



**A guide to planning, delivering and  
assessing holistic learning  
programmes**



gateway  
qualifications

*learning your way*

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## What is the purpose of this guide?

This guide explains what holistic learning means and how it can be used to benefit young people on study programmes and adult learners on a variety of different types of programme. It includes a number of examples to show how you can build holistic programmes and deliver and assess them in a holistic way.

## Who is this guide for?

This guide is for teachers and curriculum managers in further education and skills settings.

## What is holistic learning?

Holistic learning is based on the twin principles of inter-connectedness and wholeness. The learner is seen as 'a whole person' with various facets and needs. The learning programme draws together the different aspects of learning, connecting them into a singular learning experience.

In a holistic programme of learning,

- the component parts together
  - help the learners achieve a single end goal or small set of related end goals
  - fit with the broad intentions of the course as a whole
  - form a coherent entity
- delivery of the separate components is coordinated so the learners experience a single, meaningful programme rather than an assortment of different subjects
- learners' broader social, emotional and personal growth is addressed alongside their academic or vocational goals.

## What are the benefits of a holistic programme?

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A holistic programme can help keep **learners** engaged and motivated because it is clearly focused on the individual and their goals. It can support learners to understand the importance of each aspect of their programme in helping them progress. It can also make learners feel more valued as individuals as the programme is demonstrably designed to meet a broad range of their needs.

Taking a holistic approach can also help **teachers** maximise teaching time and reduce the assessment burden. A range of different skills from different aspects of the curriculum can be taught and practised within a single learning activity. Similarly, a single assessment task can provide the evidence needed to show that multiple learning outcomes across different units or qualifications have been met.

Holistic programmes are an excellent fit with Ofsted's curriculum intent, implementation and impact model. They can give teachers a meaningful structure in which to

- identify the component parts needed to meet the purpose the programme (the intent)
- consider how best to organise these different elements in terms of the teaching and learning experience (the implementation)
- reflect on how effective the programme has been in supporting the learners to achieve their goals (the impact).

## Building holistic learning programmes

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When you are putting together a holistic programme, you will need to start by asking yourself:

- What is the overall purpose of this course?
- What learning and development does this learner or group need to achieve their learning goals?
- What component parts should be combined to achieve these goals?
- Which elements should be addressed through qualifications and which through other means?
- What specific qualifications are needed? How many? What's the right mix and balance, if multiple qualifications?

Obviously, you will still need to consider any funding requirements, such as the inclusion of English and maths qualifications for young people on study programmes.

## Holistic programme example 1: 'Back on Course'

Course aims	Course components
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To re-engage in learning 16–19-year-olds who were previously NEET</li> <li>To enable the learners to make a successful, sustained progression onto an appropriate Level 2 course</li> </ul>	Gateway Qualifications Level 1 Certificate in Vocational Studies  Qualification No: 601/0024/2
	Selected bite-sized Gateway Qualifications Awards in English and Maths at Entry 3/Level 1
	Gateway Qualifications Entry Level Award in Mathematics – Using Whole Numbers, Decimals, Fractions and Percentages (Entry 3)  Qualification No:601/0705/4
	Gateway Qualifications Level 1 Award in Mental Wellbeing  Qualification No:603/3357/1
	Non-accredited learning focused on confidence building, self-management, learning skills
The rationale	
<p>The course content must motivate the learners to give learning a second chance, help them each identify the right sector for them, equip them with the necessary learning skills and behaviours to cope with a Level 2 programme and give them the confidence to rejoin 'mainstream' provision alongside their peers.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The Certificate in Vocational Studies will provide tasters of different sectors for learners uncertain of their future direction.</li> <li>Bite-sized English and maths awards will build the specific skills identified as a barrier to their entering L2 vocational courses.</li> <li>The Mental Wellbeing Award is included as low-level mental health issues account for much of the absence from education for group members during KS4. External accreditation will give the learners an early experience of externally recognised achievement. This should act as a motivator and will demonstrate that what feels like negative prior experience can be reflected on, learning can be taken from it and it can be turned into a positive.</li> <li>Additional aspects of personal and social development important for their success in further learning will be added in and either embedded into the vocational sessions or delivered through PSHE sessions (group/pair or individual as needed).</li> </ul>	

### Ways to adapt this approach for your learners/setting

- You could replace the Mental Wellbeing Award with Keeping Safe and Healthy or Keeping Safe and Healthy in the Digital World (which are of the same size and similarly assessed by on-demand on-line multiple-choice test).
- You could add in some employability skills, either a full Award in Employability Skills or one or more selected units from the wide range included in this qualification.



## Holistic programme example 2: 'Into Work'

Course aims	Course components
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To support ESOL learners into work</li> <li>To address a range of different skills gaps currently acting as barriers to employment</li> </ul>	<p>Gateway Qualifications Level 1 Award in Speaking and Listening – ESOL</p> <p>Qualification No:601/5420/2</p> <p>Gateway Qualifications Level 1 Essential Digital Skills Qualification</p> <p>Qualification No:603/5986/9</p> <p>One or more Gateway Qualifications Entry 3/Level 1 bite-sized Maths awards</p> <p>E.g. Gateway Qualifications Entry Level Award in Mathematics – Using Whole Numbers, Decimals, Fractions and Percentages (Entry 3)</p> <p>Qualification No:601/0705/4</p>
The rationale	
<p>This programme has been co-designed with adult ESOL learners progressing from an E3 ESOL course. The learners identified for themselves that there were other skills, beyond spoken English, that they needed to improve if they were to achieve the goal of getting a job. Working with their learning provider, together they designed a short course that brings together a range of priority skill areas.</p>	
Ways to adapt this approach for your learners/setting	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>You could offer this same combination of skills areas at a different level using qualifications of the same title at E2 or Entry 3.</li> <li>You could include qualifications of varying levels to match learners' spiky profiles.</li> <li>You could take a similar co-production approach but instead of considering barriers to employment, think what ESOL learners need in order to progress to a vocational course.</li> <li>You could expand the course to include a unit focused explicitly on the skills required to secure a job, for example a unit in interview skills.</li> </ul>	

### Holistic programme example 3: 'Setting up an online business'

Course aims	Course components
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To help learners recently made redundant to set up their own online businesses</li> </ul>	Gateway Qualifications Level 2 Award in Preparing for Self-employment  Qualification No: 603/6545/6 Gateway Qualifications Level 2 Award in Website Design and Development  Qualification No:603/6540/7
The rationale	
<p>An adult learning provider's analysis of local labour market intelligence alerts them to increasing numbers of redundancies as a result of the pandemic. They also pick up more informally that some local people who are currently on furlough are anxious that their jobs may no longer exist when the pandemic is over. They begin to identify a specific demand for support in setting up online businesses. These potential learners want to keep start-up costs to a minimum and manage as much of the set-up for themselves. The learning provider decides to integrate web-development skills with more general knowledge and understanding about self-employment.</p>	
Ways to adapt this approach for your learners/setting	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>You could combine any two related small qualifications into a single course to meet an identified need.</li> <li>You could select specific units rather than whole qualifications to make a more customised package.</li> </ul>	

## Delivering and assessing holistic programmes

### Key considerations

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If building holistic programmes was all about choosing the right building blocks, then delivering programmes requires you to decide how best to assemble those blocks. You will need to ask yourselves:

- How do we ensure that the learners' learning experience is coherent?
- How do we make all aspects of the learning meaningful for the learners so it's clear how each relates to the overall learning goal(s)?
- How do we maximise the learning time available to help the learners achieve their end learning goals?

You will also need to think about you keep the assessment burden to a minimum, mirroring your holistic delivery in the way you assess learning. There is little point in making all the connections during teaching and learning, only to disconnect everything for assessment purposes.

### Approaches to teaching, learning and assessment

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The following are particularly useful holistic delivery strategies:

**Embedding:** delivering one set of skills in the context of another. Often it is the more generic skills, such as English, maths, or employability skills, that are embedded into a more specific context, such as a vocational area, with the explicit intention of making the generic skills more meaningful.

Assessment tasks can be designed to give learners the opportunity to demonstrate generic and specific skills simultaneously.

**Project-based learning:** an approach to teaching and learning in which students gain knowledge and skills by working for an extended period of time to investigate and respond to an authentic, engaging question, problem, or challenge. They will typically develop and apply a range of knowledge and skills including from different disciplines as they work their way through the project.

Assessment evidence can be gathered and collated in a portfolio at different stages of the project. Distinct mini-assignments can be designed into the project drawing together learning outcomes from a limited number of different units, or a more extended assignment can be completed in stages, addressing the full range of units covered by the project.

## Examples of holistic programmes: delivery and assessment

### Holistic delivery and assessment example 1: Embedding

Programme aim	The learners
To support learners to progress onto a Level 2 catering course or to go into employment/an apprenticeship in the catering sector	16–19-year-olds working broadly at Level 1 who are enthusiastic about catering but with weak maths skills and high levels of maths anxiety which may threaten their chances of a positive progression
Qualifications	Unit selection from Level 1 Certificate in Hospitality and Catering
Gateway Qualifications Level 1 Certificate in Hospitality and Catering  Qualification No:603/6507/9	Range of catering units + <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Money, Time &amp; Temperature</i></li> <li>• <i>Numbers, Decimals, Fractions &amp; Percentages</i></li> </ul>
Functional Skills English and maths at Level 1 or Entry 3	
Approach to teaching, learning and assessment	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The catering tutor realises that the combination of low-level maths skills and maths anxiety may threaten their chances of a positive progression. She decides that the course must have a strong maths element but it must be sensitively delivered.</li> <li>• She identifies that the optional units for the Hospitality and Catering Certificate includes English and maths units and selects the maths units most relevant to her students.</li> <li>• She delivers these extra maths units herself entirely in the context of catering. This way she can get more maths skills into the course but keep the focus on catering. She hopes that by delivering them this way, the learners' confidence and enthusiasm for catering will influence their attitude to maths.</li> <li>• The catering tutor and Functional Skills (FS) tutors work together to relate the English and maths delivered in the FS sessions as far as possible to the context of catering.</li> <li>• The additional units supplement and consolidate the maths covered by the programme and delivered by the FS tutor. This increases learners' confidence as well as strengthening their skills ahead of their FS assessment.</li> <li>• The catering tutor integrates the assessment of the maths units into the catering assessments to reduce the overall time spent on assessment and to underline the fact that these are fundamentally important <i>catering</i> skills.</li> </ul>	

### Ways to adapt this approach for your learners/setting

- You could take the same approach to embedding maths skills in a range of different vocational areas, for example learners wanting to move into construction or art and design.
- You could embed a different type of generic skills into a different vocational qualification, e.g. digital skills into a retail qualification; English skills into a health and social care qualification.

## Holistic delivery and assessment example 2: Hair and beauty project

### Project: pop-up nail bar

- Learners work together to plan a one-off event in offering simple manicures and nail art to customers
- They create advertising leaflets and displays within the nail bar to illustrate the services on offer and the techniques they will use.
- They run the event and evaluate their performance as individuals in applying their basic nail art/manicure techniques and as a team player.

### Qualification

Gateway Qualifications Level 1 Certificate in Skills for the Hair and Beauty sector

Qualification No: 600/8835/7

### Unit selection

- Providing basic manicure treatment
- Nail art application
- Setting up for hair and beauty services
- Presenting a professional image in a salon
- Write accurately
- Write to communicate

### Teaching, learning and assessment approach

- A total of six different units are drawn together into a single project which is divided into three different stages: planning/prep; delivery; and self-evaluation.
- There are assessment points built into each of these different stages.
- Planning and prep covers discussions about what services to offer, practising the different techniques required, creating their leaflets and displays, identifying self-evaluation criteria for professional image. Assessment focuses on the English skills involved in producing the leaflets and displays, and aspects of knowledge required by some of the vocational units.
- Delivery of the services provides an assessment opportunity for the practical skills involved, including self-presentation. This is then supplemented at the evaluation stage which includes an element of self- and peer assessment.

### Ways to adapt this approach for your learners/setting

- You could add further units such as 'Teamwork' if you chose to focus on and develop the teamwork skills that learners would undoubtedly be using
- You could embed maths skills by putting more of a focus on the nail bar as an enterprise project
- You could develop a similar methodology to create a project in which learners prepare to, advertise and offer services relevant to their vocational area, e.g. car valeting or basic vehicle checks.

## Holistic delivery and assessment example 3: Carpentry project

### Project: wooden items charity sale

- Learners discuss possible wooden items they could make and sell to raise money for a selected charity.
- Each creates a product which requires a range of carpentry skills.
- Students hold the sale and get customer feedback on the products they have produced.

### Qualification

Gateway Qualifications Level 1 Certificate  
in Building and Construction

Qualification No: 603/6554/7

### Unit selection

- Carpentry hand skills
- Exploring and presenting enterprise ideas
- Engage in discussion

### Teaching, learning and assessment approach

- A total of three different units are drawn together into a single short project which is divided into three different stages: planning; making; selling.
- There are assessment points built into each of these different stages.
- The planning stage covers discussions about what items they could make and which charity they should support. They contribute their own ideas, listen to those of others and ask and answer questions. They each make a business case for their suggested product. All of the evidence for the 'Exploring and presenting enterprise ideas' is gathered here along with most of that needed for the 'Engage in discussion' unit.
- Making their wooden object gives learners the opportunity to practise and demonstrate their carpentry hand skills.
- At the selling stage, the remaining evidence for the 'Engage in discussion unit' is generated as they request and respond to feedback from customers. Video/teacher observation evidence is collected.

### Ways to adapt this approach for your learners/setting

- You could use the charity sale project for any vocational area that requires the application of sector-specific skills to create a product (e.g. a cake sale; a floral display stall; an art exhibition)
- You could extend the English skills covered by requiring learners to create advertising leaflets, customer feedback forms or writing a written proposal or evaluation. You could bring in digital skills here, too.

## Holistic delivery and assessment example 4: Health and social care package

### Project: Springboard into employment in health and social care

- Learners on a JCP programme explore the functions and types of organisations within the sector and key job roles.
- They seek out a genuine job opportunity, research the organisation/setting to understand its fit in the sector, the specific role and the responsibilities and skills/qualifications required for the role.
- They complete a job application.
- They prepare for and undertake a role-played interview.

### Package:

- Understand the range of service provision and roles in the health and social care sector.

Gateway Qualifications Level 2 Diploma In Skills for Health and Social Care (Adults and Children) Qualification No: 601/0189/1

- Applying for a job Level 2 - Unit No: H/617/4060
- Interview skills Level 2 - Unit No: L/505/1486

### Teaching, learning and assessment approach

- Learners begin by undertaking a research project to develop their understanding of the breadth and diversity of the sector and the job roles within it. Their research could be presented orally, in a written report, or as a digital presentation.
- They use the exploratory exercise to help them identify job roles of interest before moving on to finding an actual role that they could apply for. This could be a genuine application or a simulated application, depending on the learners' circumstances.
- They then prepare for an interview for the selected job and undertake a mock interview which is video-recorded.
- The group as a whole review the interviews (depending on length/number in the group this might be full interviews or excerpts selected by the tutor), commenting on where the interviewee performed well and where/how they need to improve. They record their observations on feedback sheets.



**Ways to adapt this approach for your learners/setting**

- You could make this package relevant to any sector by selecting a different 'exploring the sector' unit.
- You could offer a generic version of this project, in which different learners each explore the sector of interest to them, using a relevant 'exploring the sector' unit.
- You could offer the units at Level 1 or Level 2 or a combination of both.
- You could add in additional English skills, by requiring learners to make oral presentations or written reports in a particular format on their research findings or to create a CV.
- You could add in additional units in searching for a job, or using social media for job-prospecting.

## Holistic delivery and assessment example 5: Configure and manage a network suitable for your learning provider

### Project: Springboard into employment in health and social care

- Learners work together to configure and manage a network to meet the needs of the centre. They produce project plans, user requirements and technical specifications.
- They execute the plan to configure the network and use security tools and services to manage the network.

#### Qualification

Gateway Qualifications Level 2 Certificate in Digital and IT Skills

Qualification No: 603/6502/X

Gateway Qualifications Level 1 Extended Certificate in Digital and IT Skills

Qualification No:603/6440/3

#### Unit selection

- Digital Skills Project
- Networking
- Network Management

### Teaching, learning and assessment approach

- A total of three different units are drawn together to allow learners to develop, apply and demonstrate a range of knowledge and skills from different disciplines as they tackle a single, extended networking project.
- The project is divided into three different stages: planning; execution and review and formative and summative assessment tasks are built into each stage and between them address the full range of unit learning outcomes and assessment criteria.
- Learners are set a series of mini-assignments which draw together relevant assessment criteria from the different units and assessment evidence is collated in an e-portfolio.
- The centre is used as 'the client' for the project so that learners are developing skills in a real context. IT staff act as guest speakers to support delivery and are involved in project pitches and presentations to allow learners to present ideas and obtain feedback from experts.
- The planning stage covers discussions, research, ideas generation and team working. Google Docs is used for the creation and storage of project documentation so that learners can develop collaboration skills, document production and storage skills.
- The execution stage involves working to the plan and taking responsibility for their own work to configure and manage the security of the network. This is a practical element which requires learners to work together to set up, configure and manage a network to meet the centre's needs, showing consideration for their own safety and that of their peers.

- The review stage involves both self- and peer assessment. Learners identify improvements in achieving project deliverables and evaluate their own performance and that of their peers to encourage and promote their reflective/critical thinking skills.

#### Ways to adapt this approach for your learners/setting

- You could embed maths skills to support learners' understanding of network theory and subnetting, and English skills to develop learners' research, presentation and report writing skills.
- You could use this model for different sectors as a large number of Gateway Qualifications Level 2 vocational qualifications include a project unit. You could take the unit as a foundation on which to build complementary units covering the skills and knowledge needed to tackle the specific project. For example, Carrying out a Sport and Active Leisure Project might be combined with Exercise and Fitness Instruction and Fitness Testing and Training.
- You could link units from other vocational areas to follow this same pattern of planning/preparing and implementing. For example, on a catering course, an extended project might include the planning, preparing, cooking and serving of a meal combining meat and vegetable cookery. A construction project might include preparing surfaces for decoration, applying paint or wallpaper and working safely.