

# Case study

## Technology and CPD

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## A learning spiral for teacher educators and trainee teachers

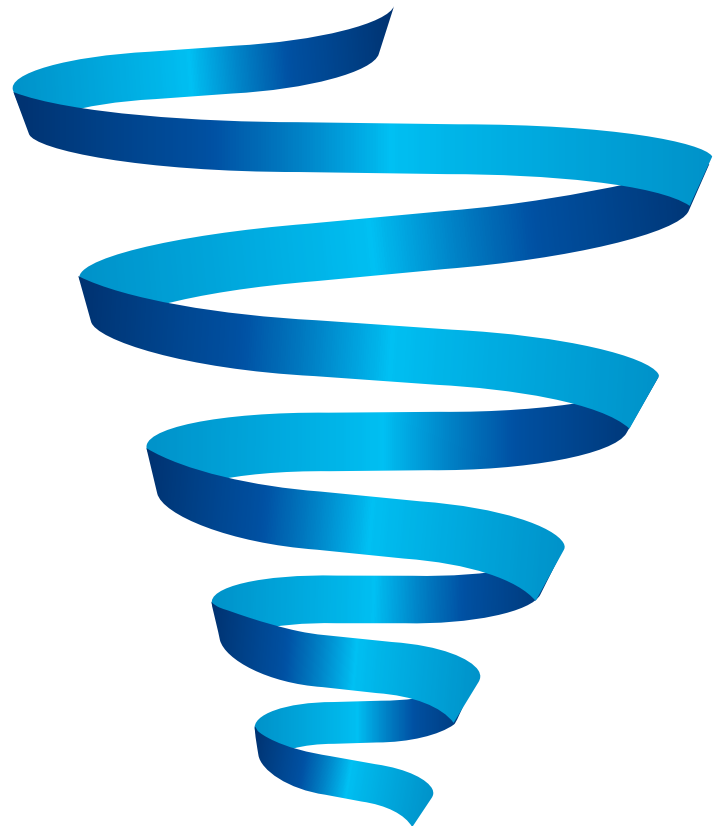
With more than 50 business centres, JHP Group is one of the largest vocational training providers in the UK, employing about 600 trainers and assessors. It has a virtual learning academy that allows employees to take their teaching qualifications regardless of where they work in the country. Stella Austin, a senior academy teacher, explains how she uses the Institute for Learning's online personal space, REfLECT, and encourages her learners to use it too.

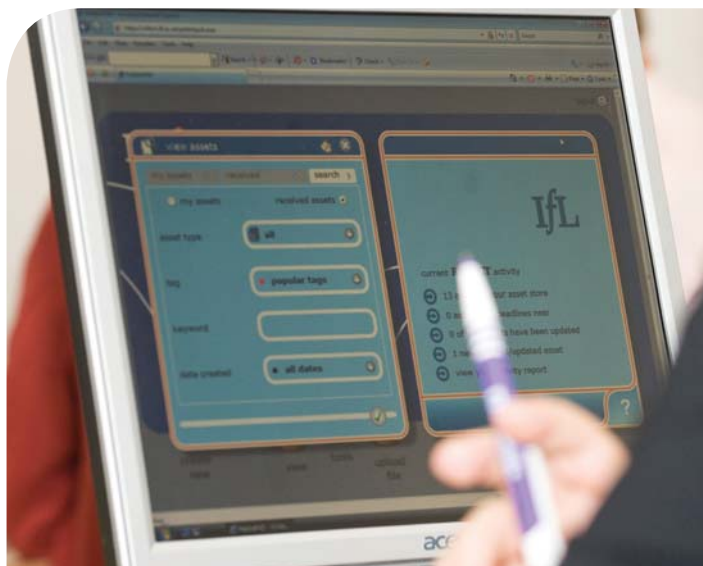
Recording my continuing professional development (CPD) allows me to learn from my experiences and assess my progress. Over the past 18 months, I have been using REfLECT for documenting and declaring my CPD, as well as for recording reflections; storing annotated essays, schemes of work and session plans; and collaborating with my colleagues.

I try to use all the elements, depending on the type of CPD activity. I particularly like the webfolio and REfLECT templates, as well as the in-depth action plan, which really makes you think about what you need to do.

Being able to share ideas with colleagues and peers anywhere in the country is a real benefit for me.

I am also an IfL Volunteer Connection, which means that I have been trained to support colleagues in the use of REfLECT.





My advice to colleagues is to make as much use of REfLECT as you can. It will help you formalise the process and make it easy to declare your CPD. More importantly, it will help you to become critically reflective. I see the process as a learning spiral, rather than a learning circle: it is so easy to go back to past reflections and update them as you make more progress with your professional development. It is also very easy to make links with related assets, to avoid repeating what you have already done.

My main challenge is time. I tend to record my reflections in a notebook, and then transfer a summary to REfLECT when I have time, making reference to the notebook or wherever the detailed reflection is stored. It would be nice though if I could access REfLECT offline, so that I can record my reflections when I do not have internet access. The records could then be loaded into my REfLECT account – automatically or manually – next time I am online. It would also be useful to be able to access assets offline.

I appreciate the importance of using technology effectively to support my CPD, and as a more 'mature' practitioner, I would like support and suggestions for using the social networking facilities available. These tend to be seen as more of a resource for younger people; the more mature among us are probably less confident about using them.

Given that we use blended learning to deliver initial teacher training (ITT) qualifications, and have a heavy reliance on technology, it is important for us to stay abreast of what is available and how it might be of use for us. Apart from team meetings and informal discussions, my colleagues and I visit exhibitions and attend relevant events, such as those hosted by the Learning and Skills Improvement Service (LSIS). Two of us in the team act as E-Guides and attend update events.

In my role as a teacher educator, I have identified opportunities for integrating REfLECT into our e-learning programmes, using it as a tool for logging reflective journals, which is part of the ITT qualification. When a learner on the Preparing to Teach in the Lifelong Learning Sector (PTLLS) course records her reflective log in REfLECT, for example, I can use the same system to give her feedback.

It is something of a challenge to get my learners – those doing ITT qualifications – to use REfLECT, so I encourage them to voice record their reflections, when travelling on a train, for example, then to use this to update their REfLECT record later.

I have also made them aware of REfLECT Mobile, and we provide each of them with a mobile phone for this purpose.



Many of our new trainers do not understand exactly what CPD what is and what counts as CPD. Using REfLECT gives them a better idea of what they can do for CPD – not just courses – and how they can use reflection.

If learners doing qualifications such as PTTLS and the Certificate in Teaching in the Lifelong Learning Sector (CTLTS) use REfLECT for keeping their reflective journal, I can give them support via REfLECT, and can share this with other teachers. That can all work very nicely. The added benefit is that it gives our learners training and experience for when they become qualified teachers and need to use REfLECT to record their CPD.

It is too early to assess the impact, but when trainee staff finish the course they have a better understanding of reflection, and are using REfLECT. They pass this on. I would like the company to adopt REfLECT as the standard vehicle for recording CPD, and by the time this happens, I hope that most of our trainers will know about REfLECT or use it already. Those who already use REfLECT are very complimentary about it.

I would actually like to see REfLECT being used as standard by all post-compulsory education professionals, as I believe it is an excellent tool.

### IfL Volunteer Connections

IfL Volunteer Connections are IfL members in provider organisations who can play a pivotal role in supporting peers and colleagues in the effective use of REfLECT as part of their CPD. The support you give, as a Volunteer Connection, could count towards your CPD. You receive support from the IfL CETT Connections through regional networks and events, in addition to a number of benefits:

- A designated area on the new IfL website: [www.ifl.ac.uk/cpd/connections](http://www.ifl.ac.uk/cpd/connections)
- Online Connection materials and resources
- Fast track advice and guidance
- Latest information on research and development
- Opportunities to share ideas with peers and colleagues
- Regular updates.

### IfL and Becta working together

One of IfL's strategies for continuing professional development (CPD) is to promote the use of technology to support professional development.

We encourage members to develop their knowledge and skills as reflective practitioners through planning, recording and assessing the impact of learning using REfLECT.

We are working in partnership with Becta on a research project to help boost our members' skills in using REfLECT and new technologies to support their professional development. This case study is one of six produced as part of the project.

See [www.ifl.ac.uk/cpd/ifl-and-becta-supporting-the-workforce-project](http://www.ifl.ac.uk/cpd/ifl-and-becta-supporting-the-workforce-project) for more information.

# REFLECT

IfL members are given a free and flexible online tool, developed by teachers for teachers, to help them manage their CPD.

REFLECT provides a personalised learning space where members can reflect on their professional practice and record the many and varied CPD activities undertaken to enhance their teaching. Members can choose to keep all records private if they wish, or can selectively share them with peers, mentors and managers. CPD activity records can be linked quickly and easily to an annual CPD record for submission to IfL if desired.

When records or assets are shared, the user may give others permission to view, comment, copy or collaborate. Permission to share may be time-limited, or rescinded at any time. Comments may be added to shared assets in the form of a professional conversation.

REFLECT can be set up so that entries automatically populate the CPD record. As more entries are added throughout the year, the system will automatically recalculate the number of hours' CPD completed.

REFLECT also gives IfL members a number of easy-to-use utilities that can be used to support teaching and learning, such as a simple blogging tool, web page builder and the facility to create multiple e-portfolios. It complements a provider's virtual learning environment (VLE), and individual members may use REFLECT however they choose, at any time and from any computer with internet access.

REFLECT Mobile gives members access to a very simple version of REFLECT via the browser on any mobile device, allowing them to manage their professional development on the move.



*This is one of six case studies produced by the Institute for Learning (IfL) and Becta in March 2010 to help identify the barriers and challenges that members face in capturing CPD.*

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