

Case Studies

BLC - THE CASE FOR TEACHING AND LEARNING

Introduction

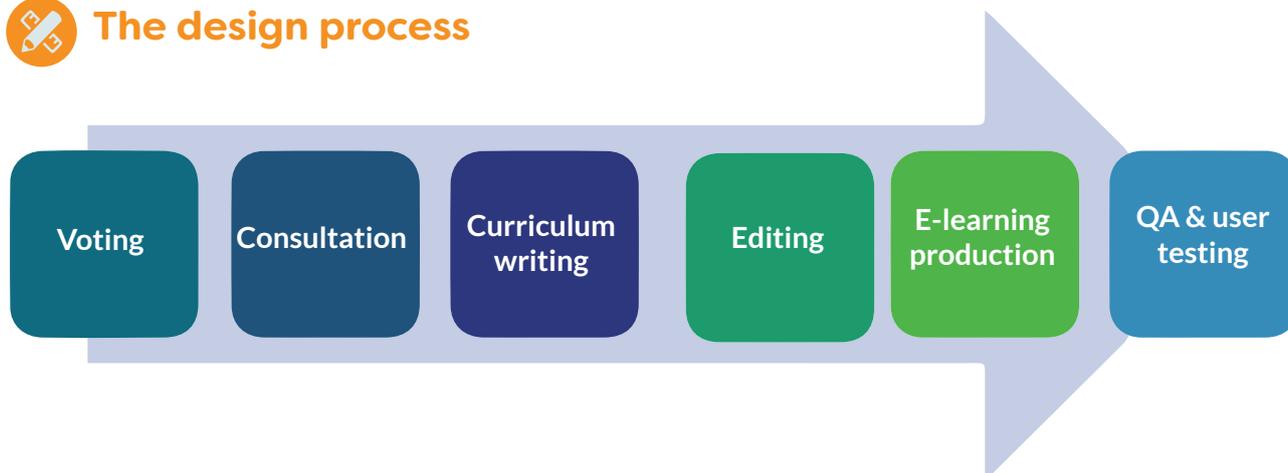
The BLC is a “by the sector for the sector partnership” that co-funds and co-develops high quality online content chosen democratically by its members. Over its first five years of operation since 2015 the consortium has created over 1800 one-hour online resources and over 100 short high-quality videos. In addition to this over 300 hours of content has been shared that member colleges have developed themselves without BLC funding.

About the resources

The resources are designed with flexibility in mind. They work on all major learning platforms and VLEs including Moodle, Canvas, Blackboard, Brightspace, Itslearning, Microsoft Teams and Google Classroom. The resources can be tracked in all these systems allowing teachers to view which students have completed individual resources and the scores they have attained on formative assessments that are built in.

When a set of resources is voted for by members 30 individual one-hour resources are created. These are designed to be “stand alone” so that teachers can sequence them in an order that matches their own scheme of work.

The design process



All resources go through a systematic and rigorous design process to ensure that the needs of colleges, teachers and learners are met to the highest standard.

1. **Voting** – all members are invited to submit subject areas they would like to see developed. These are voted on and the most popular go forward to development.
2. **Consultation** – in order to ensure the requirements of different awarding bodies are met a consultation process involving teachers from across the consortium takes place to choose 30 topics that are covered across specifications.
3. **Curriculum writing** – subject matter experts are chosen from across the consortium and trained in how to write for online content.
4. **Editing** – scripts written by subject matter experts go through a rigorous editing process.
5. **E-learning production** – edited scripts are developed by expert e-learning designers into interactive learning objects using Articulate Storyline.
6. **QA and user testing** – resources go through rigorous quality assurance and user testing processes before they are released to members.

A more flexible curriculum

Having access to this large collection of online resources across more than 60 subjects/levels helps our members improve flexibility in delivering a more blended curriculum.

Examples of these include:

- **Main Vocational Qualification** – Many of our members replace one hour per week of F2F teaching with online delivery.
- **Tutorial** – The BLC collection includes a wide range of content for tutorials including Prevent, British Values, Employability, Digital Literacy and Study Skills. Several BLC member colleges have moved from a two hour per week tutorial model to one-hour F2F and one hour online. Another approach has been to use the BLC resources in class in tutorial sessions to allow more time for one to one discussions while other students are working through the BLC content.
- **Maths and English** – The BLC collection includes maths and English resources from Entry level to level 3. These are being used in a wide range of ways including replacing one hour per week face to face delivery and as additionality.

Digital and employability skills

A key piece of feedback we have received from a number of our members in the overall improvement in learner digital and employability skills that come from increasing the use of systematic blended learning in the curriculum.

Tracking learning

Because the BLC resources come in SCORM format when learners use them their progress and attainment is tracked through the VLE. This data proves extremely useful

Flexible content with many uses

The flexibility of usage which is designed into the BLC resources has led to a wide range of usage across members. These include:

- Blended learning onsite or offsite
- Classroom usage
- Absence Cover
- Additionality
- Tasters

Accessibility

The BLC development team have always worked hard to ensure that the content is accessible to all learners. Accessibility features include audio track on online content and subtitles on videos. We have also created an accessible MSWord version of each learning resource. This allows the resources to be navigated and used by visually impaired learners using screen reading technology.

Teaching and Learning

Hull College



The BLC content collection has helped us make significant progress in rolling out blended learning across the college.

A key benefit we have found is the different ways in which teaching staff are using the content. In addition to the widespread use for independent online learning, they are also used for live streaming as a taught session resource and for online flipped learning with students first working through a BLC resource followed by collaborative activities in Microsoft Teams. This allows more time for the teacher to use discussions to solidify learning through social learning with collaboration and communication.

Khaled Al-Ankar

Head of Elearning & Libraries

NWRC



One of the ways NWRC use the BLC materials is for self-directed learning. The content works well for this for a number of reasons. It is interactive and engaging for learners, it contains assessments that the teachers can track and students get instant feedback on their understanding.

Students also benefit from developing important independent learning skills that is increasingly important for their future employability.

Martin Peoples

Head of Technology Enhanced Learning and Support

**Milton
Keynes
College**



One of the great strengths of the BLC materials is their versatility which means they can be used in many different ways and a wide range of courses across the college. Here they are used for independent study, mixed participation, flipped learning, tutorial and in class. They are used within mainstream vocational courses, T-level pilots and in prisons.

Penny Langford
Head of eLearning

**City of
Westminster
College**

**CITY OF
WESTMINSTER
COLLEGE**

The BLC materials have been used widely across our tutorial provision. Our L2 and L3 learners complete one hour a week from the Prevent/British Values, Employability, Study Skills and Digital Literacy resources. The learners find the resources useful and these independent learning hours which are tracked through the VLE contribute to their study programmes.

The resources are also sometimes used in face to face tutorial sessions. This allows personal tutors to do one to one work with individual students while their classmates are usefully engaged in online learning.

Esam Baboukhan
e-learning Manager



BLC – THE CASE FOR STAFF DEVELOPMENT



Introduction

As well as creating and sharing high quality content the BLC makes use of the expertise across its member colleges and its partnerships with commercial providers such as Microsoft and agencies including the ETF to deliver a wide range of free training opportunities which are available to all staff in member colleges.



Webinars

The BLC regularly puts on a one hour to one day webinars showcasing best practice in member colleges or new digital innovations that would be of interest to members. Examples of these have included best use of Microsoft Teams and Google Suite, developing a digital strategy, responding to the new normal and improving accessibility. Members can attend live and ask questions or view recordings after the event.

Regional/National meetings

In both the autumn and spring terms the BLC organises 6 Regional/National meetings. (Scotland, Wales, Northern Ireland, England South, Midlands, and North) These one day meetings are free and open to all member colleges. The meetings include presentations on best and innovative digital practice, discussions on digital learning and updates on developments in the BLC. These meetings provide a great opportunity learn from best practice in other colleges and network to share ideas and innovations.

BLC Conference

The BLC annual conference takes place towards the end of the summer term each year and has grown to become the largest digital focussed event in the UK with over 400 participants. Places at the conference are free to BLC members. The conference includes keynote presentations from nationally and internationally leading practitioners in digital learning followed by three rounds of a wide range of workshops for delegates to choose from.

Building capacity and skills through development work

Colleges in the BLC have the opportunity if they wish to get involved in and paid for writing and developing content and producing video resources. Where necessary members of the BLC development team provide free training and support to subject experts to write content and digital experts to develop it.

Resources to encourage and support digital teaching and learning

Having a wide range of online resources and videos available to support teachers encourages them to get involved in digital CPD to develop the skills they need to

CPD Exclusive offers with a range of CPD providers

Sometimes colleges can benefit from bringing in external trainers to support their CPD. BLC members can make savings on this with enhanced offers from companies such as Transform Education and Tablet Academy.

Staff Development

Hull College



Staff development opportunities provided by the BLC have been useful to myself and my colleagues.

One example of this is one of our digital developers attending a free one-day training event in the authoring tool Articulate Storyline. This has helped us in building the capacity to develop our own bespoke e-learning content as well as enabling us to customise the BLC content.

Khaled Al-Ankar

Head of Elearning & Libraries



CPD

Glasgow Clyde



Our teaching staff and eLearning team have taken extensive advantage of the range of CPD opportunities offered by the Blended Learning Consortium. Webinars have covered a range of useful topics and provide examples of good practice in other colleges. This is very useful in helping us understand how “normal” the use of digital is becoming across further education. The regional meetings have been useful opportunities for our digital learning team to both share what we are doing with our peers from other colleges as well as learn from their own digital initiatives. I have also found the annual BLC conference a very useful event to attend for networking, the opportunity to see some leading speakers in the field and attend useful workshops delivered by other BLC colleges.

Niall Hardie

e-Learning Manager

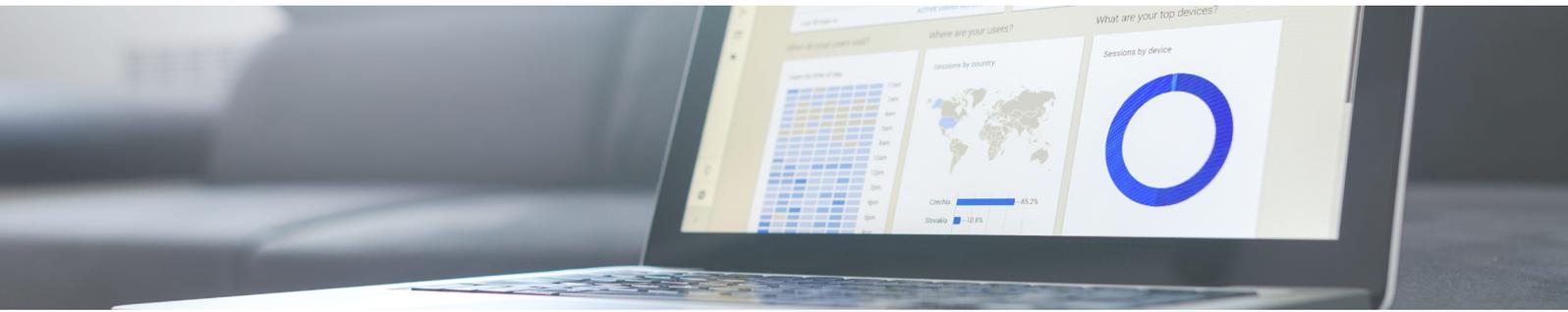
Milton Keynes College



The BLC offers regular CPD opportunities that myself and colleagues from Digital Learning, Teaching and Management roles participate in. Their regular webinars have proved particularly useful with a great range of topics. We also get the opportunity to learn new things from different colleges.

Penny Langford

Head of eLearning



BLC – THE CASE FOR DIGITAL STRATEGY

Introduction

The BLC is a “by the sector for the sector partnership” that co-funds and co-develops high quality online content chosen democratically by its members. Over its first five years of operation since 2015 the consortium has created over 1800 one-hour online resources and over 100 short high-quality videos. In addition to this over 300 hours of content has been shared that member colleges have developed themselves without BLC funding.

With colleges increasingly building future plans around a digital strategy for both teaching and learning as well as operational practices membership of the BLC can help colleges in many ways in achieving the aims of that strategy.

Digital content to underpin digital learning

One of the main reasons the BLC was set up in 2015 was the lack of quality content available for further education. Building a large amount of high-quality content across all the areas that the FE sector delivers is beyond the capacity of individual colleges. However, by working together using the skills and knowledge of teachers and learning technologists across a partnership of colleges along side the BLC democratic co-funding model we have shown this is achievable.

Colleges which have access to this large and growing collection of online resources for teaching and learning are far better placed in their ability to deliver a blended curriculum with a significant component of digital and online learning.

Integration with major learning platforms

A range of learning platforms are used across the FE sector and the BLC is committed to ensuring that its content works well across all of them. BLC content is made available for members to download in both SCORM and HTML5 format. The content is being successfully used on a wide range of platforms including Moodle, Canvas, Itslearning, Brightspace, Blackboard, Google Classroom and Microsoft Teams.

Working with suppliers of these services we have also repository options for MS Moodle, Teams and Google Classroom.

Learning analytics

Learning analytics is predicted to become increasingly important across all education sectors. Benefits of good data can help predict learner success, help learners and teachers track progress, support management decision making and improve learner retention.

Using the BLC content provides a range of useful data at learner, group, departmental and organisational level.

Organisations can track engagement and usage of each resource as well as learner success on the formative assessments which are integrated into all resources.

Accessibility

Digital accessibility is important so all learners can engage with learning. The BLC content is designed with accessibility for all built in. This is achieved through features such as choice of colours and fonts, audio track on learning resources and subtitles on videos. All online learning resources also have an accessible word document version to support dyslexic learners and those using screen reading technologies.

Sharing and learning from best practice across the sector

One of the key benefits of being part of the BLC is being part an active learning and sharing community of colleges. This is done through our monthly webinars, termly regional meetings and annual conference. These are all free to BLC members and allow you and your colleagues the opportunity to learn from best practice in other BLC colleges as well as sharing your own developments.

Digital Strategy

Solihull College & University Centre



The BLC content supports us in implementing the teaching and learning strand of our digital strategy through the availability of so much quality content that our staff use to support delivery of blended learning.

Emma Ball

Head of Learning Technologies, Open Access & Library Services

Milton Keynes College



One area that having access to the BLC resources has been useful to us is in our industry placement for T-level pilots. We had identified that a significant challenge for us was getting our learners “work ready” for their extended work placements.

The BLC employability resources have played a useful part in building a six-week course for all our 16-18 learners to prepare them for entering the workplace.

Penny Langford

Head of eLearning

**Leeds
City
College**

Being a member of the BLC has been useful to us in a number of ways in helping Leeds City College move forward with its digital strategy. The availability of content from the BLC saves our teachers the time they would have taken to make their own digital content and increases their use of online learning. The time saved in not having to develop our own resources has enabled us to invest more time to our quality leads. This helps us drive forward a more digital approach across the college.

We also benefit from keeping up to date with digital developments in other colleges as well as being to share our own good practice with others through the BLC webinars and meetings.

Steve Hope

TEL Advanced Practitioner

**Hull
College**

Membership of the BLC has been invaluable to Hull College in helping us move forward with digital as a college.

The content is robust and of high quality. It is used widely across the college and has helped us move to a 10% online model in 2019-20 and based on the success of this, increasing to 20% in 2020 -21. The networking opportunities offered through regional BLC meetings has helped us share our own ideas and learn from what other colleges are doing. The good practice and ideas arising from this have helped us in moving our strategic planning forwards.

Khaled Al-Ankar

Head of Elearning & Libraries



BLC – THE FINANCIAL CASE



Introduction

The Blended Learning Consortium is a collaborative democratic partnership involving over 140 colleges and other learning providers. Member colleges pay in £5,000 per academic year and this money is pooled to develop high quality online learning content in subject areas voted on by members. Member colleges download and keep all content they have contributed to even if they no longer subscribe to the BLC.





The benefits of collaborative working

The BLC model of pooling funding from each college means that each college benefits from a development budget of £5,000 x the number of colleges paying in during the academic year. e.g. if 100 colleges pay in during an academic year each college benefits from £500,000 of content development.



Savings through blended delivery

Many colleges in the BLC have adopted a blended learning curriculum model. This can lead to significant savings in delivery of study programmes. Many colleges in the BLC deliver between 10 and 20% of study programmes online which allow significant efficiency savings. It also has added benefits of freeing up teaching spaces and making courses with borderline numbers of learners more viable to continue.



Savings through absence cover

Each BLC resource is designed to deliver 1 hour of independent learning. These can be used for absence cover saving money on costs of agency or hourly paid staff. Based on typical costs of £50 per hour for absence cover, covering just 3 hours per week across the college during term time means that the membership fee will be paid for by these savings.



Savings through exclusive offers

The BLC uses the potential group buying power of more than 140 colleges to negotiate exclusive offers at the request and on behalf of members. We have over 50 of these with major suppliers of digital platforms, services, content, and training. Savings typically range from 20 to 50%. Many colleges in the BLC have saved more money during an academic year through making use of these than they pay in to the consortium.

See <http://blc-fe.org/exclusiveOffers.html> for more details.



Income from development work

The BLC model works through recycling the pooled money paid in across member colleges who chose to get involved in writing and developing content or producing videos. How much your college does or doesn't get involved in this is entirely up to yourselves. Colleges that do get involved in writing or developing content can earn back some, all or even more than their membership fees according to how much work they take on.



Improving bidding opportunities

The partnerships and relationships through membership of the BLC between different colleges has led to many successful bidding partnerships. The BLC manager has also helped colleges looking for partners for bids they are writing find suitable colleges across the whole UK find other colleges to work with on funded projects. For any college that already looks for funding through partnership bids or would like to get more involved in this kind of work the BLC can be a very useful resource.

Finance

Being a member of the BLC has bought Pembrokeshire College many financial benefits. Through moving our full-time vocational courses to a blended learning model, we have been able to maintain our provision despite reductions in funding. Significant savings in delivery have been made by moving between 10 and 20% of delivery online supported by the BLC content.

We have also made use of the partnership opportunities available through the BLC network in several successful externally funded project bids. The income from these has benefitted not only Pembrokeshire College but also a number of other colleges throughout the UK.

Geoff Elliot

Learning and Technology Development Manager

**Pembrokeshire
College**



**Glasgow
Clyde**



In these challenging financial times for colleges, our BLC membership has enabled us to maximise our content creation budget by giving us access to a wide range of relevant and high-quality resources. In particular, the cross-curriculum resources have provided opportunities to deliver more online skills training without needing to commit extra staffing resource. This has been a key saving for the college.

We have a full-time digital content developer, so I am very aware of the time and costs of developing quality digital learning materials. As the BLC content is funded by sharing the development costs with many colleges, it means that we get excellent value and a high volume of ready-to-use content for what is a small annual cost. We have also benefitted from a 70% saving on licence fees for the authoring tool Articulate Storyline through the BLC exclusive offers.

Niall Hardie

e-Learning Manager

**Hull
College**



In 2019/20 we were able to demonstrate a saving of at least £36,800 through the usage of BLC content. This is based on it being used to deliver 1600 hours of trackable e-learning with a saving of £23 per hour on teaching costs.

With us increasing the amount of online learning alongside the growth in uptake and the size of the BLC content collection it is expected this saving will significantly increase in future years.

Khaled Al-Ankar

Head of Elearning & Libraries

**Milton
Keynes
College**

We have found real financial benefits from our BLC membership. We have looked at buying other digital learning content and the BLC resources are superior both in cost and quality. We have also been paid by the BLC for creating video resources.

The largest financial benefit however is through moving to a Blended Learning Curriculum model where a significant number of study programme learning hours are achieved through independent online learning using the BLC content.

Penny Langford

Head of eLearning

**Solihull
College &
University
Centre**

In 2019 we benefitted from the combined buying power that the BLC offers through working with them to negotiate an exclusive offer on the Accessibility software “Blackboard Ally” for BLC member colleges. The saving on this was more than our membership fee for the year and was taken advantage of by other BLC colleges who made a similar saving.

Emma Ball

Head of Learning Technologies, Open Access & Library Services