

# Case study

## Technology and CPD

## A team approach to reflective practice

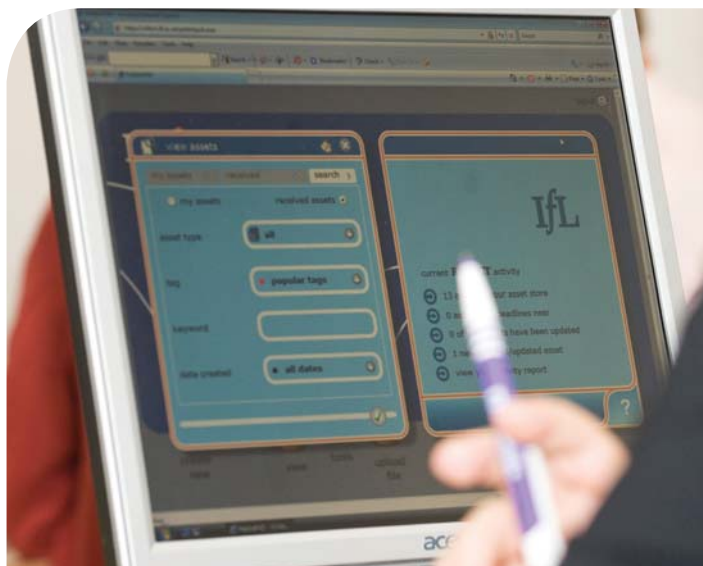
In 2009, the Institute for Learning (IfL) sponsored two LSIS STAR Awards in the teaching, training and learning practitioner category, one nominated by learners and the other by peers. Manjit Johal, who leads an ESOL (English for Speakers of Other Languages) team that teaches adult learners at Sandwell College, received the peer-nominated award. The dedicated teacher, once described as 'gold dust' by an Ofsted inspector, shares his experience of recording and declaring his continuing professional development (CPD).

We all face a multitude of deadlines and demands, and setting aside the time to record CPD activities regularly and reflect on them soon afterwards can be very tricky. Somehow, the need to focus on our own development and progression slips down the list of priorities, and all too soon we realise that we have fallen behind.

This is the position in which I found myself last year, the first time that teachers and trainers in further education and skills were asked to share their details with IfL, their professional body. As 31 August approached, having not spent much time throughout the year completing my record, I had to get to grips with the system quickly.

I hadn't made much use of REfLECT, the online tool that IfL gives members to help us manage our CPD. Luckily, I was able to seek help from a REfLECT expert in the college, who worked through how to use the system with me. After a quick run through, I found the system relatively simple to use and was soon entering all the information I needed. I'm finding that the more I use REfLECT, the better at it I become.





My challenge from now on is to incorporate recording and reflecting on my CPD into my routine. We all naturally reflect on training and CPD at the time of the activity and I believe I would definitely benefit from going on to record it, as this will prompt further thinking and provide a record for future reference. I'm also keen to understand and see all the other functions in REFLECT that I can use for my team and me.

My plan is to establish the process and use the REFLECT tool more frequently, so that I capture thoughts fresh from the event or learning occasion, and am prompted to think more deeply about the findings I take away.

I believe that this will have a positive impact on my work and will prevent the last-minute panic of trying to remember all the CPD I've done throughout the year and pulling together the proof and thoughts from all the different places where I've stored them so that I can send my CPD declaration in on time.

We are also looking at integrating the role of facilitated reflection and building a culture of proactively sharing our learning and reflections, rather than just having the occasional discussion over lunch. We will set aside time in our team meetings to discuss, focus and share our reflective thoughts and learning from CPD.

Our college doesn't use REFLECT to create sharing communities, so we are going to set up a pilot sharing community on REFLECT for our ESOL 19+ college and community team, which we can use for sharing and working with each other.

REFLECT Mobile has also been recommended to me as a resource, and it sounds very useful for getting your thoughts down quickly and then returning to reflect on them truly, using REFLECT on a personal computer. I also have an Apple iPhone® and would love to have an iPhone® application for recording my CPD.

My CPD and reflective activities have a trickledown effect on my learners. As I learn more and become more confident in my teaching methods, techniques and tools, the better the learning experience for them becomes.

This year, our college has acquired some SMART Board™ interactive whiteboards. Although we've had a training session, running through a demonstration, I've been keen to set aside time to teach myself more about the boards and how they can be of benefit to our learners. As an advocate of new technology in the classroom, I'm also investigating podcasts and the interactive Qwizdom® audience response tool.



We hope that these steps – setting up an online community for our own team and focusing on reflecting and sharing our learning – will help multiply the impact on our teaching and learning improvements.

Our college will be taking on a new build in 2011. An ILT strategy group has been set up and the new build will be a driver to go paperless, so this is a perfect time to be looking at ways of doing more online and storing resources in a more efficient way. It's an exciting time to be in the college, preparing for the future by implementing new ways of working.

Through the work our team does on this pilot, we hope to offer a solution for the rest of the college to use in their team activities and learning choices.

My message to colleagues is that the more you use the system, the better you get at it. It's a process of finding out what all the benefits of the REfLECT system are and how we can use them to good effect in our team and our organisation.

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### 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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