



**skill centre uk
abingdon and witney college**

**two partners : one vision
2010 - 2011**

learn to work :: work to learn

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Executive Summary 2010/11

At Skill Centre UK we tailor our learning around the needs of both our partners and their students. This means that we provide a suite of courses that offer variety to the learners and give them the chance to experience different trades throughout the year.

This school year we have made a great effort to ensure that if a qualification is the required outcome for a learner, then the qualifications we offer are accredited by the QCDA. In addition, we have made sure that the qualifications we do offer give the learners the greatest scope of training available to them.

To this end, we have added a range of BTEC Firsts to our course offering this year which serves to broaden the range and level of qualifications available to learners. New courses have also been added to our portfolio ensuring that we continue to meet the requirements of partners and learners alike.

In 2010/11 we will support the Collaborative Protocols in Oxfordshire ensuring that the Quality of all our programmes remains the focus of the business in every aspect of its delivery.

Quality, of course, continues to be the driver behind the business. Some of you took advantage of our joint lesson observations last year and this will continue into the current year. Unless schools request differently, attendance and performance reports for all Key Stage 4 learners will be sent to schools using the Collaborative Protocols format in the first week following the end of each term.

We will survey learners at the start of the Spring Term and at the end of the Summer Term to ensure that the courses we provide continue to meet their requirements and expectations. Additionally we will continue to respond to feedback from our partners at every stage of the school year.

The economic climate, while promising to improve this year, will not recover to the levels we saw before the current recession. As a result it is not just a learner's progression that is important, but the type of progression a learner achieves. Our links with both Amersham & Wycombe College and Aylesbury College as part of our ongoing "Countdown to College" initiative will strengthen even more next year ensuring that college becomes a viable and sustainable option for all learners.

This programme is part of our vision for Oxfordshire through Abingdon and Witney College as it is proving an effective way of transitioning learners into viable outcomes.

Where college is not the right solution for a learner, our Connexions partners both within Skill Centre UK and Oxfordshire will enable learners to explore all the available options open to them and make more informed choices.

Specifically within Oxfordshire we plan to provide high-quality vocational training for learners aged 14-19. The vocational training will initially take the form of construction skills training incorporating:

- Bricklaying
- Plastering
- Painting and Decorating
- Electrical Installations
- Carpentry
- Plumbing

Learners will work towards several City & Guilds certificates at level 1 which have been designed to allow them to not just learn new skills but also maximise those skills when it comes to them looking for outcomes at the end of the course.

Outcomes will include attending college and participating in level 2 courses; moving into an apprenticeship; finding a job or taking advantage of other training programmes at levels 1 and 2. The skills learned by our students will enable them to make real contributions to their local community from the outset.

As with our training in Buckinghamshire, instructors in Oxfordshire will be trade experts qualified to NVQ level 2 or 3. In this way learners gain real skills from people who have spent time in the trades they are teaching.

The premises we have chosen allow us to create 'virtual' construction sites which in turn give our learners the chance to experience real-life situations in a supportive environment. This is not an opportunity that is available to students at the moment and will allow them to achieve additional industry-standard qualifications such as the CITB CSCS card.

The Business

Skill Centre UK LLP is a privately funded organisation that specialises in providing vocational training to students in education. Our staff all have an enhanced CRB and copies of these are available on request.

Our Staff

We employ a mixture of people depending on the requirements of the course. At Skill Centre UK we believe that it is not possible to teach unless you yourself are learning and all our staff take part in CPD that will see them achieve professional accredited qualifications.

Staff come from one of the following groups:

- Trades Specialist
- Teaching Specialist
- Support Teacher

Trades Specialists

All our trades staff are employed to teach all the trades we deliver to our learners. They will, however, have a specialist trade in which they have either an NVQ level 2/3 or at least 5 years experience working solely in that trade.

By employing trades people in this way we ensure that students are taught by specialists in the trades and learn all the tips and tricks of those trades as well as picking up valuable insights from people who have themselves been employed in the industry.

Teaching Specialists

This group of staff have additional qualifications such as counselling skills or specialist SEN accreditations. These staff work to support the trades people and together ensure that the learning we deliver is delivered in the way that is best for the student and maximises all the abilities the students have.

Support Teacher

This group of staff comprises ex-learners that we have employed. We believe in our students and the work we do with them and show this by actively employing learners each year. These staff are trained in both the trades and teaching skills with a view to them assisting on year 11 courses and managing year 10 and 9 courses within three years of their employment.

Ultimately this group of staff will become Teaching Specialists as they learn the skills needed to support students who are working through our qualifications.

Management Team

The management team is a specialist group of people with a broad range of teaching, counselling, quality assurance, trades and management skills. Managers need this wealth of knowledge to support both staff and learners at our centres.

As with all our staff, managers also take part in a comprehensive training programme that sees them not only keep their existing skills fresh but also learn new skills.

Working with Partners

Without our partners, Skill Centre UK would not exist. Each partner brings a unique specialism to our work that serves to widen both the curriculum and the way in which the curriculum is delivered.

School Partners

In Buckinghamshire we work within the secondary school system. Schools either send learners to one of our hub centres or Skill Centre takes the learning into the host school. Both methods have their benefits and both allow learners to meet the requirements of their learning in a way that is best suited to their own learning needs.

Our plans are to replicate this solution in Oxfordshire through the West Oxfordshire Consortia.

College Partners

In Oxfordshire we work with Abingdon & Witney college. The main focus of our work with all colleges is to transition our learners into the college environment and to make that transition as simple as possible.

In Buckinghamshire this takes the form of our Countdown to College programme which sees us bringing the colleges out to our learners in the Summer Term to ensure that the whole process of trying out courses, applying for courses and understanding the workings of the colleges is managed at a much earlier stage.

In Oxfordshire our vision is to re-energise young people with vocational skills so that they are eager to follow these through; improving their own prospects and the prospects of their local communities.

Business Partners

Our young people will, ultimately, move into the community to work. Whether this is done on a self-employed basis or as an employee is not yet decided, but the important thing is that the young people understand the local business community into which they will move.

All of our courses focus on employment as well as skills. Local employers come into the centre to speak with learners about their experiences and learners will also investigate the local marketplace and create their first CV as well as learn how to fill in application forms.

Managing Learning

It is important that we work both with our school partners and our students to ensure that we provide the type of programmes in the correct format to ensure that all learners are empowered to achieve.

As part of the registration process, schools provide us with a referral form which allows us to place learners in class groups that are best suited to them. Schools also advise us of expected maths and English achievements and these too are factored into the delivery of all courses by our instructors.

Our induction programme has been developed over the last three years to ensure that learners understand the course options available to them, are clear about their progression and achievements and also understand the behaviour code for students and staff.

Helping students make the right choices

Attendance, for many learners, is a difficult choice. Our learning environment is more relaxed than that at a school and this helps learners attend courses more effectively than if they were at school. Lessons are designed around half-hour changes with a break occurring every hour of the day.

Last year we began our 'start the day right' programme where we provided learners with toast and a tea or coffee at the start of each day. The success of this programme in relaxing learners and setting the tone for the day means that we will be continuing the programme this year.

Making the right course choice is vitally important and, during this year's induction, learners will be able to try out all of the trades taught in the centre they attend. At the end of this process they can then select the one or two trades they want to take further (there is an opportunity to change courses part way through the year if required).

With Foundation Learning starting this year, learners will also have access to a wider range of support qualifications, including Personal & Social Development, Personal Finance and Work Skills. These additional qualifications not only have credits attached but are all about learning transferrable skills which can be used in all aspects of a student's life now and in the future.

Independent Learning Skills

Acquiring independent learning skills is vital in the emerging knowledge based-markets that are growing apace with the rise of the Internet. Traditional careers such as teaching, journalism, retail even care-related vocations will be transformed beyond recognition in the next 5-10 years. Having the skills to adapt your learning and to learn independently will ensure that whatever happens to the workforce, our learners will be able to play their part.

At Skill Centre we use a wide range of teaching methods that are appropriate to individual learning styles. In fact the development of individual, personalised and student-owned Learning Plans is at the core of this style of teaching and learning.

Each year we re-evaluate the materials we use on programmes to ensure that they continue to meet the needs of learners and encourage them to think and plan rather than just select answers from a pre-determined list.

In the past we have shied away from having students work on problems in their own time, but this year we will be exploring options for further development of skills taught on our courses in the learners own time. Student access to our web site is just one such way we will develop this theme.

To take advantage of all these opportunities, and have the motivation to learn independently students need to:

- feel confident about taking and acting upon decisions
- appreciate the value of reflecting on learning
- decide whether learning has been effective or whether they need to try
- another approach.

Research Notes:

A 2008 Review by the DCSF entitled Independent Learning noted that:

Moving from whole-class directive teaching to more of a coaching approach was found to be a key step in fostering independent learning.

The review authors also suggest that assessment for learning has a key part to play in developing attitudes to learning that are helpful for pupils when they monitor their own work. Engaging pupils in peer and self-review supported this process.

The review highlighted the importance of feedback from others (or from oneself) as a key part of pupils taking responsibility for their own learning.

<http://www.standards.dfes.gov.uk/research>

Phil Race Programme Director: University of Durham in his article Effective Learning asked: Who can help independent learners?

In answer to this he noted that Teachers could:

- provide learners with resource materials
- provide learners with chances to test out their learning;
- give learners feedback on their progress;
- help learners to make sense of what they have learned.

Fellow students can also help in many ways:

- helping each other to keep a sense of perspective;
- explaining difficult ideas and concepts to each other;
- helping each other to find out which resource materials work best;
- learning from each other's mistakes.

<http://www.londonmet.ac.uk/deliberations/effective-learning>

Improving Personal Thinking Skills

Thinking skills combine perception, memory, forming ideas, language and use of symbols - the basic cognitive skills which underlie the ability to reason, to learn and to solve problems. The National Curriculum stresses that when pupils use thinking skills they focus on 'knowing how' to learn as well as 'knowing what' to learn and this philosophy underlines how we have designed our programmes this year.

We have used a three step process when updating courses. All programmes use these steps as follows:

- input – allowing learners to obtain and organise new information through practical activities that allow them to determine 'what I know'
- control – learners will think through scenarios which allow them to take meaningful actions in real-life (albeit simulated) circumstances
- output - strategies for using knowledge and problem solving skills will be developed which combine the two beliefs: 'what I do' and 'what I know'

Behaviour Management

Where we work in a school, we will continue to use the same strategies for managing behaviour in the classroom that are employed in the rest of the school. It is important that learners do not perceive a difference between a Skill Centre lesson and a school lesson where standards of behaviour are concerned.

In the Witney Centre, learners will be motivated through a points system that allows them to exchange points they have earned for protective equipment or tools. Certificates are also awarded for completing tasks and also for good behaviour and attendance. Where behaviour does deteriorate, we operate the behaviour management process as outlined in the Collaborative Protocols:

- Preliminary Concerns meeting
- Formal Verbal Warning
- Formal Written Warning
- Final Written Warning
- Withdrawal from Learning Placement
- Appeal

At all stages of this process, parents/guardians and the school are involved.

Foundation Learning

Foundation Learning provides flexible learning programmes for young people at Entry level and level 1. At Skill Centre UK we have used the final outcome for learners, employment, as the starting point for developing our programmes. With specific careers in mind we have created a suite of learning that maximises the potential of each learner and ties back into learning such as Functional Skills which are taught in schools.

Delivery Mechanisms

Vocational training is, by its nature, practical. Some courses are, however, more practical than others. Construction easily lends itself to practical sessions, for example, while retail is less so. To increase the practicality of our teaching we will concentrate next year on creating 'virtual-sites' be they warehouses, offices or building sites. The aim is to use these sites to increase the practical elements of the courses by allowing learners to experience what they are learning in a simulated 'real' environment.

Where it is necessary to collect evidence of learning and background knowledge, this will be done using a variety of methods including worksheets, photographs, video, witness statements and finished pieces.

Learners will be able to try out courses before they select them ensuring much higher retention and achievement rates.

Initial Assessments

As learners only attend Skill Centre UK for one or two days per week it is difficult for us to assess their skills ourselves in a fair and comprehensive way. All learners come to us with a referral form and this includes data relating to their expected grades in Maths and English as well as any information regarding behaviour and attendance.

This information coupled with our own work with learners looking at their learning and communication styles ensures that we get a rounded picture of each student as is possible and can then tailor programmes much more effectively to meet their needs.

Sampling Sessions

It is difficult for young people to know exactly what they want to do with the rest of their lives and, with this in mind, we have designed our Foundation Learning programme so that learners can try out all of the trades on offer before they choose one or two trades for the rest of their time with us.

This sampling session will be a roll-on, roll-off programme with learners being able to join at any time of the year. Students will select at least four courses to sample and each sampling session would last for at least two full days (usually spread over two weeks).

At the end of the sampling programme learners can then select one or two courses for the remainder of the year. For learners at the start of the year this will mean they can study two courses to certificate level or one course to diploma level. For learners joining from the middle of the Spring term, this will mean them achieving at least one but possibly two certificates by the end of the school year.

During this time learners will also complete awards in subjects such as Health and Safety, Personal Finance, Personal and Social Development, Employment Skills and Customer Service (where relevant).

All courses are on the Foundation Learning catalogue, and all will contribute credits to the overall credit rating of each student.

Course Options

At the end of the sampling session students will select a main trade either for the remainder of the year (to achieve a diploma) or part of the year (for a certificate). This will be from any of the courses they have tried out in the sampling sessions.

Some diplomas, however, will take two years to achieve because of the guided learning hours required to complete the qualification. Where a diploma does take two years, students will also be able to achieve additional certificates (accredited).

If a learner does not want to aim for a diploma, they can select two qualifications to achieve at certificate level or, if they join at the start of the school year, two certificates and an award.

Learners who join later in the year will still have the opportunity to achieve a diploma as long as they are in year 10 and can carry their learning over to year 11. Year 11 learners who join later in the year will concentrate on a combination of certificates and awards depending on how long remains until the end of the school year.

Qualifications

We have created as broad a range of courses as we possibly can this year and hope that you agree with us. Where a course is not included in this catalogue, we can offer it to learners as long as we have a minimum cohort of 5 learners (for awards and certificates) or 6 learners (for a diploma).

All courses are in the Foundation Learning Catalogue or on the National Database of Accredited Qualifications.

Award in Employability and Personal Development

Level	Reference	Awarding Body	Credits	Performance
1	500/4082/0	City and Guilds	9	25

This qualification recognises the employability and personal development skills that help learners to look for, obtain and maintain employment. In particular, it develops the key personal skills required by employers across all vocational sectors. By developing students skills, this qualification also helps learners progress to further learning. It meets the Personal and Social Development (PSD) requirement within Foundation Learning.

In addition, this qualification provides a solid grounding in employability and personal development skills, which will enable progression to further learning, including qualifications such as Level 2 Employability and Personal Development, Key Skills, Functional Skills, Essential Skills and vocational qualifications, and to work or employment. The work-based experience unit provides valuable preparation for employment as it enables learners to prepare for, attend and review work experience.

Award in Health and Safety

Level	Reference	Awarding Body	Credits	Performance
1	500/7232/8	Ascentis	1	6.25

The Health and Safety course is designed to give learners knowledge and understanding of the basic principles of Health and Safety, including hazard recognition and management. The course is tailored around the courses learners are looking at for their main study.

The qualification gives students an introduction to Health and Safety principles which can be applied in a wide variety of employment contexts including supporting careers in catering, construction and hair dressing as an example.

Award in Managing Personal Finance

Level	Reference	Awarding Body	Credit	Performance
1	500/7233/X	Ascentis	3	6.25

This qualification gives students an understanding of managing their own finance which can be applied in a wide variety of contexts.

Having an understanding of personal finance is vitally important in all aspects of life especially as learners begin to think about leaving home and striking out on their own. This qualification will provide them with a good foundation of all aspects of personal finance management.

General Awards

We can offer any award listed in the Foundation Learning Skills Catalogue as long as we have a stable group size of 6 learners. If you have a group of young people that wish to take an award not listed in this document then feel free to talk to us.

Certificate in Introduction to Construction Skills

Level	Reference	Awarding Body	Credit	Performance
1	TBA	City & Guilds	56	75

This certificate provides learners with an excellent introduction to the occupational areas within the construction industry in order that they may make decisions on whether to progress with further training and employment within these areas. The qualification also promotes the development of wider health and safety skills, emphasising the importance of protective equipment, training, risk assessment and safe working practice.

It is suitable for learners who wish to work as:

- Bricklayer
- Carpenter/Joiner
- Construction Operative
- Plumber
- Decorator
- Electrician

Certificate Basic Construction Skills - Multicrafts

Level	Reference	Awarding Body	Credit	Performance
1	TBA	City & Guilds	56	75

This qualification provides a more detailed study of construction skills, including painting and decorating, plastering, carpentry and joinery, electrical installation, brickwork and plumbing.

It is suitable for learners who wish to work as:

- Bricklayer
- Carpenter/Joiner
- Construction Operative
- Plumber
- Decorator
- Electrician

This qualification also leads into the City & Guilds NVQ level 2 certificates in the trades.

General Certificates

If you have a group of six or more learners, we can offer any certificate listed in the Foundation Learning Catalogue. Please speak to us for more details.

The Learner Experience

Learners attending our Foundation Learning courses will have the opportunity to experience all the available trades through a 6-week roll-on, roll-off sampling course. This course will serve as an induction to the programme as a whole, but also allow learners to try out trades they may not have otherwise considered and also achieve their first awards or certificates.

At the end of the sampling programme, learners can select one or two trades for the remainder of the academic year and then work towards either a certificate or diploma in these subjects. (The qualifications achieved are determined by the guided learning hours available for the course).

At any time up until the end of the Spring Term, learners can change their minds and move onto a different trade.

On the following page you will find a tabular layout explaining how the sampling programme and the trades programme will operate.

Foundation Learning Outline			
Sample Programme	Construction	2 Week taster	
	Horticulture	2 Week Taster	
	Catering	2 Week Taster	
Trade Programme	Construction	Decorating	City & Guilds 6218-01
		Plumbing	
		Bricklaying	
		Carpentry	
		Electrical	
	Horticulture	Soil Preparation	City & Guilds 9352
		Plant propagation	
		Environmental management	
		Landscape Gardening	
	Catering	Food Hygiene & Nutrition	City & Guilds 7107-91
		Soups & Stocks	
		Meat & Fish	
		Vegetables & Fruits	
		Baking	
		Food service	
Additional Qualifications	Award in Employability and Personal Development		
	Award in Health & Safety		
	Award in Managing Personal Finance		