



Functional Skills Curriculum Policy

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Functional Skills will provide the necessary understanding, knowledge and skills for learners to progress within life and work. It will prepare learners to the next educational or employment stage with Bluestone College.

Functional skills will be delivered through a spiral approach with focus towards employability and skills. Using active, and inspiring teaching and learning methods; Functional Skills will provide learners with a holistic approach to learning combined with employability and introduction to sector skills to encourage and support their learning journey.

We are making Basic English and Maths skills the cornerstone of learner's education, integrating them into mainstream qualifications including, vocational provisions as well as creating a stand-alone qualification.

The implementation of the policy is intended to improve the quality of the learner experience by developing the individual's ability to apply the fundamental skills that underpin most vocational and professional work. Developing the Functional Skills will improve the learner's personal effectiveness and employability. This policy will ensure that Functional Skills are relevant to learners' needs and are effectively delivered.

This policy sets out Bluestone College's objectives and strategies for planning, managing and delivering Functional Skills, as well as describing aspects of quality assurance and staff development relating to the delivery of Functional Skills. The strategies within Functional Skills policy apply to Functional Skills across all qualifications and stand-alone qualifications for all learners where appropriate.

Bluestone College believes that Functional Skills are important to educational, employability and personal development for learners because they are:

- Essential for individuals to function in everyday life, work, leisure and education.
- Necessary in developing a commitment to lifelong learning to enhance the lives of individuals, improve employability in a changing labour market and to create the skills that our economy and employers need
- Help towards meeting the Government's drive for improvements in the maths and English skills of all learners

Responsibilities

The Lead IQA has the overall responsibility of the curriculum and the observation of Teaching, Learning and Assessment Policy, Procedure and related documentation in relation to Functional skills. The Lead IQA has day to day responsibilities for the enhancement of the policy and the operational responsibilities for the delivery staff.

Principles

Functional Skills provision at Bluestone College aims to meet the following needs:

- To successfully plan, establish and manage Functional Skills curriculum to meet the needs and interests of learners and support with progression into further qualifications and/or employment
- Become a mandatory provision for the completion of Apprenticeship frameworks from July 2014
- Learners who are 19 years plus and do not have a GCSE A*-C in English and/or Maths will be required to complete Functional Skills qualification through embedded or stand-alone delivery with Bluestone College which provides significant progress towards future success within employment and training.

Bluestone College Commitment

We are committed to providing opportunities for learners to develop their English and Maths beyond their level at entry to the Training Academy. Successful delivery of Functional Skills is achieved through a whole-organisational approach with the following features central to the success:

- To ensure a co-ordinated approach led from the Lead IQA
- To define support systems (managerial, resources, learner support, staff development)
- To define procedures for a robust initial assessment and review and continual monitoring of learners' progress
- To support effective internal verification and moderation
- To ensure clear communication and to define procedures for sharing good practice
- To maintain the standards set by the assessment, moderation and external examination process
- To ensure that there are robust and comprehensive continuous quality improvements

Learner entitlement

Bluestone College will provide the following Functional Skills opportunities for learners. This will provide learners with the opportunity to become functionally literate and numerate to a level above their entry level at initial assessment with the opportunity to at times develop up to Level 2 where appropriate. This will also allow Bluestone College to contribute to the National Skills for Life targets as set out in Government policies.

- All learners will be offered an effective and robust initial assessment. The completion of this initial assessment and diagnostic assessment will ensure that each learner's current levels of skills will be identified on his or her Individual Learning Plan.
- Key information, advice and guidance on the opportunities available to them to improve skills and qualification up to level 2 in literacy and numeracy will be given alongside career advice and guidance to build on employability to support learners into progression opportunities.
- All learners will have their needs identified on an Individual Learning Plan devised and reviewed on a regular basis by the tutor
- All learners will have access to appropriately trained and qualified Functional Skills tutors
- Teaching supports all three stages of the iterative development cycle for Functional Skills (Build Skill, Practice, and Demonstrate Functionality)
- Wherever possible, the teaching of Functional Skills should be delivered in the context of the learner's course and/or individual needs with links to employability to support personal and professional development

Leadership and Management

Responsibilities for the development of the whole centre approach to Functional Skills are identified as:

Lead IQA

- Overseeing the implementation and effective delivery of Functional Skills programmes
- Setting and achieving targets for Functional Skills programmes through forecasting and profiling
- Ensure the effective use of Initial Assessment results and outcomes in order to place learners onto the correct level of programme
- Ensuring effective planning is in place prior to the process of registration
- Line management of the Functional Skills tutors
- Effective administration of registration, test entry and examination arrangements through awarding body alongside Quality and Compliance Teams
- Academic leadership for Functional Skills
- Oversee Training Academy quality assurance procedures for Functional Qualifications alongside Quality and Compliance Teams
- To improve teaching and learning through rigorous performance management and appropriate personal development of staff
- To evaluate the quality of the provision through robust self-assessment and to use the finding to promote and develop capacity for sustainable improvement
- To successfully plan, establish and manage the curriculum and learning programmes to meet the needs of learners and employers
- To actively promote equality and diversity and safeguarding at all times to ensure an inclusive and thriving learning environment for learners to succeed and progress in
- To ensure that the subject, curriculum and course tutors undertake a robust approach to the development and delivery of Functional Skills. Through positively promoting Functional Skills, enabling staff to work closely with the Quality Team to attend any training opportunities that arise and thereby take ownership for the embedding of these skills into their programmes at all levels.
- To ensure that the quality of Functional Skills teaching and learning is monitored throughout the Training Academy
- Ensure that training is undertaken around Functional Skills to ensure that teaching staff take every opportunity to address English and maths in their teaching and assessment

Delivery staff – including Tutors / Learning Support

- Providing high quality learning experiences through active and innovative teaching and learning and coaching methods to inspire and challenge all learners, to enable them to extend their knowledge, skills and understanding
- Setting and achieving high but realistic expectations and targets for achievement at course level to motivate learners
- Monitor and track learner's progress through rigorous and informative assessment processes
- Perform screening, initial and diagnostic assessment and using this to set challenging tasks for learners to build on and extend their learning
- To provide supportive feedback to learners so learners understand how to improve following an assessment of their learning
- Planning schemes of work and assessment in line with Functional Skills standards
- Continually develop teaching, learning and assessment practices through reflective and evaluation of sessions
- Effective registration, examination entry arrangements in line with awarding body regulations

Implementing an Effective Curriculum Model

Delivery Teams need to plan delivery and assessment of Functional Skills according to the needs of their learners

- The Lead IQA will have Functional Skills Tutors in place to work with cross centre vocational areas to ensure partial embedding of Functional Skills, so that Functional Skills are taught by specialists and are flexibly applied in a range of contexts in vocational areas of the learner's main programme.
- When fully embedded, Functional Skills will have tutors in place to work within employability and vocational areas to ensure full embedding of Functional Skills so that Functional Skills are taught by specialists and are flexibly applied in a range of contexts in vocational and professional areas of the learner's programme.
- Functional Skills classes will be streamlined to ensure that there is opportunity for progression from Entry Levels to Levels 1 and 2, without disruption to their main programme of learning.

Our Planned Delivery Modes will:

- Develop Functional Skills to the levels suited to their individual needs and goals
- Be taught the underpinning skills and understanding
- Practice and apply the skills in relevant and meaningful contexts in everyday work and life
- Review their skills and identify opportunities for development through career advice and guidance
- Prepare for assessment to meet national standards and to achieve qualification

Quality Assurance

The Quality Assurance of Functional Skills will be partially through Bluestone Colleges Compliance standard procedures, such as Course Review, Standardisation and Evaluation and Observation of Teaching and Learning. It is therefore vital that Functional Skills are incorporated within these processes for every course.

It is absolutely vital that all course tutors assess and deliver to the criteria/standards.

Consistency/standardisation will be addressed through the following:

- Staff development sessions led by Tutoring Team
- Discussions and co-ordination within course team
- Through the work of external bodies
- Peer observations
- Quality Assurance checks
- Feedback from external standards moderators liaising with Functional Skills tutors

Continuing Professional Development

Staff will be confident and competent to teach Functional Skills through:

- Being fully conversant with the Functional Skills standards from the standards and the assessment criteria contained within the respective handbook and marking criteria for each Functional Skills and Skills for Life assessments.
- To be competent in the Functional Skills being taught - It is highly recommended that all teachers of Functional Skills within Bluestone College are encouraged to work towards a relevant subject specialist qualification if not already doing so.
- Anybody assessing and/or internally verifying these qualifications will need to be competent and confident in the skills being assessed. It is best practice that all subject tutors who deliver Functional Skills should hold the relevant qualification at one level higher than that at which they are teaching.
- Bluestone College internal observation of staff within the centre should also ensure that training is undertaken around Functional Skills.