



## The activity

John Wheatley College participated in a pilot project run in 2009 with the JISC Regional Support Centre Scotland south & west called Collaborative Course Design. You can read the report of this initiative on the RSCs website – [http://www.rsc-sw-scotland.ac.uk/best\\_of\\_the\\_west/johnwheatley.htm](http://www.rsc-sw-scotland.ac.uk/best_of_the_west/johnwheatley.htm)

During the training phase of this project time was spent exploring a range of software and a variety of Web 2.0 applications. In particular, the use of WIKI software (online collaborative web editing software) was explored with hands on time using a free WIKI service with the group of staff that were involved in the pilot.

Leading the project was Jacqueline Henry, lecturer in Hospitality who worked with Marlyn Barr, Curriculum Leader Communication & Languages. Together they decided to use a free online WIKI service to provide a common platform where they could both support learners and integrate core skills effectively within the hospitality events unit in the course. Student IDs were set up using existing details in college systems i.e. the same user ID that is used for normal network access. This eliminated any confusion that can arise for learners with multiple user names and passwords.

Student activities were uploaded to the WIKI with links to relevant resources. Permissions were set to allow both the learners and the staff to upload, comment and edit the pages of the WIKI and to upload files such as Word docs and Excel spreadsheets to the WIKI.

## The outcomes

Both Communications and IT elements of the core skills curriculum were covered within the context of the hospitality events unit using this model of delivery. Although the WIKI could be accessed out-with college it was mainly used during face to face classes but the flexibility to meet the different needs of learners was provided. It was jointly taught, supervised and supported by both members of staff and both lecturers responsible were involved in activities in the WIKI.

It was clear that learners read each other's work and although in the first instance it might have be attributed to curiosity it became clear quickly that peer review was a powerful learning tool.

*"I think wiki is ok if you don't mind your work being seen by others, I do find it easy to use. It's a good lay out and easy to work and find things."*

General Catering E/H student

It's important to note that at the out-set lots of support is required to be in place to encourage students to develop constructive and meaningful dialogue in the context of peer review.

Learners felt that it "made life a lot easier" as the system was very intuitive and easy to use without the need to negotiate the complexities of popular learning technologies.

*"Wikis are very easy for the students to use, possibly there is something better out there but wikis suit the level of student that I am teaching."*

Jacqueline Henry - lecturer in Hospitality

## The impact

There has been a significant improvement in the achievement of core skills outcomes. It was felt that it was largely a problem of attendance and a lack of student engagement which had led to previous failures when the core skills elements were discretely taught.

Learners were motivated to use the software and enjoyed having access to a wider set of resources.

*"I think that the wiki spaces are good for some things but bad for others. Wiki is good for saving paper and comparing the work that you have done with the rest of the class, also it is quick and easy to use."*

*General Catering E.H.*

The ease with which links to appropriate web resources could be incorporated into the WIKI provided learners with a broader range of industry related resources than they would previously have used. This provided flexibility and scope for a more personalised learning experience, meeting the differing needs of the diverse group of learners.

Learners also used discussion tools provided with in the WIKI software which helped improve confidence levels and their engagement in course activities.

The improved achievement rates have had a positive impact on student retention with learners better equipped and qualified to move on the next stage in their learning.

A more collaborative approach to learning was also taken by another member of staff currently undertaking the TQFE qualification. Jan Barr used WIKI software with a group of Deaf and hearing impaired learners. It was used in preparation for a trip to the Isle of Wight. It allowed greater use of a variety of media such as images, to be uploaded to the WIKI and contributed to both communications and the IT units on their course.

The Collaborative Course Design approach continues to be pursued at the college the impact of these experiences is being widely disseminated to other staff.

## Lessons Learnt

It was recognised that the relatively small numbers of students and staff currently involved in this new model of delivery did make it easier to implement in terms of administration, support and management. Because numbers were relatively small electronic tracking although available within the software, was not needed as student participation was clear to the staff involved.

At the out-set lots of support was required to familiarise the learners with the software and encourage them to develop constructive and meaningful dialogue.

The system was used to enhance face to face work and it was available out with college hours and not location dependent. Many learners did access the course out with class time however learners were not required to access the materials other than in class time.

It was necessary to be consistently time-tabled for an IT lab with the group. Student IDs were set up using existing details in college system and this eliminated any confusion that can arise for learners with multiple user names and passwords.

It is recognised that plagiarism and authenticity can be a problem and is often highlighted when digital materials and online resources are used. Staff found that because contributions could be seen and shared with other members of the group it discouraged copying and therefore the whole learning process was more authentic.

### **Useful Links**

[http://www.rsc-sw-scotland.ac.uk/best\\_of\\_the\\_west/johnwheatley.htm](http://www.rsc-sw-scotland.ac.uk/best_of_the_west/johnwheatley.htm)

[http://www.rsc-sw-scotland.ac.uk/Learning\\_Technologies/web2.htm](http://www.rsc-sw-scotland.ac.uk/Learning_Technologies/web2.htm)

<http://www.wikispaces.com/>

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

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