

Case Study: Certificate in teaching adults with learning difficulties and/or disabilities at Northumbria University

**The context:**

The post compulsory education and training (PCET) programme within the School of Health Community and Education Studies (HCES) at Northumbria University offers a range of initial teacher education and continuing professional development provision to a wide range of providers. This case study outlines one development carried out in conjunction with the CETT for Inclusive Learning

The challenge:

Adults with learning difficulties and/or difficulties (LDD) have an equal right to receive high quality education and training as experienced by their peers without LDD. Those that teach or support learners with LDD have for too long experienced both isolation and a lack of appropriate qualifications.

The development of the 'Certificate in teaching adults with learning difficulties and/or difficulties' was a collaboration between Northumbria University's PCET teaching team and Interactive Development both of whom are partners in the CETT for Inclusive Learning (CETTIL) and was a response to the needs of the sector, building capacity in a specialised and frequently under resourced area.

The development began with the arrival of the CETT's initiative in April 2007; the programme was validated and ready for delivery in September 2007. The CETT funded the development and validation of the award and the training of the specialist mentors.

What we did:

In order to develop, validate and implement the award a series of actions were carried out.

- Practitioners and learners with LDD were involved in discussions regarding the overall aim, key content and assessment strategies.
- The PCET programme manager created the documentation for the Northumbria University validation process. This involved identifying a suitably experienced person to act as an external panel member who would be able to scrutinise the content and ensure it was engaging and appropriate
- CETT Partners were extremely supportive of the award and a cohort of 18 qualified practitioners were recruited to the September 2007 pilot programme
- The programme was delivered one evening a week for 30 weeks. The programme consisted of 3 modules, each of twenty credits.
 - Conceptualising the learner (semester one)
 - Planning for effective teaching and learning (semester two)

- Creative strategies (year long)
- A suitably qualified and experienced External Examiner was identified and approved by the university as part of the quality assurance process.

The outcomes:

The experience and achievements of Northumbria University's Post Compulsory Education and Training (PCET) provision which through participation in the CETT for Inclusive Learning has enabled them to

- Develop, validate and implement a sixty credits, level four continuing professional development award to meet the needs of those teaching adult learners with learning difficulties and / or difficulties
- Create a pool of subject specialist mentors to support the practitioners undertaking the work based element of the award
- Support a suitably qualified and experienced teacher to become a teacher educator by mentoring her as she contributed to the delivery and assessment of the award


The impact:

Impact was measured using a range of strategies.

- Funding from the CETT for Inclusive Learning was targeted at an identified need.
- Sixteen practitioners successfully completed the award. Feedback indicated that the award was challenging, very appropriate to the continuing professional development needs of teachers in the sector and has enabled, in some instances, progression in employment.
- Opportunities were provided to share practice and develop new innovative practice through visits, the opportunity to share practice and resources during seminar activities.
- Subject specialist mentors were trained to support this initial group of practitioners, funded by the CETT for Inclusive Learning. They will continue to receive support and further training where necessary.
- The PCET team supported the development of a new subject specialist teacher educator through peer support and mentoring.
- Feedback from the External Examiner noted *"...that this was a well thought out programme responding directly to the sector needs. The content of the modules provide valuable stimulus to existing teachers encouraging use of innovative strategies and reflection."*
- A cohort of eighteen practitioners has been recruited to the September 2008 programme. They include further education, work based learning, offender learning, specialist colleges, skills for life providers and the voluntary and community sectors.
- Practitioners from the pilot cohort act as subject specific mentors for the second cohort. This will have an impact on the future provision and should ensure that learners with LDD will have the opportunity to enhance their achievement.

Supporting documentation:

- Course information leaflet

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Certificate for teachers of adults with Learning Difficulties and/or Disabilities

Length of Programme:

2 semesters – September to May, (3 hours on Wednesday evening – 5pm to 8pm) and you will study at Northumbria University's Coach Lane Campus.

Key content:

Three, 20 credits continuing professional development modules, at level 4.

Conceptualising the learner (semester one)

The overall aim of this module is to enable teachers in the post compulsory sector to identify the differences between specific and generic learning difficulties and the theories that support teaching and learning. There are three key strands to the module:

- Who is the learner?
- What are the learner needs?
- How do we ensure the learner voice?

Planning for effective teaching & learning (semester two)

The overall aim of this module is to enable teachers in the post compulsory sector to apply theory, principles and practice relating to assessment, negotiated learning and target setting. There are two strands to the module.

- Multi-professional learning
- Development and use of individual learning plans

Creative strategies (year long)

In this module, which spans the two semesters, the aim is to enable teachers in the post compulsory sector to research into and apply creative strategies to support learners with learning difficulties. To record and reflect on practice and plan for future development, and there are three key strands to the module.

- Innovative practice to support inclusive practice
- Developing creative strategies and sharing with their peers
- Observed teaching practice

Who Should Apply?

The Certificate is a two-semester programme of study for practising teachers, lecturers and trainers who work in the field of Learning difficulties and/or disabilities (Adult) The Certificate has been designed to reflect the professional demands upon subject specialists in LLDD and the changing contexts in which they work.

Do I need a Qualification to join?

- PGCE/Cert Ed (or be studying for either of these qualification currently or be willing to study for either qualification concurrently)

Course Requirements:

There are key features of the award that you must engage in

- **Teaching Requirements** - the part-time pathway is an in-service programme, which means that you must currently hold a lecturing/teaching/training position within a recognised institution. The compulsory *minimum* requirement for the Certificate is *30 hours teaching practice*. You will need regular access to a group of learners and be teaching / training across *core curriculum levels* if possible (this will be discussed at interview).
- **Reflective Practitioner** – you are encouraged to reflect upon your practice. Every module requires you to carry out something practical within your own workplace and to relate theory that you have learned to the practice you are carrying out.
- **Professional Development Profile** – helps you keep track of the skills you are developing, encourages self assessment and acts as a profile. The evidence you gather will support your continuous professional development, and will have a strong focus on your specialist area.
- **Teaching observations** – there is a requirement that three teaching observations take place. You will be allocated a University Tutor to carry out two of these observations. The third observation will be carried out by a work place mentor.
- **Record of teaching practice** – this will be maintained throughout the programme, encouraging you to record what you were teaching, how you were teaching it and what you have learned as a result of the experience, and finally how you can draw upon that experience to improve practice.

Will I have to pay for my course?

Contact your Local Learning and Skills Council for details of student support schemes, which may be available to you.

Who can I contact for more information?

If you need further help or advice about the application and admissions process please see details below.

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