

Take advantage of C++ exceptions to create robust programs that respond to uncommon errors
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March 2016



DUDLEY **Insight**

THE ENGLISH CHALLENGE GCSE RESITS



Teaching, training
& learning

6

A practical guide

Clear presentation... Coverage is excellent, as is the level of explanation and relevance.

Very well presented... very popular with our students.

... useful for both novice and experienced teachers.

Comprehensive coverage of the practical side of teaching in post-compulsory education.

Well structured... good practical examples of teachers' strategies.

This is one of a series of papers aimed at providing our stakeholders, both internal and external, with up-to-the-minute information on how we are strategically responding to local and national challenges. The papers may be of interest to many relevant stakeholders including parents, employers and the Local Enterprise Partnership.

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CONTEXT

As highlighted in the October 2014 Insight, the college prides itself on being at forefront of developments supporting young people to improve their English skills whilst studying with us. The college has delivered a range of qualifications since 2009 including Key Skills Communication, Basic Skills literacy and more recently Functional Skills English has formed a central part of our programmes of study since their inception, with over 1,200 learners enrolling on English qualifications each year.

A NEW CHALLENGE

In 2015, the government sought to address the national issue of underachievement in English, by introducing a new policy. From September 2015, any learner enrolling at college who achieved a grade D in GCSE English must study and resit their English GCSE examination. This new policy forms part of conditions of funding for all 16 to 18 year olds. This has created a series of challenges for the FE sector including Dudley College.

INITIAL ASSESSMENT OF LEARNERS

When a learner enrolls at Dudley College they complete initial and diagnostic tests to assess their levels of literacy.

These tests assess learners across five levels: entry 1, entry 2, entry 3, level 1 and level 2. Level 2 is broadly rated as equivalent to achievement of a GCSE grade D. Therefore to successfully achieve a grade A*- C in a GCSE resit, we would expect learners to achieve a level 2 in their initial assessment.

The following charts demonstrate a very small proportion of learners completing initial assessments in English at the beginning of this year achieved level 2. Skills assessments demonstrate a higher proportion of learners' skills being below level 1 than we initially anticipated. In 2014/15 these learners would have been enrolled onto an appropriate level of Functional Skills English to enable them to develop their underpinning skills.

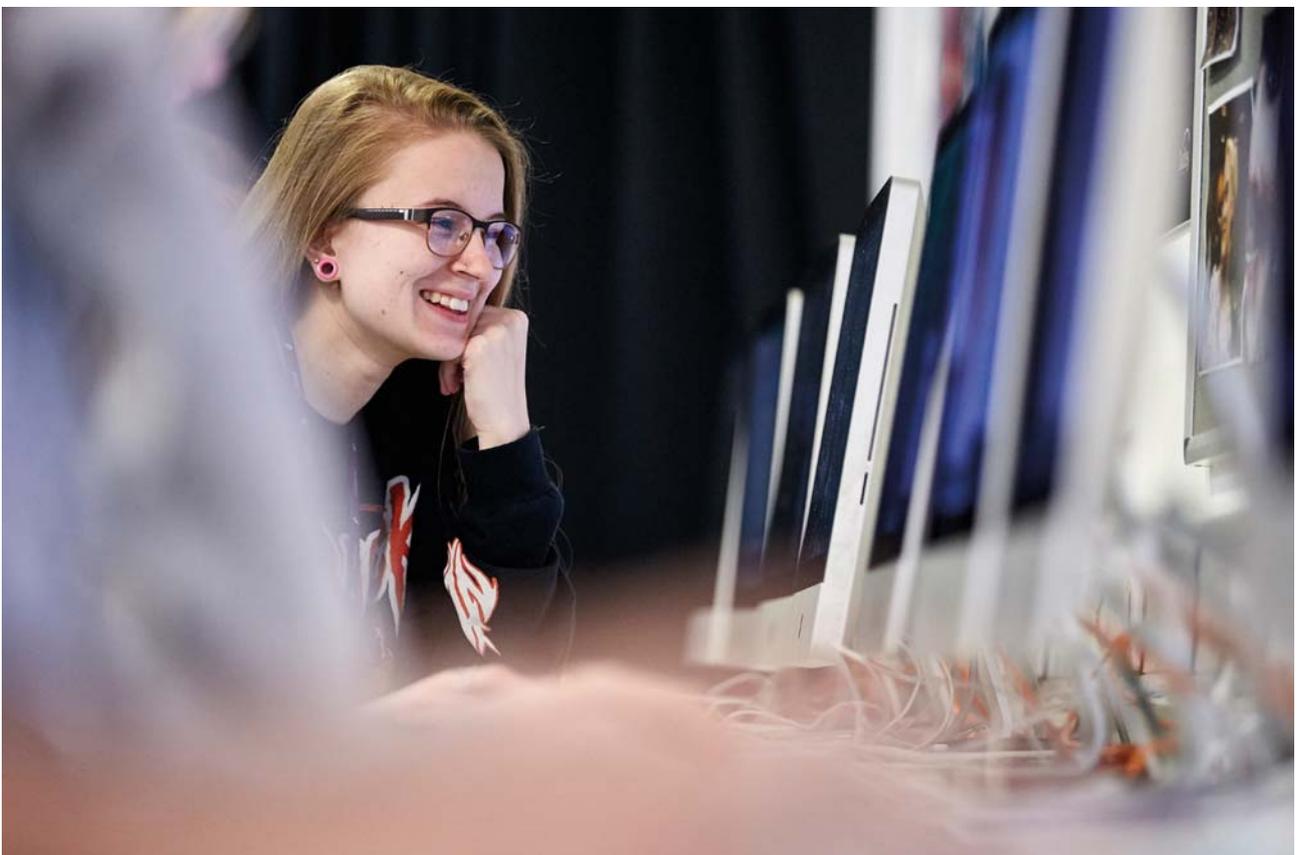
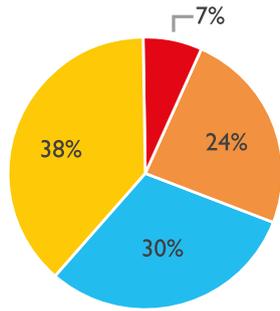


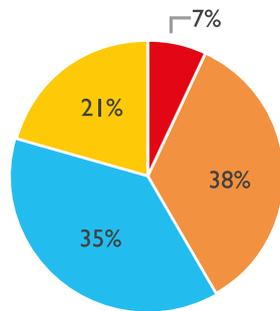
FIGURE 1: ENGLISH INITIAL ASSESSMENT RESULTS – WHOLE COLLEGE



- English entry level 2
- English entry level 3
- English level 1
- English level 2

The results of initial assessment demonstrates that more than 60% of all learners have English skills which are below level 2 when they join the college.

FIGURE 2: ENGLISH INITIAL ASSESSMENT RESULTS FOR D GRADE LEARNERS



- English entry level 2
- English entry level 3
- English level 1
- English level 2

When we analyse the results of learners enrolling who achieved a grade D in GCSE English, the results demonstrate 80% of learners have English skills below level 2 when they join us.

ATTENDANCE

Whilst we work relentlessly to emphasise the importance of attendance to GCSE English classes, learners remain reluctant to attend a subject which they have experienced failure in previously and which they have not chosen to study.

The college staff work hard with individual learners on motivation and improving their attendance, but when a learner’s performance in all other elements of their study is good, it can be difficult to enforce any real sanctions. Compared to overall college attendance of 88% the attendance for GCSE English is 79% with 19% of absences remaining unauthorised. This could result in learners being entered for an examination for which they are not fully prepared.

As a result, government policy is challenging the college to enter learners on GCSE resits who do not demonstrate the English skills or the motivation to attend a subject they have failed in previously. This represents a significant challenge to the college and the learners.



OUR RESPONSE

We have proactively taken a number of steps to address the GCSE English challenge. There has been a real 'hearts and minds' challenge with learners and some staff, in understanding the importance of English. We have tackled this in a number of ways:

STAFF

- investment in new specialist GCSE English teachers.
- development of existing English staff to deliver GCSE,
- English Curriculum Manager attends staff induction for all new staff, and
- Performance targets for GCSE attendance and success set for all managers and personal tutors.

LEARNERS

- the Principal set out the expectations with learners about English as part of full-time induction.
- college purchased individual copies of English revision books and *Of Mice and Men* for learners completing GCSE English retakes.
- attendance to GCSE is monitored and followed up by the GCSE team and personal tutors.

DELIVERY

Significant skills gaps within this cohort has led to us adopting a more flexible approach to GCSE English including the following:

- the introduction of a two year GCSE English course,
- more effective use in-class assessments, controlled assessments and mock examinations to enable us to differentiate our approach to meet individual learner's needs by identifying those learners with significant skills gaps who need two years to achieve their grade C,
- allowing learners likely to achieve and those who are borderline to sit the summer examinations where they have a chance of success. This means that those who are likely to achieve a grade C in year one can focus on their technical programme in year two, whilst those who are unsuccessful in year one will continue to study in year two with additional exam preparation and intervention sessions.
- Introducing REACH week – a week where learners are taken off their usual timetable and allocated to English stretch and challenge sessions and
- the implementation of additional intervention classes for the lead up to exams including throughout Whitsun holidays.





OUTCOMES

This year 1,476 young people entered the college without a grade C in English. All of these learners are studying either GCSE or Functional Skills English as part of their programme of study. Learners with a grade D are enrolled on to a GCSE programme alongside their main programme; learners below a D grade are enrolled on to the appropriate level of Functional Skills English. This has meant a significant increase in the number of learners enrolling on GCSE English, 286% more than in 2014/15.

Last year's success rates saw a big improvement in GCSE English resits. Achievement rates at A*-C improved from 9.6% in 13/14 to 20% on 14/15. As part of our Strategic Plan 2016-2019, we have set ourselves some challenging targets for improving the number of learners achieving high grades in GCSE English resits. By 2019 we aim to improve the number of 16-18 year olds achieving grades A*-C (9-5 in future grading system) to 60%.

This year sees the first big challenge in achieving this. We have set ourselves the target to achieve 40% grade A*-C for GCSE English resits. We anticipate that 300 learners aged 16-18 and 100 adult learners will complete their GCSE resit in English with us this year. Based on our target success rate for these completers, we anticipate we will have helped 120 young people and 40 adults to achieve a GCSE grade A*-C in English by the end of 2015/16.

Subject to no significant changes in enrolment patterns or qualifications on entry, in the 2016-17 academic year we anticipate the number of completers in GCSE English will rise to 400 learners aged 16-18 years and remain fairly stable for adult learners. Based on our target success rate for these completers, we anticipate we will help 200 young people and 50 adults achieve a GCSE grade A*-C English in 2016-17. Thereafter we anticipate completion numbers to remain fairly stable with annual increases in success rates up to our ambitious target of 60%. As a result, over the life of our Strategic Plan 2016-19 we anticipate helping 600 young people and 150 adults achieve an A*-C in English. If we can indeed achieve this level of performance we will have played a significant role in improving attainment levels in English in our local community.

Although we approach this challenge with some confidence, we are also anxious about the impact changes to the GCSE English qualification in 16/17 will have on learner achievement. Particularly the removal of the controlled assessment which we believe will have a negative impact on learner achievement. Our experience demonstrates that many learners resitting GCSE English perform extremely well in controlled assessments where they have support from tutors but struggle with examinations. We are planning delivery around this change but are cautious about the risk to outcomes for learners and to us achieving our ambitious targets.

GCSE ENGLISH ANALYSIS 2015-16

2015-16		Summary
Total enrolled in 2015-16		882 enrolled 142 on 1 year programme 740 on year 2 of a 2 year programme
Estimated total completers June 2016		400 completers 100 from 1 year programme 300 from 2 year programme (taken early)
Target passes A*-C June 2016		160 A*-C achieved target pass rate 40%

	Enrolled on 1 year programme, finishing June 2016
	Enrolled on 2 year programme, finishing June 2017
	Completers June 2016, from 1 year programme
	Early completers June 2016, from 2 year programme
	Target passes A*-C in June 2016 at 40%

1 person = 100 people

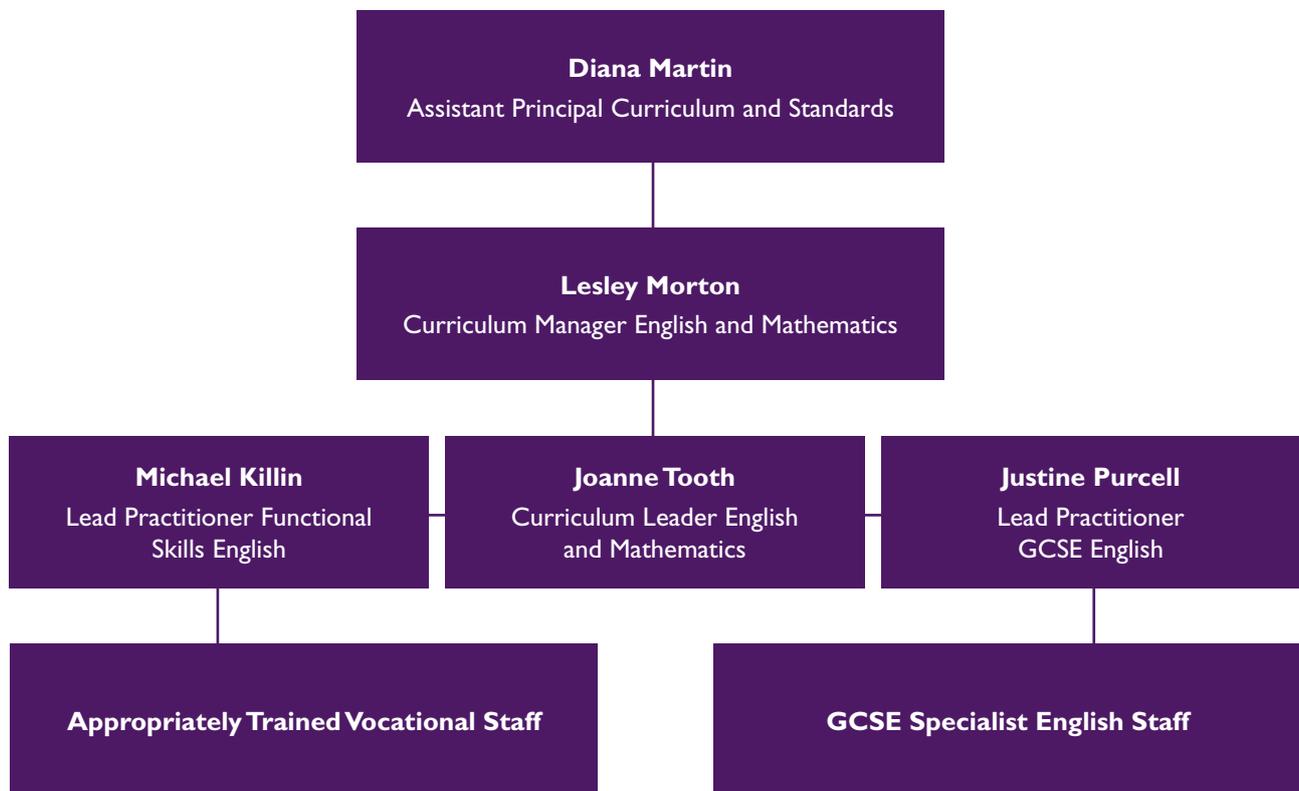
GCSE ENGLISH ANALYSIS 2016-17

2016-17		Summary
Estimated total enrolled in 2016-17		900 enrolled 100 on 1 year programme 300 on 2nd year of 2 year programme 400 starting 2 year programme
Estimated total completers June 2017		500 completers 100 from 1 year programme 300 on 2nd year of 2 year programme 100 from 2 year programme (taken early)
Target passes A*-C June 2017		250 A*- C achieved Pass rate 50%

	Enrolled on 1 year programme, finishing June 2016
	Continuing on 2 year programme, finishing June 2017
	Enrolled on 2 year programme finishing June 2018
	Completers June 2017, from 1 year programme
	Completers June 2017 Year 2 of a 2 year programme
	Early completers June 2017, from 2 year programme
	Target passes A*-C in June 2017 at 50%

1 person = 100 people

GCSE ENGLISH DELIVERY TEAM



WHAT NEXT?

Following the examinations and results of this cohort, we will reflect and identify further improvements which can be made to support learners to gain their GCSE English at a grade C or above and give them an excellent learning experience.

If you would like to know more about the GCSE English Challenge, please contact

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Dudley Insight catalogue:

Issue 1: The STEM Challenge - October 2014

Issue 2: The Maths Challenge - October 2014

Issue 3: The English Challenge - October 2014

Issue 4: The Apprenticeships Challenge - November 2014

Issue 5: The Management of Student Attendance – November 2014

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