

# Next Generation Learning Awards 2010

Technology excellence in further education and skills

**AWARDS 2010**

Recognising technology excellence  
in FE & Skills

**NEXT  
GENERATION**



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# Introduction

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**We are delighted to celebrate the achievements of the winners, highly commended and special innovation awards in the further education (FE) and skills sector in Becta's 2010 Next Generation Learning (NGL) Awards.**

**These awards reward all types of learning provider in further education and seek to identify those across the whole system who are fully confident in the use of technology.**

The NGL Awards were established in 2008. They fulfil an important role, rewarding those who are making the most of technology in learning and demonstrate to others what a difference technology can make to further and adult learning. Building on Becta's Generator tool<sup>1</sup>, they can provide clear examples of excellent practice from organisations across the UK.

This year's entrants come from a cross-section of backgrounds, showing how far and wide technology can be used to influence and improve learning. They also demonstrate how this learning has spread out into the wider world of work.

This year we also celebrate the 16 exemplar colleges and learning providers of the Technology Exemplar Network. The exemplars were chosen for their success and expertise in using technology to support learning, and their willingness to share with others. Their responsibility is to establish a network of providers in order to share this expertise and encourage innovation.

The Next Generation Learning Awards provide a flavour of the excellent practice being undertaken in the FE sector. They are exemplars for others to aspire to and learn from.

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<sup>1</sup>[www.generatorfeandskills.com](http://www.generatorfeandskills.com)

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## Message from Stephen Crowne

Chief Executive, Becta

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Becta is delighted with the outstanding quality of practice witnessed during the 2010 NGL Awards. Our latest research shows a steady growth in e-maturity throughout the FE and skills sector and the NGL Awards are one of the ways in which we celebrate and support that e-maturity.

The award winners, highly commended and special innovation award colleges and providers profiled here all show how learning technology can be used to best advantage. It helps learners achieve their potential, businesses benefit from skilled staff and providers themselves operate efficiently. I am hugely impressed and heartened by the innovation, commitment and partnership evidenced in this year's awards.

At Becta, we want to ensure that all in the FE and skills sector can benefit from the best practice demonstrated here and in the work of our Technology Exemplar Network.

The 2010 NGL Awards are proof of what can be achieved right across this broad sector when there is commitment, enthusiasm and expertise.

On behalf of Becta, I would like to thank all the sponsors, judges and entrants who supported the 2010 NGL Awards. My congratulations to all, who can be extremely proud of their achievements.

**Stephen Crowne**

Chief Executive, Becta

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Stephen Crowne". The signature is written in a cursive style and is underlined with a single horizontal line.

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## Our sponsors

Lead sponsor



### OCR

OCR is delighted to sponsor Becta's Next Generation Learning Awards for FE and skills again this year. It has been a real pleasure to see how organisations continue to realise such exceptional results, not only for themselves, but for their learners in particular. It has been a privilege to witness how committed and enthusiastic they have been in their work and in sharing their innovative ideas on the uses of technology to transform their organisations and the experiences of their learners. Congratulations to all of the award winners and also to those that were shortlisted – a great achievement in itself.

Category sponsors



### AQA

AQA is delighted to have the opportunity to sponsor the important Furthering My Learning Award as part of Becta's Next Generation Learning Awards 2010. We congratulate all the organisations that have been nominated.

As a major awarding body and an educational charity, AQA is committed to investment in the development of assessment for 21st-century learners and exploring how technology can support and enhance this. We value being represented as part of an Awards scheme which is an exciting opportunity to bring together a wide range of people and ideas.

### Toshiba

Toshiba is proud to be playing its part in implementing Next Generation Learning, to exploit fully the power of technology to provide a 21st-century education that reaches and benefits all learners and enables the UK to compete globally. Our relationship with the education sector is long-standing and predicated on confidence, trust and a mutual commitment to quality and improved educational outcomes for learners. Toshiba is delighted to continue to support the work of Becta, and especially in these awards which recognise and celebrate the innovation and creativity of learners, teachers and leaders in colleges and learning providers.



In association with **educationguardian**

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## XMA and HP

XMA, in conjunction with HP, is proud to support Next Generation Learning Awards 2010. XMA has been working with the education sector for over 25 years to deliver the best IT solutions to ensure ICT is embedded across teaching. HP is at the forefront of new technology delivering truly anytime, anywhere solutions for education and offers this with an integrated approach that covers every aspect of infrastructure, including devices, networks and servers.

Together, XMA, HP and our partners have developed a secure web-based learning solution that expands the IT offering in secure establishments to provide offenders with an IT-based educational environment that helps reduce re-offending.

With our involvement in prisons and FE, XMA and HP witness the excellent work that prisons, along with the Offender Learning and Skills Service and other learning providers are doing to transform the experience of their learners. XMA and HP are delighted to support Becta in their delivery of these awards to reward those who are the very best in class and should serve to inspire and encourage others to follow.

## Education Guardian

This is our second year as media sponsor of the Next Generation Learning Awards and it has been a fantastic journey for both us and the institutions involved. The entrants have been consistently of a high standard and we have been overwhelmed by the effort, skill and determination of staff and learners to achieve great things while using ICT appropriately. Congratulations to all those shortlisted, which is a great achievement in itself. To the winners, we extend our heartfelt congratulations and admiration for your efforts and accomplishments. On a personal level, we would also like to thank institutions for making judging such a challenging and enjoyable task. Organisations continue to achieve results not only for themselves but for their wider communities and it is a privilege to witness how enthusiastic they are in sharing their ideas and helping support others.

# General Further Education Sector Award in England

## Winner: North Hertfordshire College

North Hertfordshire College is not a typical FE college. Its highly sophisticated and robust e-strategy has given it a definite edge in continuous, whole-organisation improvement.

At the heart of the college is its management information system (MIS), which integrates the college's data to provide the reliable information needed for all the college's functions, including day-to-day operations. The integration of its MIS is exceptional, and the college consults students, staff, employers, governors and external partners on its development.

Induction and skills workshops ensure that all students can benefit from the college's e-systems, including use of the student intranet and online access to course materials.

Learners receive very good online support, and the college has introduced innovative strategies to engage and motivate them. For example, there is a student union blog, and technology 'speed dating' has been used at a student conference to rapidly update learners on ongoing service improvements. Teachers can monitor the performance of vulnerable students electronically and are able to identify specific areas of concern.

The college's e-continuous professional development programme (e-CPD) is key to its work. An online needs analysis tool identifies skills gaps, and there is a strong emphasis on transparency and sharing.

ICT is embedded in the college self-assessment process, for example in online course reviews that bring together all the relevant information at a single point of access.

Much of the college's success is due to the excellent leadership of the Principal, who has given the work a clear strategic direction and ensured a consistent and whole-college approach to continuous improvement.

Find out more about this college at **[www.nhc.ac.uk](http://www.nhc.ac.uk)**

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## General Further Education Sector Award in the Devolved Administrations

Joint winner: Coleg Menai (Wales)

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Coleg Menai in Gwynedd faces two specific challenges: operation across a very large, mainly rural catchment area and a learner population of 9,000 that is predominantly Welsh-speaking. Judges found the college's sophisticated, e-mature delivery systems ideally suited to addressing these challenges across the college's five sites.

Moodle is a virtual learning environment (VLE). The first-ever Welsh language version was developed by Coleg Menai in partnership with Deeside College, Coleg Llandrillo and Coleg Meirion-Dwyfor. Part of this is E-Menai Moodle, the college's e-learning delivery system which has attracted 11,843 enrolments in just four years. Judges found it to be an excellent one-stop intranet resource for employers, learners and staff alike. It includes an electronic suggestion box, and the judges found clear evidence that that feedback was acted upon.

The college has extensive partnerships across a wide arena. For example, the college is a major contributor to Gwylfa Rhagoriaeth e-Ddysgu (GRe), an e-learning excellence project for 14–19 pathways led by Cynnal, the body set up by Gwynedd and Ynys Môn Councils to support educational institutions.

This collaboration has resulted in the production of outstandingly good shared bilingual resources in Childcare and Education and Interactive Media Studies.

The judges were impressed by Coleg Menai's responsiveness to learner needs. Its e-strategy and substantial investment in ICT have allowed the creation of facilities that support learner recruitment and motivation. The learner voice is highly regarded and is expressed, for example, through the college radio and intranet and snap online surveys.

During their visit, the judges found without exception that the members of the senior leadership team, staff and learners they spoke to were enthusiastic and knowledgeable ambassadors for the college's approach. The effective practice they demonstrate has put Coleg Menai at the forefront of ICT-enabled learning and is bringing seamless, high-quality provision to a wide range of organisations and learners.

Find out more about this college at [www.menai.ac.uk](http://www.menai.ac.uk)

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## General Further Education Sector Award in the Devolved

### Administrations Joint winner: South Eastern Regional College (NI)

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South Eastern Regional College (SERC) is based in County Down and was formed from the merger of three general FE colleges in 2007. In addition to providing a broad range of vocational training (with 30,000 learner enrolments), it runs a successful business consultancy. The college is not just a national provider – it has achieved a global presence through its innovative use of virtual world and Web 2.0 technologies.

The judges were particularly struck by SERC's use of industry-led technology to implement strong collaborative arrangements with businesses. Employers can view students' practical portfolios online and select suitable candidates for work placements. Some student enterprises have been sold to industry, with the college receiving a percentage of the revenue.

The judges praised SERC's highly innovative use of virtual reality to develop content, deliver courses and enhance the student experience. Its virtual learning environment, Moodle, was used effectively to encourage remote learning and peer group interaction, for example through live text chat. Moodle is also used very effectively for electronic enrolment, registration, assessment and feedback.

Student support and tracking systems demonstrate excellent integration and interoperability of ICT resources.

SERC has taken a proactive approach to engaging students, who each have an electronic learner agreement that gives them a central access point for all details of their learning journey. This also links to SERC's presence on Facebook and Twitter, which are used to showcase student work, make lectures available and keep students informed, wherever they happen to be.

All this work is underpinned by an excellent information and learning technology (ILT) and operational plan, overseen by an ILT strategy group. The judges liked the way this strategy was embedded across all six sites to the benefit of all learners.

Find out more about this college at

**[www.serc.ac.uk](http://www.serc.ac.uk)**

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## General Further Education Sector Award in the Devolved Administrations Shortlisted: North West Regional College

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North West Regional College (NWRC) was established in 2007 as a result of a merger of the North West Institute of Further and Higher Education and Limavady College of Further and Higher Education. NWRC offers a range of education and training programmes at levels 1–7 across a wide range of vocational areas and enrolls roughly 21,000 students a year.

NWRC has successfully created annual ILT action plans through a process of stakeholder consultation both across the college and beyond to its partners in industry. Recent aims for action have been: better use of IT to gather, analyse and distribute information; more rigorous evaluation and review processes; improvements to all aspects of the delivery of learning through the enhanced use of technology; and a stronger focus on staff development and training.

The college uses Moodle as its virtual learning environment. The judges found it to be well integrated with the management information system (MIS) and used for a host of administrative tasks, including accurate tracking of education maintenance allowance payments to students, student and staff registration, online submission of assignments and e-assessment. Teaching resources are hosted on the Moodle platform, and students can access them if they are not able to get into college.

The use of in-house software in sports studies in particular is 'inspiring and motivating' students, especially those who have not had access to a computer in school and for whom there was now evidence of exceptional progression and achievement. Sports science is taught using an electronic whiteboard and interactive resources, including Flipvideo, which is used to record students' sports performance before being transferred to an image-sharing site such as Flickr.

Find out more about this college at

**[www.nwrc.ac.uk](http://www.nwrc.ac.uk)**

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## Voluntary Sector Award

### Winner: Riverside Centre

The Riverside Centre provides a broad range of services for disabled and non-disabled people, working with voluntary, statutory and independent organisations, both on the Isle of Wight and in Newport. It serves over 4,000 people each week and has received numerous awards for its training and therapeutic activities, including the Queen's Award for Voluntary Service.

The judges found that Riverside's position as a thriving community hub was well justified. The Riverside team uses technology as a major way of supporting collaboration, coupled with good communication and sound working practices, such as moving towards drawing up service level agreements with its partners.

The judges also found that personalised, relevant learning was a major strength at the Centre. There is a high ratio of staff to students. Assessment and evaluation procedures are driven by learner need, as are purchasing decisions. Provision is carefully tailored to the needs of individual learners and the aims and ambitions recorded in their individual learning plans.

The Riverside Centre has embedded in its practice rigorous evaluation and a clear, learner-centred vision for ICT implementation. Outreach provision using an IT bus (itself developed largely by a former service user) showed excellent commitment to taking provision to hard-to-reach learners. The judges enjoyed meeting Gary, who attended the centre as a learner and is now a tutor at Riverside, and a recipient of the LSIS (Learning and Skills Improvement Service) Tutor of the Year award.

Find out more about this provider at [www.riversidecentre.org.uk](http://www.riversidecentre.org.uk)  
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# Adult and Community Learning Sector Award

## Winner: Middlesbrough Council Community Learning

Middlesbrough Council Community Learning (MCCL) combines Middlesbrough local authority's adult education and work-based learning services. It serves the town of Middlesbrough, which has high levels of deprivation and unemployment. The service generates approximately 5,500 enrolments, with many learners studying part time in community venues.

Innovation at MCCL comes in the form of its in-house-developed social networking site, Badger, which is embedded within the virtual learning environment (Moodle). The judges praised the safety of this site for learners, and observed its use as a very positive experience for them. Badger is well integrated across the region and used by six partner local authorities.

Such partnerships are key to MCCL's work, for as well as working with neighbouring local authorities, it has good collaborative arrangements with the Deaf Association, Mind and Scope. This has led to specific benefits for staff: for example, a two-year international partnership project has enabled learners in Middlesbrough and Tees Valley to access video and sound files of interviews with European learners and businesses.

MCCL surveys its stakeholders annually, and feedback is also collected in innovative ways, for example, through electronic forums, SMS, text walls, and online polls and focus groups. The LSC Learner Survey has a prominent position on the local authority's website. The judges felt that this proactive approach accounts for the very high involvement of learners in the development of content and resources, which they singled out for particular commendation. For example, its interactive Entry to Employment (E2E) software had been amended in the light of learner feedback, with young learners collaborating directly with the software developers.

Find out more about this provider at

**[www.maes.ac.uk](http://www.maes.ac.uk)**

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## Adult and Community Learning Sector Award

### Highly commended: Aston Pride NDC

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Aston Pride New Deal for Communities (NDC) regeneration programme operates in a highly diverse community in Birmingham, where 71 per cent of the population are members of an ethnic minority. Working in an area with above-average levels of deprivation, Aston Pride NDC is successfully addressing the digital divide that exists as a result of socio-economic factors.

Aston Pride's highly innovative Computers in the Home (CiTH) project is entering its third phase. CiTH takes as its starting point the young 'digital natives' of Aston and is empowering them to become the primary educators for their extended families, over 1,000 of whom have been supplied with desktop computers and secure wireless internet access at home. The judges described CiTH as an outstanding example of a community-based initiative. Partnership is at its centre, with 14 schools, the local authority, libraries, employers, researchers and community groups all having an input with a strongly personalised approach.

Good IT support is essential for community-based ventures, and the judges made very favourable comments on this aspect of the project, which has a multilingual IT support team and a helpline for families.

Two excellent examples of this in practice are the use of SMS messaging to inform residents of technical updates, and the use of female IT technicians with Asian language support.

The judges also noted that Aston Pride NDC's work has been subject to rigorous research and evaluation. Researchers already report seeing greater involvement of parents in their children's schoolwork due to greater familiarisation with ICT. Looking forward, Aston Pride NDC intends that, by 2011, every teacher in Aston will know that all the children in their classes have access to internet-based IT at home.

Find out more about this provider at [www.aston-pride.org.uk](http://www.aston-pride.org.uk)  
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## Independent Specialist College Sector Award

Winner: National Star College

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National Star College is an independent specialist college working with learners who have physical disabilities and associated learning difficulties. Its full-time students come from across the UK but it also offers part-time courses to disabled adults in its local area through a contract with Gloucestershire County Council.

The judges were impressed at the outset by the strong focus on learner outcomes. This principle forms part of the information and learning technology (ILT) strategy, which was drawn up in consultation with staff and learners and is now an essential component of the college's cyclical review process. Its focus on the effective and innovative use of technology to help learners achieve independence and autonomy makes possible highly flexible and individually tailored provision which is to be commended.

'Real-life' ICT was used as part of a learning journey that was fully synthesised with day-to-day life at college. For example, the use of eye-gaze technology means learners can control their use of lighting, TV, internet etc, often for the first time in their lives. The same technology allows them to capture evidence of their learning live on digital video, camera and MP3 players, mainly using handheld devices, and to monitor their own progress using e-portfolios, which are accessible on a web platform.

The judges praised the use of the ILT facilitator model, which is supported by excellent continuing professional development for staff. As well as encouraging staff buy-in, the ILT facilitators have promoted creative and innovative use of technology, often by widening its application beyond its intended purpose. The judges felt that this approach has made the use of inexpensive technology highly effective.

National Star has become a centre of excellence in its use of technology and attracts interest from colleges and providers across the FE and skills sector who have benefitted from their innovative practice.

Find out more about this college at

**[www.natstar.ac.uk](http://www.natstar.ac.uk)**

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## Offender Learning Sector Award

### Winner: Every Step Ltd in HMP and YOI Chelmsford

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Every Step Ltd provides training and staff development services to a wide variety of clients, including small businesses, private clients and the public sector. Its main offer is Skills for Life courses and qualifications, and in the past year it successfully delivered more than 600 online programmes to over 100 learners at HMP and YOI Chelmsford, including provision for both inmates and staff. HMP Chelmsford is a category B local and young offender institution.

There are several challenges in meeting the needs of this particular group of learners and Every Step's strength was making a difference to offenders' lives. Learners feel valued and have their achievements acknowledged – for some, for the first time in their lives. This can be demonstrated by high levels of learner satisfaction expressed in surveys.

The secure estate presents particular restrictions on online learning, but Every Step anticipated these and has successfully adapted Learndirect materials to suit the particular needs of the inmates and prison staff. For example, staff used a simple word-processing package to create a centre-specific, contextualised welcome pack, which includes valued design input by a learner.

Ufi Ltd expressed interest in adopting this format commercially for use in all its prison-based learning centres.

The inspiration provided by the tutors and other staff from Every Step was singled out for particular commendation by the judges, and it is expected that their work in the secure estate will continue to transform the lives of offenders. The inspirational guidance by staff enables offenders to gain qualifications, transform their lives and so move out of the cycle of crime. A particularly successful strategy is the use of peer mentors, where existing prisoners are trained in City & Guilds Level 3 Adult Support to provide one-to-one support to new inmates.

The judges were very impressed by the transformational journey of one prisoner who had no experience of technology. With support from his tutor he achieved qualifications and has become a peer mentor. He has also secured a job with Every Step Ltd after his release from prison. His achievement is an inspiration to others and he is viewed as a role model by other learners.

Find out more about this provider at

**[www.everystep ltd.co.uk](http://www.everystep ltd.co.uk)**

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## Sixth Form College Sector Award

### Winner: Xaverian Sixth Form College

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Xaverian College is a large sixth form college based in a relatively deprived area of Manchester and serves full-time students and undergraduates from Manchester University. Xaverian enjoys very good academic success and has been rated outstanding in all areas of its provision by Ofsted.

In 2003, the senior leadership team decided to develop the college's own bespoke virtual learning environment (VLE) and managed learning environment (MLE). This integrated intranet now sits at the heart of all of the college's operations, and is widely used by staff, students and parents.

The college was praised for its highly professional system which is spread across a range of new and old buildings, some listed, and has had to be developed to cater for these differing environments.

The judges also commended the clarity of information on offer. From online pre-assessment, through shared electronic individual learning plans and assessment to obtaining exam results online, students find their learning journey is supported by technology.

Personalisation was demonstrated in the fact that students have online journals to which their tutors can add information, such as important deadlines, and when logging on, students receive a learner-specific daily bulletin board.

The judges found evidence of excellent collaborative practice with the local council. This was exemplified in relation to tracking attendance that qualifies students for education maintenance allowance (EMA). Parents and students are similarly able to quickly check attendance records at any time.

Since the introduction of the MLE/VLE, there has been sustained improvement in student performance at Xaverian. By all accounts, this looks set to continue, and spread to Xaverian's partner colleges in its role as an exemplar college.

Find out more about this college at

**[www.xaverian.ac.uk](http://www.xaverian.ac.uk)**

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## Sixth Form College Sector Award

### Shortlisted: Sir George Monoux College

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Sir George Monoux College in the London borough of Waltham Forest is a sixth-form college serving approximately 2,000 students with over 80 per cent being from minority ethnic groups living in east London.

Since 2003, the college has made a substantial investment in technology. The IT and computer suites were refurbished in 2005, and teaching rooms are now equipped with electronic registers and interactive whiteboards. Specialist software, some of it developed in-house, allows tutors full control of learners' computers. The judges saw some 'great classroom practice' involving 'engaged and contented students'.

The college has come a long way in the past two years. There has been a big push towards encouraging the cross-curricula use of technology and this has been instigated successfully in a short period of time. For example, the judges were impressed by the college's use of information and learning technology (ILT) champions, whose work is overseen by an ILT advanced practitioner.

Moodle was used for e-assessment of students' portfolios and also boasts an electronic tracking system for students on vocational courses. This includes a facility that allows students to calculate their predicted UCAS points. At the time of judging, the college was trialling electronic individual learning plans (ILPs), and students in the pilot could access their ILPs when they were not at college. The college also uses mobile means to contact students, for example SMS.

Find out more about this college at

**[www.george-monoux.ac.uk](http://www.george-monoux.ac.uk)**

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## Sixth Form College Sector Award

### Shortlisted: Portsmouth College

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Portsmouth College is a sixth-form college serving about 900 full-time students and 2,000 part-time adult learners, with provision for adult learners with disabilities and learning difficulties. Most students join the college to study at level 3, but it has a strong offer of entry level and level 1 programmes for students who need to consolidate their learning. Portsmouth College has a good record in results, and is rated as one of the top three colleges in the south east for value-added at A-level.

The judges visited a purpose-built facility that is linked to the main campus of Portsmouth College. The work of the centre has a huge impact on learners, and there is excellent personalisation of learning. Staff are committed to harnessing technology for the benefit of individual learners, whether they are aged 18 or 80.

Portsmouth College offers truly inclusive provision to learners with a wide variety of backgrounds and abilities, and successfully tailors its programmes to suit the needs of individual learners. There is a commendable focus on helping learners with learning difficulties to understand their choices, thereby raising their self-esteem and sense of inclusion. The college is responding positively to recognising and recording progress and achievement (RARPA) in non-accredited learning.

Find out more about this college at [www.portsmouth-college.ac.uk](http://www.portsmouth-college.ac.uk)  
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## Work-based Learning Sector Award

### Winner: Charnwood Training Group

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Charnwood Training Group is based in Nottinghamshire and provides commercial and publicly-funded work-based learning (WBL) and workforce development to the hospitality and catering industry.

WBL providers have historically struggled to embed technology within teaching and learning but Charnwood has achieved an exceptional degree of integration with a wide range of sophisticated ICT equipment both on- and off-site.

A wealth of e-learning resources, including training sessions, live streaming and demonstrations by visiting chefs, is stored in the media library. This is added to consistently by staff who record and upload external resources from several outlets. Trainers can access this library while working off-site with learners. Off-site students also benefit enormously from the provision of portable interactive computers that allow personalised, 'any time, any place' learning.

On-site, trainers use webcams to observe students live across all the training environments. This gives learners the opportunity to practise in 'real-life' situations, free of the physical presence of the trainer but still allowing two-way communication between trainer and learner. Such sessions are recorded for feedback purposes.

The judges commented very favourably on Charnwood's strong partnership work. It has forged links with Wolverhampton University to develop innovative training resources and has an excellent working relationship with Ashfield School, which shares its site and whose 14–16 year old pupils are able to benefit from state-of-the-art ICT. Partnerships with business are no less impressive, with Charnwood providing bespoke training for corporate clients, including professional development materials for the regional skills centre.

The judges particularly commended Charnwood's clear vision and highly developed plans for taking its investment in ICT forward. Plans to develop the e-portfolio and virtual learning environment will ensure that Charnwood maintains the momentum of its initial outlay and continues to provide an excellent facility for business and learners alike.

Find out more about this college at

**[www.charnwood.co.uk](http://www.charnwood.co.uk)**

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## Work-based Learning Sector Award

Shortlisted: Swansea ITeC

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Swansea ITeC is a small, limited company based in Wales that offers IT training and services with a focus on the education market. Its work-based learning provision is relatively small scale with just 50 learners. Swansea ITeC is one of seven partners comprising the Academi Sgiliau Cymru (Welsh Skills Academy), which aims to meet the vision of the Welsh Assembly to 'transform educational provision' and achieve a 'seamless transition' between all stages of education and learning.

Collaboration with employers is a key aspect of Swansea ITeC's work. It offers extensive training in the use of interactive and multimedia technologies to local schools and sees information and learning technology (ILT) as a holistic part of students' learning, with the aim of seeing them take their skills beyond the workplace. Using Moodle, which is introduced via an online tutorial, learners are directed to the most appropriate route and level for them and encouraged to experiment and make use of open-source and copyright-friendly resources. Innovation and enthusiasm are particular strengths of this provider.

Find out more about this college at

**[www.swanseaitec.co.uk](http://www.swanseaitec.co.uk)**

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## Furthering My Learning Award

### Winner: Croydon Adult Learning and Training

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Croydon Adult Learning and Training (CALAT) is one of the largest adult education providers in the country. The provision is a mixture of academic, recreational, pre-vocational and vocational courses.

On their visit, the judges saw CALAT's photography lab, a white-box studio, which they described as 'a fantastic resource'. They agreed that the equipment on offer was highly professional and offered further potential for both partnership work with employers and income generation for the centre.

The college was praised for the high standard of exhibitions by learners, and also commended for strong progression routes. Students were supported on their introductory courses to achieve clear outcomes before being guided to more advanced provision and, importantly, to self-supporting learning communities, assisted by CALAT's virtual learning environment.

Marianne, the learner who nominated CALAT for the award, has had five years' positive experience at CALAT. She has seen vast improvements in the equipment on offer, and had recently experimented with a new smart board. She likes the fact that learning is 'hands-on', allowing students to experiment and learn from their mistakes as well as from each other. She told the panel that her tutors are enthusiasts for their subject and that they use the VLE to keep the group updated beyond the classroom, for example by posting new links and websites of interest on a regular basis.

The judges agreed that CALAT's VLE has great potential to support students in a secure online environment. With the commitment and enthusiasm they witnessed, it seems likely that CALAT will go from strength to strength.

Find out more about this provider at

**[www.calat.ac.uk](http://www.calat.ac.uk)**

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## Furthering My Learning Award

### Highly commended: Birmingham Citizens' Advice Bureau

Birmingham Citizens' Advice Bureau (CAB) is part of the national network of CABs. It offers free, independent, confidential and impartial advice to local residents, mainly through teams of trained volunteers. Volunteers need to be aware of a range of information and to remain up to date on legislation.

The judges praised the immediacy of the training materials, which are derived from the same real-life resources used on the job. The judges said that this made training 'very real' and the resources 'highly relevant', providing a very good example of how material from the workplace can also be used for training purposes.

The judges praised the strong strategic steer from the Chief Executive, with strategy and a well-embedded ethos driven from the top. This includes clear progression routes, both for individuals and the organisation as a whole. Several learners now have positions as senior managers at the bureau. Birmingham CAB has also forged links with local universities, enabling graduates to train and gain valuable experience and skills.

The judges praised the continuity between home and workplace study. Having these facilities readily available from home and within the bureau means that staff can maximise the time they have available and helps them to review and repeat important topics. Learning was personalised, and the take-up of self-study by learners very high.

The judges agreed that ongoing development of the training materials, for example, by expanding its multimedia resources, will see Birmingham CAB continue to flourish from a very strong base.

Find out more about this provider at

**[www.bcabs.org.uk](http://www.bcabs.org.uk)**

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## Furthering My Learning Award

### Highly commended: Ealing, Hammersmith and West London College

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Ealing, Hammersmith and West London College is a large general further education college. The area it serves is one of high contrasts, with prosperity sitting alongside high social deprivation.

The judges who visited the college were full of admiration for its innovative and engaging Apprenticeship Project. This two-week project for enrolments begins with presentations on different business skills by the staff. Students then work in teams to devise a new business product or service and subsequently present this to a panel of judges.

The project is conducted entirely on a managed learning environment (MLE) in the form of a networking site, with students using Google Groups for conference meetings, file-sharing and showcasing their business product. The judges said that the MLE and the supporting management information system were exceptionally well developed.

Sue, who nominated her tutor for the award, explained in her submission that she and her fellow team members 'met' and shared ideas frequently via the networking site in a variety of physical locations, through computers, home laptops and their mobile phones. The integration of technology with personalised learning opportunities was excellent.

Teaching on issues such as security and time management was integral to the project.

The judges felt that the high quality of operation on the project provides an excellent springboard for development, particularly in terms of embedding the excellent practice across the whole college. This also presents good opportunities to bring more staff members on board.

Find out more about this college at

**[www.wlc.ac.uk](http://www.wlc.ac.uk)**

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## Special Innovation Award

### Birmingham Metropolitan College

Birmingham Metropolitan College (BMC) was formed in August 2009 as a result of the merger of Matthew Boulton and Sutton Coldfield colleges. BMC provides education and training for 39,000 students, and has strong links with industry across the West Midlands region.

The judges praised BMC's strong business-orientated approach, in particular its relationship with Sky. This partnership on digital installation has led to the development of the first apprenticeship of its kind in the UK. The results achieved will help to enhance the reputation of the FE sector as a whole.

The same programme is supported by good IT resources for apprentices, recruited by Sky across the UK. Each apprentice is issued with a mini-laptop and stays in touch with college through email, telephone and SMS.

The college's virtual learning environment is used to deliver interactive resources, assignments, paperless meetings, etc. The college already provides staff with up-to-date information and plans to extend this kind of service to students in the future using SharePoint.

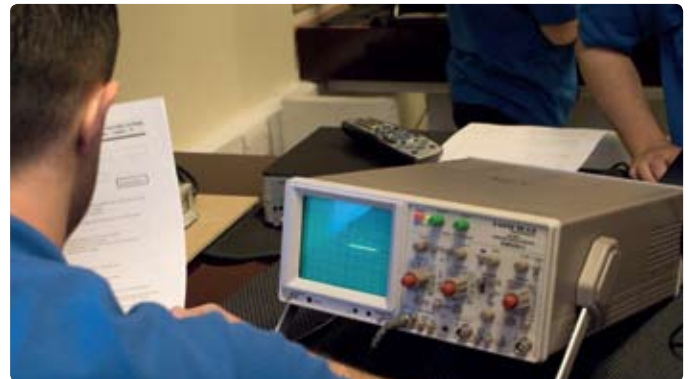
The college has made a substantial investment of £0.5 million in mobile learning technologies, including ultra-mobile PCs, portable gaming devices, iPods, tablet PCs and personal digital assistants (PDAs). This outlay is being put to good use. For example, one employer uses the internal job allocation system to book on-site assessments, and learners are informed of the booking via PDA. The IT system is integrated with SMS so parents can text in for attendance data and students can receive information on, for example, performance in the same way.

Find out more about this college at

**[www.bmetc.ac.uk](http://www.bmetc.ac.uk)**

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## Special Innovation Award

### Gloucestershire College

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Gloucestershire College has 3,500 full-time and 10,000 part-time learners. It operates from two main sites but also offers extensive provision in over 120 community venues.

The judges praised the enthusiasm and commitment of all members of the college team, starting with the vision and commitment of the principal and senior leadership team. They found a high level of technological innovation that is in effect led by learners and their needs.

The judges also liked the way the use of technology has brought about a rapid cultural change in the willingness of tutors to share good practice and resources both internally in the college and nationally. This is done traditionally via presentations given by staff members at events and conferences, but the college has also pioneered the use of online communities and social networking sites to share good practice.

It also enjoys more formal working partnerships. For example, it is working with the Royal Forest of Dean and Stroud Colleges to implement mobile learning there, and has a successful collaborative working arrangement with local schools to deliver diplomas.

The college recognises that a strong infrastructure needs to be in place to support technological innovation.

Trained advanced practitioners are used to disseminate good practice in using ICT across the college and more widely. These practitioners are well resourced and given the right equipment to develop, for example, mobile learning and assessment. One example the judges noted was the use of specialist software to mark and annotate students' multimedia portfolios that were then presented to external validators.

The judges felt that for the future, all-round embedding of the vision and strategy for ICT and ILT will see the college move from strength to strength in the coming year.

Find out more about this college at

**[www.gloscol.ac.uk](http://www.gloscol.ac.uk)**

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## Technology Exemplar Network for FE and Skills

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The Technology Exemplar Network is a national network of further education and skills providers who work together to share effective practice and support through the exchange of ideas, experience, knowledge and practical know-how in harnessing the potential of technology. It is variously described by participants as a 'swap shop' of techniques and solutions, a 'mutual e-support service' and a test bed for innovation.

It was set up by Becta and the Learning and Skills Council (LSC) in 2008 to help colleges and providers speed up the effective use of technology across all aspects of their business and since then it has grown to support over 2 million learners and 55,000 teachers and trainers across the further education system.

The network comprises 16 exemplars and they have engaged with 113 participating providers with whom they work closely within a formal programme of peer to peer support. They meet regularly and run online forums to share experience and effective practice. In the coming year the network will reach an even wider audience through a series of open days, case studies and wider forums.

The 16 exemplars represent all parts of the FE and skills sector - general FE, sixth form and specialist colleges as well as adult and community learning and work-based learning providers.

They were chosen for their success and expertise in using technology in order to support learning and to improve business and management processes, and for their willingness to share their experience with others. Their responsibility is to:

- develop a network of learning providers
- increase peer networking and exchange ideas of what works
- share innovation and expertise
- host mini network events and open days within their regions
- provide mentoring in specific areas of technology.

Participating providers have reported that by joining the Technology Exemplar Network, they have:

- more self-confidence in the application of technology across their organisation
- a better understanding of the potential of technology to improve learner outcomes
- a clearer view of the way forward and an improved understanding of strengths and weaknesses
- become more effective in setting targets and developing strategic plans for their technology investment
- benefitted from having access to a test-bed for new approaches in using technology
- learned from other people's successes and failures.

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## Exemplar Network Providers

1. Alton College
2. BL Hairdressing Training
3. Brockenhurst College
4. City and Islington College
5. Derwen College
6. Gloucestershire College
7. Grimsby Institute of Further and Higher Education
8. Lincoln Academy T/A ISIS Training
9. Middlesbrough Council Community Learning Service
10. National Star College
11. North Warwickshire and Hinckley College
12. Priestley College
13. South Devon College
14. The College of West Anglia
15. The Oldham College
16. Xaverian 6th Form College

Exemplar profiles can be found on the Becta website at:

**[www.becta.org.uk/feandskills/exemplarnetwork](http://www.becta.org.uk/feandskills/exemplarnetwork)**

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