) created	33	21
2.3 Increased hours of training, support or professional development provided by staff/ industry for other staff	80	26
2.4 Increased number of staff/ industry providing training, support or professional development for other staff	16	6
2.5 Increased number of staff who: a) have identified training needs	30	23
2.6 Increased number of staff who: b) have a development plan in place	30	23
2.7 Increased number of staff who: c) receive training as a result of a) and or b)	30	23
2.8 Number of staff accessing training or resources created through the project	100	132
2.9 Number of teachers accessing remission	30	132
2.10 Number/range of subject areas in which training is sought as a result of training needs analysis	15	11
3.1 Indicators of collaboration, for example dissemination of outputs (possibly through the sharing of resources or learnings), or development of professional communities of practice	20	19
3.2 Indicators of positive changes to teacher confidence and teacher knowledge as a result of the project (in, for example, teaching practice; pedagogy; subject specific skills; digital/technological) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Completion of confidence and competence Training Needs Analysis 	30	23
4.1 Creation and completion of Employer Skills Taxonomy for participants to use with students to identify sector specific individualised skills shortages to inform development of resources for each PDN <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Creation of Employer Skills Taxonomy Learner's completion of Skills Taxonomy at the beginning Learners' completion of Skills Taxonomy at the end of the project 	4 150 100	2 0 (to-date) 0 (to-date)
4.2 Industry activity <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Each PDN participant to complete 1 day in industry on an area identified from the TNA Disseminate findings to colleagues 	30 100	24 0 (to-date)
4.3 Monthly reporting and QA <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Feedback on quality of programme – participants and employers Monthly KPI calls with PDN lead and Project Lead 6 calls x 4 PDN Monthly reports from PDN lead with QIP 	38 24 24	22 24 24

Annex B – Participant survey questions

1. Which college are you employed by?
2. Are you currently teaching/planning/supporting teaching at Level 4 or 5?
3. If no, do you plan or hope to do so in the future?
4. Which Professional Development Network (PDN) did you participate in?
5. Roughly how many hours or days of activity did you take part in in total through the pilot?
6. What type of activities did you participate in?
7. How would you rate your experience on the pilot?
8. What did you find most useful about the pilot?
9. What did you find least useful about the pilot?
10. Have you shared/cascaded anything you learnt on the pilot to your colleagues?
11. If yes, approximately how many colleagues have benefitted so far?
12. Has your time on the pilot had an impact on your teaching/planning/support work with students?
13. If yes, can you briefly describe what you have changed as a result?
14. If yes, approximately how many students have benefitted so far?
15. If we were to run a similar pilot in the future would you recommend it to a colleague?
16. Do you have any other comments you would like to share?