Appendix 1 – Extract from our OTLA project proposal

Briefly describe the Teaching, Learning and Assessment challenge/ issue you would like to address.

We recognise that our learners suffer from low confidence and resilience. We particularly see the lack of confidence in their own abilities to be able to articulate their thoughts in spoken form. This is in part related to the social and economic deprivation present within our catchment area; 5 out of 7 wards in Lowestoft are in the most deprived 10% in the country. Increases in the use of digital technology as a method of communication, and lack of opportunities to discuss and converse at home may also contribute to this.

Our learners are not able to present their ideas and opinions verbally as well as they could, particularly in front of their peers. Lesson observations also clearly show us that not all students are able to give full, rounded answers. We believe this hinders their confidence and resilience when applying for university, apprenticeships or employment. As a result even learners who achieve well do not always secure the same outstanding destinations as their peers in other areas of the country, and do not engage in activities which will increase their cultural capital or enhance social mobility. Our staff are looking for a collaborative college-wide approach linked to effective activities and practices which will enable all students to develop their oracy, and as such build their confidence and resilience.

What are the main activities that you intend to undertake as part of this project?

Oracy requires a number of core skills, including: confidence; a developed vocabulary; critical thinking; persuasion; and discussion, amongst others. Some of these present challenges to our learners, and therefore to develop oracy a number of these skills will need to be developed. We would like to take the opportunity to explore new ideas around the development of oracy, through research and development of classroom practices. This will require us to engage with other centres and institutions, to understand the barriers students may face when developing their oracy, and classroom practices teachers can implement. We would then want to look at how we encourage all staff to embed these practices across all our classes (apprenticeship programmes, vocational courses levels 1-3 and A-levels), so that core skills are developed that improve students' oracy. Such whole-college approaches could include movements towards increased peer-work and opportunities to present, or developing techniques to encourage students to provide in-depth and expansive answers to questions.

In the early stages of this project, through collaboration with other centres and research, we will pilot different classroom techniques to improve oracy in selected different learner groups. For example, 10 specific groups of learners studying at levels 1, 2 or 3 courses could be selected (e.g. an A level Art class, Apprenticeship Engineering class, BTEC level 2 Sport class, Functional Skills English class, etc.). Strategies such as increased peer work, changes in questioning techniques,

methods to challenge and enhance vocabulary, student-led activities or presentations could be used with these groups. The outcome of this action research should allow us to identify effective practices for improving oracy amongst different groups of learners, which can be embedded in the classroom practices of all teachers across the institution.

Whole-college changes to teaching practices will underpin this project, but can be supplemented with additional activities to address some of the skill deficits of specific groups. These will also be confirmed and established through research and sharing of practice amongst other centres, but examples could include:

- Development of the tutorial and induction programmes for specific groups of learners (from functional skills through to level 3), to provide opportunities to speak, debate, lead and undertake activities which develop confidence and resilience.

- Embedding of presentations as a method of assessment or feedback in lessons for BTEC subjects. For example Art students may present at exhibitions of their art work.

- Out-of-class learning, for example social action projects, for level 1 and 2 courses as a method of building student confidence and providing further opportunities for peer work and student-led activities.

- Writing and debating clubs to develop skills such as debating and critical thinking amongst students undertaking A-level programmes.

We recognise that staff will require support and training to help them delivering the outcomes. For example, staff will need guidance and support on how to successfully encourage learners to develop their verbal responses to questioning. As such research, collaboration and sharing of good practice with other centres will be fundamental in the early stages of the project process, to establish effective classroom practices and activities to implement, and the learner groups we wish to pilot these with.

How will your proposed activities impact on learner experience, achievement and attendance?

The approach will enable learners to develop vital life skills in all sessions and not just discrete English classes. Staff in vocational classes will be brought together to focus on how to develop confidence and resilience through use of language and literacy. The learners will receive a more rounded education including opportunities developed through out of class learning. They may also as a result progress onto more outstanding employment, apprenticeship or university opportunities, having the confidence and ability to tackle, for example, competitive interview processes.

The opportunity to make lessons more student-led and include greater student input should also have a positive impact on student attendance, retention and learning

experience. Students should see greater value in their contributions to and involvement in the lessons and to the learning they and their peers are undertaking.

We would expect these activities to add additional value to each subject studied and act as a springboard to better opportunities. Social action projects and clubs will broaden the learner experience and add shared experiences that each can use to help them develop for challenges they will face in the future. For many courses, including level 1, 2 and 3 vocational programmes and apprenticeships, presentations can be used to assess achievement, and as such improvements in oracy should result in greater student achievement and an increased number of students obtaining high grades. Students will also be better prepared for their progression routes, developing skills such as the ability to present, which is used as a method of assessment in higher education, and is commonplace in employment.

What changes might show the extent to which your initiative has been effective?

- Improved attendance compared to other cohorts.

- Improved achievements in functional skills and GCSEs.

- Improved number of high grades in BTEC courses and A-levels.

- Improved positive destinations e.g. increased number of students applying and accepting places at higher tier universities, competitive jobs and apprenticeships.

- Improved engagement in lessons and increase in student-led activities.

- Improved student satisfaction.

The triangulation of more qualitative methods of assessment, such as observations made through learning walks alongside student voice/learner feedback information could be a useful tool for measuring the impact of this project.